

M.I.C. REPORT 2019

Where have we been over this last year, and where are we going as we prepare for next year? More importantly, how has our Lord been with us through this past year and how is he preparing us to walk together with him as we go on from here?

I started by listing things that stood out for me over this past year and the signs of the Lord's hand and his grace at work amongst us. I quickly realized two things: firstly, I don't have time in this report to expand on and explain them all in anything but the most sweeping way, and, secondly, that as many items as I have on my list, I will almost certainly have missed plenty of others and I probably need to apologise for those omissions right off the bat. When we stop and give attention, it is amazing how many initiatives and activities have filled our year over and above the regular ongoing expressions of our life as a worshipping, loving and serving community.

I could start anywhere. Let's begin with weekends away. Not only has our Emerge Church Weekend continued to build community and enrich us as a congregation, but there have been significant men's and women's weekends and retreat weekends that have also been rich wells of blessing and transformation.

Beyond the weekends, the Lord's hand is evident in men's events, the Women's Journey, Beulah and other occasions that have brought women together. There has been another wonderful Holiday Club, and great things happening in Ambies, Children's Church and Young Adults with the Secret Kitchens and the multiplication of connect groups.

Mums Connect has celebrated ten years since Jill Matthews heard the Lord calling her to establish this crucial ministry to mums with babies. There are so many testimonies of what it has meant to these mums over the years.

This year we again had a wonderful Alpha Course and it is great to see folk coming through Alpha into vibrant personal faith in Jesus, and into full membership of CCK.

Similarly, it has been a real delight to see the Lord working in the lives of so many ladies coming through the WOTS ministry and the role they are increasingly playing in our community. The same is true of the community of those who are refugees from troubled countries to the north of us and who add so much to our church life and the 10.00 a.m. service in particular. It is so special to see ministries emerging from these quarters.

This year has seen the establishment of fresh expressions of worship and community life – the families who meet around the forge on Sunday afternoons and the participative worship and deeper community gatherings which are appropriately called "Deeper". Our monthly gatherings for Concerted Prayer and the recent

establishment of a dedicated space for 24/7 prayer are also fresh things that the Lord is doing.

The move of the offices to the Annex has been a really positive development and has contributed to a happy working environment. It has been a joy to see our newer members Keenan and Elsché growing in ministry influence and to welcome Alison Claassen to our team. Having Lauren Bates as a part-time staff member has enabled us to add a dramatic note to many of our services. It is a privilege to work amidst such a committed and gifted staff group.

The Lenten theme of the Land Between combined with the work of Sue and her team in producing the Lent Booklet of testimonies was a source of enrichment and blessing. My two months of sabbatical leave was a time of great refreshing for me and I look forward to sharing the fruit of that with CCK when, in the not too distant future, the two books I wrote are published.

This year I felt we needed to embrace the book “Letters to the Church” by Francis Chan and grapple with what its implications might mean for us in our context. During my absence on sabbatical, Bushy and Corina Ash carried the conversation forward using a tool called the Praxis Cycle to help us evaluate our life as the CCK community and begin to envisage how God is calling us to move forward. I am grateful to them and those who worked with them. As Bushy and Corina relocate to KZN, we will continue to build on and seek to apply the insights which that process has given to us.

This past year also saw the establishment of Service Teams where each of our congregations can have a voice and bring fresh insights and perspectives to enliven and enrich the flavour and focus of our various Sunday services. In many ways, these are still struggling to get going and will need to grow in the coming year.

Of great significance over the past year has been the work of the Task Group in exploring our vision for the Christ Church Centre. We owe gratitude to Geoff Everingham and his team for the work they have done and which we will be focusing on in due course this evening. The freeing of a large building at 16 Summerley Road as a result of the relocation of our offices, opens the way for fresh initiative and bold vision. It really is a call to adventure and the assertion of the centrality of missional engagement. The process certainly doesn't end this evening. The building offers us potentials and opportunities, but it is up to us to grasp them with energy and courage.

The Lord has been building something among us since we gave ourselves to listening to the deeper call of God for us as CCK over two years ago. The Lord continues to ask us to be courageous in pursuit of the unfolding of our vision for the redemptive use of our buildings and land. My hearts' longing is that we will be equal to this call and truly take it to heart.

Linked to this is the way we give shared attention to the conversations stimulated by the “Letters to the Church” book seeking fresh imagination about how we build closer bonds of relationship, greater sharing of mutual ministry and enhanced responsiveness to opportunities for mission and service.

In this regard my intention is to provide discipleship material and a curriculum for use in our small groups, where we begin to practise being the kind of engaged community that more closely reflects what we see in the New Testament.

Plans are already afoot to produce another Lent booklet, like we did this year. In Isaiah 45:3 the prophet proclaims, “I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness— secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.” These words are addressed to Cyrus the Persian king, but they speak of a spiritual discovery that many believers have experienced in their times of darkness. This will be our theme this Lent.

These are all specific matters, but there is a deeper question: what are the values that I believe we are called to embrace as we prepare for the coming year? Over my time here I have felt the Lord urging me to call forth four emphases: that we are saved into authentically loving community; that we are invited to embrace the missional adventure of the Kingdom with courage and joy; that the true presence of the Gospel is full of grace that sets us free from condemnation; and that only as we seek the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit in fervent prayer will we be able to embrace the destiny God has for us as CCK. I remain fully convinced of these priorities.

I reach retirement age in March of 2021, so 2020 is the last full year of my ministry here and I desire to cling fast to these four values and encourage us all to give ourselves to their pursuit. Let’s make it a really good and growthful year so the next MIC finds healthy life and purpose in this church. On that score, the setting in motion of the prayerful search for my successor will be very much on the radar screen in this next year.

All in all, there is so much to be grateful for and encouraged by. I honour you the people of Christ Church, for the many and varied ways you serve God in and beyond the church, the amazing staff and the fine and diligent team of Wardens and Pastorate. In that regard I want to express special thanks to Jeremy Clampett who finishes his term after six years, for walking beside me in the good times and the tough times. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to Sue who is always a tower of strength and wisdom, whose encouragement is invaluable and who gives of herself in ministry in CCK in many often invisible ways. Most of all I am grateful to the faithful goodness of the Lord whom it is my privilege and delight to serve.