



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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(JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015)

Happy 2015 CBCGM! It is a blessing to have so many CBCGM ministries actively doing the work of the Lord and there is much to share so that you might be informed, inspired and encouraged. It is my prayer that every member reads this newsletter and identifies opportunities to engage and interact in the work of ministry at CBCGM.

I offer my sincere apologies for the staggered and inconsistent production of this newsletter over the last few months of 2014. The workload of pastoral ministry, academic teaching and just being a husband and father of two, has certainly impacted its month-to-month delivery. I have considered moving to a quarterly format, but decided that to move forward with the vision of the church and the development of new ministries and other initiatives, it is important to have regular and consistent information available to the congregation. In an effort to keep the production and distribution of the newsletter consistent in 2015, I have enlisted the editorial assistance of Ms. Ebony Bracey (Church Administrator), Minister Charlotte Flowers (Minister of Christian Education and the Bereavement Ministry), Reverend Michael Robertson (Minister of Community Outreach) and Deacon James Powell. With the cooperative work of this team we are certain to stay on track. Please join with me in applauding them!

Our church theme for 2015 is: "There is Still **MORE** Room: Come, Let us Fill God's House". In this endeavor I am happy to inform you that CBCGM organized a Mission Ministry in 2014, and they have already engaged in several mission initiatives in the community (more below). I would like to thank Minister Charlotte Flowers for taking the initial steps for making a reality this vital ministry of the church.

DEACON'S COUNCIL

At the monthly meetings of the Deacons' Council held on *Saturday, January 10 and Saturday, February 7, 2015* at 9 AM, there was a general sense among those present that great progress is being made in several areas of church work and life but more needs to be done. Here were several important outcomes:

- 1) The diaconate addressed and assessed security issues for the church and its properties. While we appreciate the presence of Deacon Sherman Zolicoffer (security), more assistance is needed. For this reason, the diaconate has appointed other deacons to assist, especially in cases of emergency.
- 2) The deacon co-chairs reminded and encouraged the diaconate to recommit themselves to the service of the church and to be active and present in their duties, and also to seek active involvement in at least one church ministry. This is important, as the Pastor will evaluate them on their work and responsibilities yearly.
- 3) Finally, those deacons who have availed themselves of the opportunities and offering of various AIM-sponsored in-services (teaching, missions and deacon's in-service) verbally affirmed how helpful and enlightening these events have been for their growth.

I hope that many more deacons take advantage of these opportunities to advance their learning and development. As always, we thank the diaconate for its work and service to CBCGM.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The first leadership council of the New Year was held on Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 10:00-11:30AM. At the start of the New Year, we felt it necessary to do a cleansing activity to leave old things behind and move forward with a fresh slate therefore we initiated a Forgiveness Ritual. This was an anonymous activity in which each leader was asked to write down any issue they had on a piece of paper, whether it was an issue with another brother or sister or within themselves. Pastor Williams read a passage from Corinthians on Forgiveness and talked about the importance of Establishing Working Relationships. He prayed and the leaders were asked to destroy their issues by tearing them up and disposing of them in the Family Basket.

The leaders also participated in a writing activity entitled "Before I Die, I Want My Legacy To Be..." This was inspired by a video we watched by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. entitled "To Serve". Feel free to view it via this link: <http://youtu.be/WkRdj9L3wyE>

TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN: “PROSPERING THE VISION”

We are now in the third year of implementing our ten-year strategic plan. When we started developing the plan in 2012 with the generous assistance and guidance of Dr. Cyriaque Sukam, we started with a cadre of dedicated members: Anthony Caples, Linda Caples (Coordinator), Dorothy Walker-Cooper, J. Brenda Hagler, Alexander Hardy, Barbara Johnson, James Powell, Debra Rosby, W. Ray Rosby, Bessie Smith, Claude Williams Jr. They served well and several (but not all) have now passed the baton over to a new group of members who will continue to strive toward the vision. The new Core Team members are: Jerry Benston, Ebony S. Bracey (Coordinator), Sherlon Butler, Charlotte Flowers, Brandon Hardy, Adom Hinkle, Willie Jude, Mary Lyles, Lena Patton, Marcus Patton, Rebecca Powell, Emmy Robertson, Michael Robertson, Tommy Saffold, Bessie Smith, Mike Staples, & JaJaun Zolicoffer.

Unfortunately our application to Feed America was denied as there are already over 400 food pantries in Milwaukee County which are inclusive of 4 located in the 53208 zip code. Moreover, the Core Team has reviewed and organized the 22 recommendations and categorized them to fit under our Strategic Initiatives. In addition, each member has been assigned a specific initiative to make sure that our goals are in alignment and being met.

FINANCE COMMITTEE NEWS

The Finance Committee would like to remind all CBCGM members that the annual statements of giving have been sent out from the church office and that you should have received your report. If you have not received your annual statement of giving, it might be because you have moved and did not forward your new address information to the church. If you have any problems, you may call the church office (414-445-1610). If you have received your statement, look it over carefully and please ask yourself: ***“Does my giving reflect the grace and mercy God has showered on me and my family this year?”***

In other news, the Finance Committee looks forward to providing a brief summary of overall giving that will begin on UNITY SUNDAY, March 1, 2015. This brief synopsis will keep the entire church informed of the monthly status of giving, and hopefully encourage us to “catch up” should we fall behind in our monthly goals. Finally, the Finance Committee is happy to announce that the CBCGM Handicap Accessibility Project (or “the Church Elevator” construction) is well underway and on target. The preliminary work of placing the concrete walkway, framing the inner walls and cutting through the outer church wall has been pretty much completed. The elevator itself has been ordered and will soon be delivered and installed, hopefully before our Resurrection Sunday services in April.

Celebrations for the dedication and completion of this project are being planned. But the reality is that this project could not have been realized without the consistent giving of each of us, and the hard work and dedication of many CBCGM volunteers, not the least of which have been Deacon Willie Jude and Brother Mike Staples, whose hard work and priceless service continues to save the church from costly financial burdens.

UNITY SUNDAY WORSHIP

Our Unity Sunday worship experiences continue to be awesome! I really believe that the reason that I feel so inspired is that we are all together as a church body at the same place and time to worship. Those who have read Acts chapter 2 know that the church was gathered together at the same place and time, and on one accord in prayer, and the Holy Spirit descended upon them and empowered them for witness. This was in fulfillment of Jesus' prediction in Acts 1:8 – “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (RSV). This passage from Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19-20 (“Go therefore and Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” [NRSV]) are the *raison d'etre* (“reason for being/existence”) of the church. It is upon these two scriptures that the 2015 church theme, “There is Still **MORE** Room: Come, Let us Fill God's House” (Luke 14:15-24), is built. In order to fill God's house we need the powerful aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit to unify and empower us to be witnesses for the kingdom. The purpose of the UNITY SUNDAY messages, therefore, is to bear out the meaning of the theme scripture.

In line with the new theme, the message for our first **UNITY SUNDAY on January 4, 2015** was: “**Fill the House**” (Luke 14:15-24). The emphasis of the message was on evangelism and outreach. We noted that God wants God's house filled just as do promoters, theater owners or restaurants owners (etc.). It is the role and mission of the church to get God's house filled for the Great eschatological (“end time”) Feast. The church represents the servant in the parable who must go out into the highway and hedges and compel men and women to come and fill the house of God. One final note, those who were invited (healthy, wealthy and “preoccupied”) rejected the invitation. So God sends the servant to compel the crippled, blind and lame (those with health challenges and most likely lacking in wealth) to fill the house. This is a powerful challenge to the church to seek out those who are underrepresented and neglected.

On the **UNITY SUNDAY of February 1, 2015** I diverged from preaching on the church theme because of the Winter Snow Warning that began on Saturday evening into Sunday

morning. I assumed that attendance would be significantly affected, so I did not want to use the sermon prepared for a regular UNITY SUNDAY. However, I must admit that more members showed up than I expected. I commend you and may God bless you for your refusal to “make excuses”. The message for this worship service was from Matthew 7:24-27 – “Life Assurance”, which I prepared that morning but was received quite enthusiastically. It was a “word of exhortation” that assured us that the “policy” we have in Christ Jesus is valid both in this life and in the life to come. Do you have your “Life Assurance” policy? I pray that all were blessed.

NEW MEMBER'S FELLOWSHIP

Our New Member's Fellowship was held on Sunday, Feb 1, 2015 and the interaction was called “Speed Ministry” and it was a lot of fun. The purpose of this fellowship is to foster interaction between ministry leaders and new members. Leaders should recognize that this is the perfect opportunity to showcase your ministry and recruit new members.

In other membership news, Sister Mary Lyles (Church Clerk) reports that in 2014 there were 10 baptisms and already in 2015 we have had 6 baptisms. Minister Charlotte Flowers reports further: In 2014, 58 people walked the aisle during the invitation to discipleship. Of the 58, **9** were minors, **9** have complete New Members class, **3** are in progress, and **8** were re-instated and aren't required to attend new members' class. Seven (**7**) have received the right hand of fellowship and **3** are scheduled for March. So our retention rate is running about 50%. I think this is because of the personal touch added to the intake process. The previous process for the new members was that a letter was mailed out to the new member to remind them of baptism and the New Member's class. The New process is that new members sign a commitment letter. A revision of the old letters was completed by Sis Ebony Bracey (thanks Ebony) that has information regarding baptism and attending new members' class. The person signs, they take the original and a copy is filed in the new members' notebook. The information on the commitment letters that are filed are used for baptism follow-up/confirmation for new members and an email is sent to CBCGM Media and the baptismal team.

In an effort to reach out in prior years, we mailed post cards that resulted in 45% returned with no forwarding address and about 15% weren't received in time because their P.O. Box aren't checked regularly. Again the personal touched was activated; each new member now receives a phone call inviting them to the fellowship. The New Members Ministry is always looking for ways to keep new members engaged; we are also looking for additional ministry help. If interested contact the church office or Minister C. Flowers.

MILWAUKEE AIM CHURCH CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS INSTITUTE

Our annual MKE-AIM Christian Educators Institute was held here at CBCGM on Saturday, January 31, 2015 from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM. We had 110 educators in attendance. Pastor John Walton of Calvary Baptist Church was our facilitator and he taught on lessons from the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Galatians. I'd really like to thank the Culinary Ministry for organizing the space that was available given the elevator construction, and also for preparing a great meal for all of our guests. Many of the evaluations mentioned the great hospitality and good food that was prepared. We commend and thank all who were involved or participated in any way.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The following report comes from Rev. Michael Robertson, Minister of Community Outreach:

This is my first report as your Minister of Community Outreach. My office is set up in Mother Davenport's house thanks to the hard work of Mike Staples and many others. I have met with Common Ground and attended a meeting held at CBC with Alderman Russell Stamper. The weekly Brotherhood breakfast meetings on Tuesday provide an opportunity to identify employment challenges and implement a mentoring program we hope will lead to training and job placement for currently unemployed individuals. Deacon Dorothy Walker-Cooper shared a program that MATC has developed to train incarcerated men and women that we will partner with as soon as possible and coordinate it with our current training program. I am working with Deacon J. Brenda Hagler regarding how to increase participation at Community Child Care and how to use our space more effectively. As an Associate Minister I have attended Milwaukee A.I.M., Leadership Council and Core Team meetings as I try to gain a better understanding regarding existing church programs. Please know I am here to help our church in outreach efforts you may be interested in.

COMMUNITY MISSION MINISTRY

I am happy to remind you that in 2014, CBCGM organized a Mission Ministry and in that same year they engaged in several mission initiatives within the community. I would like to thank Minister Charlotte Flowers for taking the initial steps for making this vital ministry of the church a reality. The Mission Ministry completed the following initiatives in 2014: Mailed

over 78 pounds of old Sunday school books to facilities who send and distribute them to developing countries. Sisters G. Hence and E. Johnson represented Mission at the Ministry Fair organized by the Family Day Committee. Information about the ministry was handed out. In addition, we supported META house for Thanksgiving by purchasing and delivering groceries in preparation for their in-house "family" Thanksgiving dinner. META house sent a thank you note to the church. The Mission Ministry has also supported BLAST outreach/evangelistic efforts and was in attendance at the Villa Nursing home where our beloved Mother Davenport resides. A special thanks to Nakita and April Grant, Jaloni and Janyla Brown and Marie Shaw for partnering with the Mission Ministry as we supported St John's Cathedral annual Christmas party for the homeless. We donated desserts, serve meals, directed guests to their seat, set and cleared tables and fellowshiped with all. It was a humbling, enjoyable and rewarding experience.

COMMUNITY EVANGELISM

(In support of the universal church mandate from Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19-10 and our 2015 CBCGM theme: *"There Is Still **MORE** Room, Come Let's Fill This House"*, Luke 14:15-24). Minister Jeffery Eastern, Sis. Zumehka McCrary, and Sis. ReDonna Rodgers recently attended a 6 week training course to sharpen their evangelistic skills. VCY ("Voice of Christian Youth") Bookstore, located at 107th & Capitol has been offering this class for the past year and I know that our church and the surrounding community will benefit from this training. I look forward to a report and eventually evangelistic training for the church. Thank you Minister Eastern, Sisters McCrary & Rodgers for accepting the challenge of our church theme for 2015, but more importantly training to honor God's command **"TO GO"**.

BIBLE STUDY/B.L.A.S.T.

Our church theme is being actualized through the ministry efforts of B.L.A.S.T. ("Building Lives Around Spiritual Truths"). Sister Zumehka McCrary reports:

1) Our 2014 Resurrection Outreach Canvassed the Neighborhood for our "Life Saver Mission" in April. We handed out over 100 invitations to surrounding neighbors. I am aware of 2-3 people who actually attended a service as a result of this outreach. I am not sure if any of them joined or kept coming to CBCGM. We had between 5-7 CBCGM members (men and women) outside of BLAST who volunteered and accompanied us;

- 2) Our Annual Fundraiser "Flap Jack" was in June and we raised over \$800.00 for our ministry. We had about 40 people who actually attended the breakfast and a host of others who donated;
- 3) We participated in the CBCGM Community Ministry Fair in September which included a bounce house for the children & informational brochures for the parents.
- 4) Our annual BLAST trip was to Helium Trampoline Park in New Berlin, WI. We paid for 37 children and adults to participate and had a total of 47 people who attended the outing in total. We provided Domino's Pizza, chips, beverages and a bus as well;
- 5) Our Christmas Outreach was to the Villa at Bradley Estates where Mother Algenora Davenport is a resident. We played BINGO and provided Christmas gifts for each resident who attended this activity along with a bus for transportation;
- 6) Finally, we escorted some of our teens to a Brewers game in November and there were 2 chaperones with 7 teens.

In Bible Study News, the Noon and Evening Bible study has been reading through the Gospel of John. We invite all members to join with us in this spiritually enriching and practically instructive journey through John where you can meet Jesus again, and get re-connected.

**After reading the summary of the ministries from 2014,
Have YOU participated in the life of the church
through any of the ministries?**



In Memoriam

Finally, let us remember the beloved souls that have passed from our congregation and also the family members of our CBCGM sisters and brothers. We sincerely offer our prayers and condolences to the bereaved families.