

Pastors Report for 2007

Many and varied things have influenced this year at Sykesville PC.

We seem to be more “Green” than most houses of worship – not like those stuck in cities and towns with gray all around them. We are blessed to be a “little country church” with the beautiful reminder of God’s creations around us. Recently the Parish Nurse Judy, walked a visiting 5-year old down the hill to see the horses, cows, pigs, pens and other sights of God’s creations in nature. The child had her eyes opened in new ways and would like to come back again. Wait until the flower fields and peaches start to bloom! Yes of course as a “green church” with and recycling special care for God’s environment has been a way of life proclaimed here for 16 years – especially with the help of Nurse Judy.

In more dramatic ways we have become a “facilitator church” by helping to continue Christ’s mission on earth as well as helping those who do not have physical facilities. We continue to reach out to more than 100 people in two other congregations as they rent air-conditioned space here four days per week. Only Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday evenings are available and some of those times are now “booked.” So this little church continues to serve in ways only known to God. The “electronic ministry” is so well developed that for security sake we do not publish last names in the bulletin. It has been literally e-mailed across the world.

Also SPC has held free help and information seminars for women in the area. Topic in these have ranged from health/healing to personal debt reduction and taking college courses at home via computer to better your life, income and career opportunities.

SPC has continued the local tradition among churches of the other area denominations in providing Soup Suppers on Monday evenings during Lent. We encouraged a renting congregation, the Word of Life Christian Center to do the same in their facility. In 2007 one of the renting congregations here, The Word of Life Christian Center began providing one of Lent these weekly Soup Suppers. In so

doing, they are helping to carry forth this long standing local church tradition. When they complete their new building, located down the road, the Center will be tied into the work of ministry in an effective local way.

Bob Wilson, whom was a long time friend and member of the church, passed away. We are sorry about his passing; however we are happy that the family had a large memorial service here for him. We are thankful for that because it brought many folks back inside to experience worship (and the new sanctuary painting).

Ed Gilbert provided a large shed to the church for storage of the additional equipment needed to maintain the Church. We thank him for helping throughout the last year with small maintenance projects.

We tried to provide special worship to the many permanent Mexican farm workers by recruiting a Spanish-preaching pastor. The session concurred with excitement but then we learned that almost all of the workers are devoted Roman Catholics.

Sykesville Presbyterian congregation does provide a monthly tithe to the missionary family, the McKinnons in Brazil. This year Mathew, Simone and the six boys provided a worship service here, while in the USA on furlough. Prayers are offered every week for two other missionaries that stopped here on their journey. Each week Norma provides us with a new name of one Presbyterian missionary whom we address in worship.

Continually I thank God for others who make it possible for Sykesville Presbyterian Church to remain open to serve God in a variety of ways. For Stated Clerk Gary with effective leadership, for Christine keeping us on track with finances, for Norma who mails out bulletins each week with the personal notes she adds with love, for Jim always ready to help and respond in maintenance, for Arthur with the hand-baked communion bread each month. We are thankful for others who can no longer attend worship service as they serve as prayer warriors and help sustain us.

The outlook for the near future in Sykesville Presbyterian Church is exciting for me. Why? Folks in the church have now recently come forward to get involved in new ways with the life and mission here. There is a need for more volunteers to make things work and grow:

- - Sunday School was renewed again by Vicki providing quality professional teaching downstairs after children's time in worship in the church. The children look forward to her and learning as they grow in knowledge and Christ. Also stepping forward for leadership is Warren George who again volunteered to serve on the church session board. The George has provided continuous support for many years.

- - A brand new modern web site that, member-to-be, Sharon has offered to develop and maintain on behalf of the church. The web site will contain many types of information, such as the weekly bulletin, sermon notes, current photos, Sunday School materials - so we can better serve the diverse community and attract additional folks in need of ministry. The Sykesville Presbyterian site can be linked to many other sites in order to help users here better grow in spirit and truth.

- - Parish Nurse Judy continues to visit and pray with folks in need here. That is very well received, as is her pediatric home care. She also represents Sykesville Presbyterian Church in the Mall Ministry at Burlington Center with "Knitting with Judy" on Thursday mornings each week. Judy also leads singing at Sykesville Presbyterian Church in worship as well as in local hospitals, nursing homes, rehab facility, and the Federal Prison at Ft. Dix. Judy and I respond to police stations in seven districts as members of the Northern Burlington Domestic Violence Response Team in which we often both have an opportunity to work and witness.

- - Elder Niki, who this year started compiling, editing, printing and producing the bulletin each week. Currently things look much better and this also saves the pastor a lot of fumbling around on the keys.

- - Window replacements – new and insulated for the six down stairs windows are possible as on-time gifts from families concerned with the and dedicated to the growth and future of Sykesville Presbyterian Church.

- - Painting and finishing of the outside are long over. This week we have a contractor's bid of less than \$25,000 to refinish the outside and complete the painting. We will need special contributions to fulfill this obligation but I believe that God's will is possible for us all to maintain His church on the Hill. We look to donations on these last two as commitments to Gods continuing work here. Thus thanking the VFW for most recently helping with the costs of removing an underground fuel tank.

As your pastor I am always open to ways of serving as God calls in prison ministry, working with the chaplains on FCI Fort Dix, McGuire Air Force Base and Fort Dix main chapel. Volunteering as an emergency response chaplain in both Deborah and Memorial hospitals as well as with grief support for the county keeps me near where God is working dramatically. College teaching on the bases and on-line provides outreach – often with students remaining for ministry in some manner. Some remain on our e-mail list and request prayers for years. Providing local funeral services almost once per week, especially at the veteran's cemetery in the township also has been a way of sharing God's love and support representing Sykesville Presbyterian Church. Leading in the county's memorial service to fire fighters and serving as chaplain in the local department and emergency crisis response are ways God calls for special ministry. This county depends upon me to represent the needs of clergy to the Planning Board of the Health Department.

One major event this year was for me to leave the hourly work at the Plumsted Presbyterian Church on July 29, 2007. I terminated my work there because I felt that after 2.3 years of part-time pastoring – nothing was changing nor growing in attitudes nor flexibility in the leadership. For example there were no children attending that worship service. Also the presbytery committee on ministry was concerned about my health being split between two churches, colleges and careers. We can rejoice in that

now our sister church has other people getting supporting their student pastor.

What I did not realize was as I literally ran out of here after Sykesville worship every Sunday to get to New Egypt on time and how much I was leaving undone in Sykesville. For this I am truly sorry.

Please forgive me for that but now You are needed to Bring Ways and Opportunities here.

God will use You as he uses each of us to lead Sykesville Presbyterian Church by being more flexible than others. We do respond to local needs and issues more quickly and meet special needs in The Kingdom.

Now it is your turn – yes to be moved to bring these needs to Sykesville Presbyterian Church to be fulfilled in the name of Jesus Christ – our Lord and Savior.

Sincerely and Humbly at Your Service and Thanking You Lord I Am - Your Pastor Bill

1 Peter 5 :6