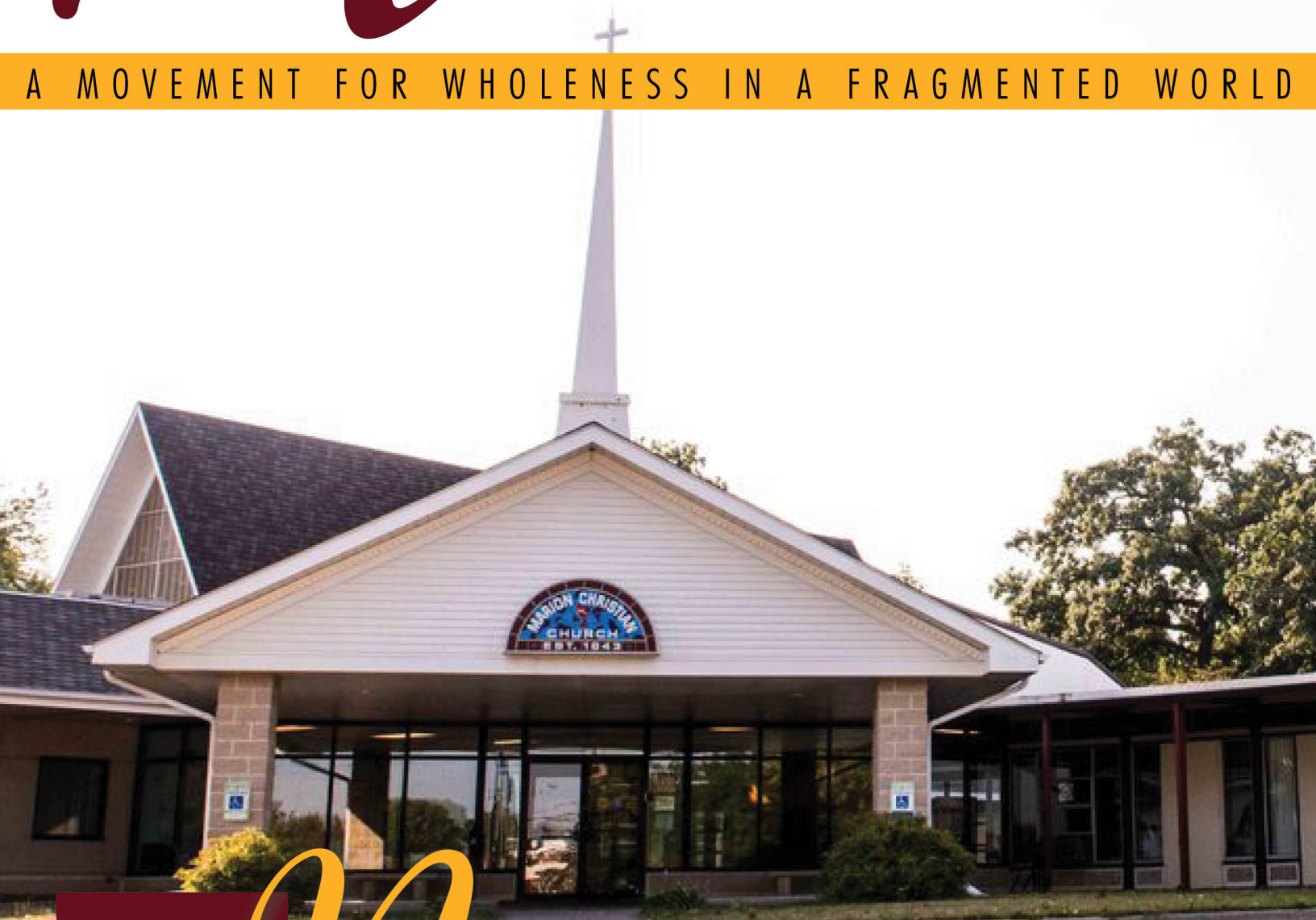


THE *Marion* CHRISTIAN

A MOVEMENT FOR WHOLENESS IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD



Marion

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

MARION CHRISTIAN STAFF

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INTERIM MINISTRY

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Happy New Year! 2024 is upon us. How can this be?

The new year is a perfect time to reflect and to allow space for wonderment. As we reflect, we call to mind the ways in which God provided, the ways in which we were able to not only survive challenges but perhaps even thrive as a result. How marvelous is God's grace and goodness!

If you had told either of us one year ago that we would serve much of the year as Co-Pastors for the Interim at Marion Christian Church you might have gotten laughs from us and we would have dismissed such an idea. But here we are nine months down and less than 6 or 7 weeks to go until Rev. Mike Miller joins us as our settled senior minister! (We know that we are not the only ones counting. It is so exciting!)

We suspect that there are elements of 2023 that surprised you, challenged you, brought you sadness and overwhelmed you with joy. We have all felt that in our individual lives and in our life as a faith community. We have celebrated so many important milestones. We have grieved losses. We have navigated change.

We are experiencing renewal and vitality as we find our way in this new chapter of life as a 180-year-old congregation. 2024 will bring all sorts of new opportunities, tricky moments and everything in between. God's Spirit will continue to move within and among us and will open to us additional opportunities to care for one another and to share the Good News and Hope of Jesus with others in meaningful ways locally and beyond.

We offer the following suggestions that will better equip you to greet the new year. Consider focusing on one or more of these practices.

- Prayerfully seek God's guidance and participate in practices that nurture growth in your faith.
- Continue to demonstrate generosity and warm hospitality. Be open to share the many gifts God has entrusted to each of us.
- Fill your conversations with grace and curiosity with one another and with our community – this will foster healthy relationships.

With gratitude and joy to be serving alongside each of you,

Tammy & Gary

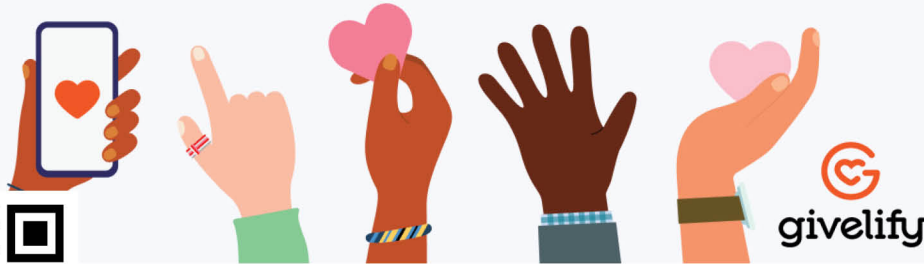
Co-Pastors for Interim Ministry

What's happening!

GIVING ONLINE TO MARION CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS BEEN MADE SAFE AND EASY BY USING THE GIVELIFY APP.

CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE MADE ONE AT A TIME OR FEEL FREE TO ESTABLISH REGULAR WEEKLY OR MONTHLY OFFERINGS.

Thank you for your generosity!



JUST SCAN THIS CODE TO GO RIGHT TO THE GIVELIFY APP!

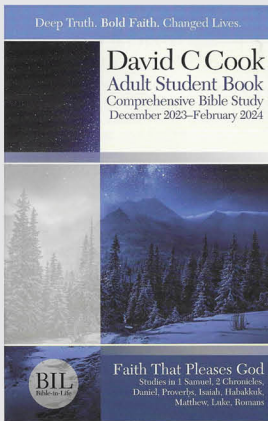
OFFERING ENVELOPES

We have received the 2024 offering envelopes. Many of you are now paying through automatic bill pay set up at your bank, through Givelify, or mailing in a check to the church. With these changes, I didn't feel that every giver needs a box of envelopes, so the order was placed with a significant decrease in the number of boxes.

If you would like to have a box of envelopes for next year, please call the church office or email me at pwise@ncsei.com

Thank you!

TUESDAY AFTERNOON ADULT BIBLE STUDY



Beginning Tuesday, January 9th, we will be offering an adult Bible Study, 1PM at church. The 13-week study is entitled "Faith That Pleases God" and uses a variety of Old and New Testament scriptures to explore questions like "what does it mean to trust God in Faith?" and "why is it sometimes difficult to follow God on a faith-filled adventure?"

The study will be led by Pat Knight, who has led numerous studies off and on at church for many years.

There is no cost to participate but please let Pat know if you plan to attend so we will have enough study books. Contact Pat by phone or text at 319-360-1905 with questions or intentions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

10AM
WORSHIP SERVICE

AFTER CHILDREN'S
MOMENT
SUNDAY SCHOOL
FOR PK-5TH GRADE

WED., JAN. 3
6PM
NO OASIS

TUES., JAN. 9
1PM
ADULT BIBLE STUDY

WED., JAN. 10
6PM
OASIS

TUES., JAN. 16
1PM
ADULT BIBLE STUDY

WED., JAN. 17
6PM
OASIS

TUES., JAN. 23
1PM
ADULT BIBLE STUDY

WED., JAN. 24
OASIS

TUES., JAN. 30
1PM
ADULT BIBLE STUDY

WED., JAN. 31
OASIS
PAJAMA & MOVIE NIGHT!

Dear Marion Christian Church,

December 3 was an exciting day in the life of our church. While we are always blessed to be together, we were abundantly blessed by having Michael Miller in service with us to preach, sing, and to ultimately present him as the candidate for settled pastor.

The search committee has been hard at work and throughout our search has looked at 14 professional information forms and interviewed four candidates. It quickly became clear that Mike was the minister that was supposed to be at Marion Christian Church.

Based on Mike's profile, the committee was interested in him for many reasons. On the surface, he brings some qualities to the position that we hadn't even considered, but find intriguing, such as his ability to converse in Spanish and German, his degree in vocal music including studies in organ and piano, and that he is currently an elementary school teacher. All of these are things that we think would lend themselves well to a church setting.

As we read through what Mike had to say about his call to the ministry, his call to the Disciples of Christ in particular, his gifts and strengths and where he feels God is leading him, it felt to the committee that he was not only worth interviewing but was also someone we didn't want to waste any time in speaking with.

After our initial zoom interview and listening to three sermons, the committee was 100% in favor of scheduling a second, more in-depth interview with Mike as soon as possible. After that interview, we were once again 100% in favor of bringing Mike to Marion to meet in person so he could see the church and community and we could have face-to-face discussions. Our main concern with Mike had been his lack of experience in a senior pastor position and we had him lead a meeting with the team as well as asked him additional questions and presented scenarios about staffing, committees, Council, budget (real life). At no point was he scared off, nor were we.

When the committee referenced the MCC Church information Form, the congregation had indicated the top 4 skills needed in our next pastor were: Biblical Knowledge, Church Administration and Planning, Communication and Worship. In all instances Mike or at least two of his references ranked these among his top skills.

The committee found him to be approachable, relatable to all ages, have an amazing sense of humor, be a forward thinker, an effective listener, compassionate, creative, respectful, have a good sense of conflict resolution skills, and to prioritize relationship building, which were all priorities in our congregational survey.

Based on the information gathered by the committee and the person and minister that we believe Michael Miller to be, the motion was made to extend the call to Mike as our Senior Minister. That motion passed with a unanimous vote.

It is Mike's plan to be here and active in this role by Lent (early February). Please see the back of this letter for Mike's biographical information and reach out if you have any questions.

Many thanks to the search committee for the endless hours of dedication and prayer. Marilyn Rambo, Amy Cameron Buseman, Vanessa Renaud, Tim Feldman, Zach Cooper, Abram Evers, Justin Lightfoot, and Sharon McIntosh.

A huge thanks also to our Co-Pastors of Interim Ministry, Gary Sneller and Tammy Cameron Buseman. A decommissioning ceremony will be planned as dates are finalized. A special thanks also, to everyone who helped fill the pulpit this year. We couldn't have done it without you.

Rev. Michael Miller

A Michigan native, Mike Miller has had the great opportunity to serve churches across the United States as a music minister and pastor. Having been a singer for his entire life, Mike studied opera and organ performance at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, MI. His studies in organ gave him the opportunity to serve numerous churches in the southwest and central region in Michigan and eventually led to his realization of his call to serve the church. After working in various denominations as a music minister, he found a church home in the Disciples of Christ church.

Mike graduated from Phillips Theological Seminary in May 2023 with a Master of Divinity Degree and was recently ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on November 25, 2023. Currently serving as the associate pastor for a congregation in Katy, TX, Mike has found immense joy in creating spaces for conversation surrounding biblical interpretation and a renewed sense in the call of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)'s ultimate goal of Christian Unity. Outside of church work, Mike is a public-school music teacher, and has worked with students from Pre-Kindergarten through High School for the past 8 years.

In the coming new year, Mike will be starting his doctoral studies pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Phillips Theological Seminary. Mike has a passion for a vision of church that shares the radical love and welcome that Jesus taught. The verse that called Mike into ministry was Psalm 27:13, "And I remain confident of this: that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." This has been a guiding scripture for Mike as it reminds him that there is goodness wherever we go and when we cannot see the goodness, we are called to be the goodness of God for one another.

God's blessings,

Deanna Long, Pastoral Search Committee Chair

Becky Clemens, MCC Council Chair

Introducing the Marion Community Center

Now that our church building is fully open following derecho repairs, Marion Christian Church is once again able to fulfill **its vision for building use**: "We believe in the importance of hospitality and stewardship and therefore buildings are meant to be used for the benefit of all, and we encourage all to consider using the Marion Christian Church facilities. ... We will welcome everyone as we would welcome Christ" (MCC Building Use Policy 2007/20018)

Soon after our grand re-opening in September, MCC was asked by the Marion Community Center if they could start meeting in our Fellowship Hall on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10am-2pm (also using the church kitchen to prepare a simple meal for participants). Marion Community Center is a small non-profit social group (not affiliated with the City of Marion) that provides an opportunity for food, fellowship, and fun for senior adults. All people in the Marion/Cedar Rapids area are invited to participate. A small donation from participants covers the cost of the meal and supplies for craft activities. As a non-profit organization, they also make a donation to MCC for the use of church facilities. If you are in the church building on Mondays or Wednesdays, please extend a warm welcome to them and MCC members are invited to participate in the food, fellowship, and fun of the Marion Community Center.

SUNDAY SCHOOL



PRESCHOOL - GRADE 5
AFTER CHILDREN'S MOMENT DURING 10AM SERVICE



THE OASIS

**WEDNESDAY
NIGHT**
PROGRAMMING FOR
**PRESCHOOL-
12TH GRADE**

STARTING JANUARY 10TH

MEAL AT 6PM | ACTIVITIES AT 6:30PM
REGISTER AT [HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/WPWUJKYSC9XXV7QWA](https://forms.gle/WPWUJKYSC9XXV7QWA)



MCC Council Meeting

Hybrid Council Meeting - Provisional Sunday, December 10, 2023 2:30pm

PRESENT: Jana Madsen, Chris Hack, Genny Davis, Lori Law, Becky Clemens, Alindsey Kramer, Erin Wittkowski, Joy Talley, Joyce Talley, Zach Cooper, Justin Lightfoot, Krystal Monawar, Nikki Kibler, Mike Kibler, Sue Thompson, Gary Sneller, Tom Fuller, Cathy Fuller, Susan Boatwright, Tammy Buseman, Tim Feldmann, Gloria Waltke, Sharon McIntosh

Chair Becky Clemens opened with prayer. She welcomed all attendees; each person introduced himself or herself including the ministry team they have/will serve on for 2023/2024.

Approval of September & October 2023 Council Meeting Minutes along with the November 12 Special Council Meeting – Mike Kibler Motioned to Approve, Cathy Fuller Seconded – Carried

Approval of September, October & November Financial Reports

- Pledges/Offerings were \$27,757.96 for the month of Oct and \$198,780.63 year to date

- Total actual operating expenses for Oct were \$23,884.97, leaving a net income of \$3,872.99 for the month of Oct

- YTD net giving (income vs expenses) is \$21,247.00 (gain) - Total Encumbered fund expense for Oct is \$5,035.33, with a YTD total encumbered spend of \$26,200.56

- Capital Improvement Campaign income for Oct is \$14,523.60, bringing the YTD total to \$149,790.97

- Checking account balance as of end of Oct is \$187,000.46. We had another net gain of \$3873 for Oct, leaving us with a net gain of \$21,214 for the year through October.

Please send any outstanding receipts for reimbursement as soon as possible so they can make it in for year-end.

Discussion around spending and upcoming expenses was followed by information on a new form available to report expenses that are not being turned in for reimbursement.

– Mike Kibler Motioned to approve, Sha-

ron Seconded. Carried

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS:

Worship

We are making a few adjustments with communion. For at least the remainder of December, we will fully fill 4 communion trays. Increasing because of attendance is a great “problem” to have! We are also adding communion instructions to the elder communion script to include the following information. It will be in script form but this is the general information that has been added:

- to come forward down the center aisle (returning by the side aisles),
- that there is gluten-free bread available on the small stand by the piano, and
- that someone will serve those in the pews who cannot come forward.

Please let Ryan or Kari Wilcox know if you have any questions.

Submitted by Kari Wilcox, Elder

Spiritual Growth & Formation - No report

Congregational Care & Evangelism

Our team has not formally met, but we have been collecting pictures for our Picture Board in the Narthex. (Submit yours if you haven't already.) We have also been involved in the Sunday after worship workshops making family Christmas for the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary.

In this report I am asking for the 2024 Ministry Teams to volunteer with Fellowship time on Sunday mornings through 2024.

Submitted by Sharon McIntosh, Elder

Guardianship - No report

World & Local Missions

1. We are wrapping up the year with holiday food baskets provided to four church families. Thanks to the generosity of the congregation all the non-perishable items were donated. A gift card for

the dairy, fresh produce and bakery was given to each family to meet those needs. Baskets are provided for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The children of the same families will be provided with gifts for Christmas as designated by tags on the Angel Tree. Any ornaments not taken from the tree will be purchased from our budget. Each child will get four gifts.

2. In partnership with Marion Cares we have adopted nine children. They will also receive four gifts. Value is about \$100 per child.

3. We reviewed our budget and sent support funds to seven local organizations that we had only partially funded. We are waiting to see if we need to purchase gifts from the Angel Tree before disbursing our remaining funds. We are presently about \$3000 under budget. We will be keeping the overall 2023 church budget in mind as well as the underfunded 2024 budget before distributing any more funds at year end.

We have been able to provide financial support at our budgeted amounts to all but three of the organizations we work with. Those we provided “in-kind” goods as well as some funding.

4. We look forward to 2024 with new people coming on board. Fresh ideas always keeps things exciting.

5. Special “Thanks” to Cathy Fuller and Gloria Waltke for their guidance, ideas, and support for our church’s outreach missions program.

Outreach-Missions

Susan Boatwright & Cathy Fuller

Community Growth and Formation - No report

Sharon McIntosh brought up that we should be accepting these reports, not a need to approve. Justin Lightfoot will check into this.

Krystal Monawar motioned to approve, Susan Boatwright seconded. Carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS: Tammy Buseman brought up an opportunity to sell the

MCC Council Meeting

Hybrid Council Meeting - Provisional Sunday, December 10, 2023 2:30pm

church van, but wanted to have discussion regarding the van. She mentioned that although it can be a great resource it just seems to sit in the parking lot. So, do we need it?

Discussion entailed regarding that it's weekly use by Marion Cares, which is no longer happening. It has taken youth on a Mission trip. It was mentioned that it would be a good resource to take youth around the community to do work. Our seniors used it for their monthly outings.

The question was asked, "How much of a liability is it?" Can we afford it? Repairs will be getting more costly than the van may be worth. Not always comfortable taking youth in it for fear it will break down. Discussion around renting a van when needed, but that insurance in doing that is not easy to get. Annual maintenance costs were discussed, do we need that additional expense right now.

Cathy Fuller moved, Krystal Monawar

seconded to sell the van now and then we can research what we need. Carried.

It was mentioned that the church logo must be removed by us before this can be sold. The church parking lot was discussed regarding repairs needed. This was tabled for the January meeting to have more information available to discuss.

Cathy Fuller asked if the church wanted to support a Local Creative Artist group by having a show in our church again. Gary mentioned that this would need to be applied for in compliance with our Building Use Policy, which is being updated and presented in January.

Susan Boatwright asked if the senior group using our building twice a week pay anything to cover utility expenses. Gary reported that will be under review with the new policy.

Co-Pastors of Interim Ministry Report – Gary mentioned that their emphasis was to lead the congregation during this

interim period. Their goal is to work with Guardianship and complete the Building Use Policy. He is ready to "set the table" for the transition and will be stepping back when our new called pastor arrives in February. Gary and Tammy are grateful to work together during this time of interim for Marion Christian. They applauded each other and the council applauded both of them!

Justin Lightfoot thanked Becky Clemens for her leadership during this year.

Becky thanked the council for their willingness to serve.

Gary Sneller closed us with prayer.

Ministry Teams had team meeting to prepare for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,
Patty Wise

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL HYBRID MEETING PROVISIONAL MINUTES SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2023 11:00AM

The meeting was called to order with a prayer by Chair Becky Clemens. She called up the Chair of the Search and Call Team, Deanna Long. Deanna announced with joy that, after receiving 14 informational profiles, interviewing 4, and pursuing only one with a second interview and personal visit, the team recommended Michael Miller to the Council to be called as our church's next settled senior minister, and that the Council had unanimously voted to present him as a candidate to the congregation. She presented extensive information about Michael's qualifications, gifts and personal qualities that lend themselves to be a perfect fit for our congregation. Deanna then moved and Krystal Monawar seconded to call the Rev. Michael Miller to

be Marion Christian Church's next settled senior minister.

Michael was then called before the congregation, gave a brief summary of his personal background, and then answered questions from the congregation. He mentioned receiving a radical welcome by the Search Team, our church's active partnerships in the community, and our ability to recover from the derecho as reasons he was excited about becoming our senior minister. (Also the SNOW!)

He mentioned that a main challenge would be the unknown as we navigate through traditions, while still moving forward.

He said he encourages conversations with all those who have doubts and who are skeptical.

He indicated he would be absent for 2-3 weeks during the year as he begins pursuing his Doctorate beginning in January. Regarding the LGBTQ community, Michael made it clear that it is the church's responsibility to reach out to people who have been hurt by the church. He also stressed that reaching out to ALL people is the purpose of the church, and that all groups are important.

The question was called for a vote by secret ballot. The vote was unanimous to call the Rev. Michael Miller to be Marion Christian Church's next settled senior minister.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Rambo, Church Clerk