

Regional Pastor Report

Activities

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." — Lamentations 3: 22-23

There was no letting up on my activities this year. For part of the year I tried to cover the whole conference with giving direction to search groups. When George O'Reilly's responsibilities phased out, Cliff Brubaker came on in July and covered the western part, which was a great relief. From May through September, I coordinated three pastor peer groups each month. I worked with five search groups looking for pastors. I attended at least 50 meetings, and we are still looking, praying, and talking with potential pastors. I conducted two exit interviews, for Jesse Johnson from Midway, who moved to Memphis, and Dan King, at Beech, who retired. We placed four interim pastors in congregations. I officiated at two ordinations services, for Jared Chase at Sharon and Ryan Nafziger at Tedrow. Sean Swanson was installed as the new pastor at First Mennonite Canton. Walt Morton, a transitional pastor, is currently working with two congregations as a facilitator. I helped coordinate an Everence pastor appreciation event trip to Cincinnati and helped to plan a resource day for pastors, along with Credentialing Ministry Team, on critical care and suicide. I attended a three-day Constituency Leaders Council Meeting in Hesston and various other meetings, too many to mention. Without a conference minister, I also tried to be a support for the rest of the staff with quarterly meetings.

Affirmations

With a surgery in December and all the support and prayers I received, I felt truly blessed and realized that with God's help and your prayers, I still have things to do. After five and a half years of being a regional pastor, I truly have an appreciation for the diversity and spiritual rigor that I see in Ohio Conference, and I count it a privilege to be a part of what God is doing.

Concerns

A big concern many of you hear me talk about is the lack of pastors being called from within our congregations. Our seminaries are not turning out many new pastors, but maybe it is because congregations are not calling and sending them to seminary. Let's not only look outside the congregation for pastors but start looking within and help develop those gifts.

Actions

I already mentioned the need for creating a culture of call and the other action is for all of us to get on board and become more missional. Not only do we need to be challenged and stirred, but we need to learn how to relate to others unlike ourselves. We need to reach beyond our "tribe" and share the good news with our broken world. Ministries happen inside and missions happen outside our congregations. How well are you keeping a balance? I would like to see us plant new churches and be creative in reaching our unchristian neighbors.

Ralph Reinford, regional pastor