Thank you for the honor and privilege of being your Pastor. Thank you for being a generous congregation with your time, talents, and treasures. Thank you for electing an effective, amiable, and efficient Board and to those Board Members themselves. Thank you to Rev. Bodhi and Rev. Marie for your work, your support, and your input. It is a joy to work with all of you.

This congregation is stable and full of vitality. We have many programs and activities for a church of our size. We have 6 months operating expenses set aside plus some reserved funds for unplanned needs in addition to meeting our current budget. We are slowly growing in worship attendance, programs, outreach, and community visibility. We have grown in the number of volunteers involved, which makes everything possible. It has been a busy productive year for all of us.

Preaching

From the beginning of the year through the end of October, I have preached 28 Sundays out of a possible 43. By the end of the year, I will have preached 34 out of 52 weeks plus the non-Sunday services of Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Christmas Eve. That's 66% of the time. For some of our guest preachers I was present to lead worship. Whether present or not, I prepared the orders of worship and PowerPoints for all the worship services.

Intentionally, we invited five trans-identified guest clergy this year. Three of our guest preachers are people of color. Coming up, we will hear from Rev. Dr. Jerry Maynard, aka The People's Priest, who is a Two-Spirit Indigenous person. We need to hear diverse voices! Our guest preachers included:

- Rev. Dr. Lawrence Richardson
- Rev. Elder Carmarion Anderson
- Rev. Caedmon Grace
- Rev. Jakob Hero-Shaw
- Trent Clifford, author
- Nico Lang, author
- Rev. Elder Hector Gutierrez (Nov. 1st)

Further, we were blessed to hear from our skilled staff clergy, Rev. Bodhi and Rev. Marie!

Worship

Since our spring Congregational Meeting, we have guided our worship through these series including focused PowerPoint backgrounds, marketing, social media, and theme songs.

- Early Church in Eastertide
- F>O: Faith Greater Than Opposition (Pride series)

- Wild Grace (summer series)
- God is My Rock (2 weeks in September and there will be 2 weeks in November)
- Stand alone or bridge services for IDAHOBIT, July 4th, Labor Day, and All Saints

Our average worship attendance in 2025 was 60. At the end of September 2026, our average attendance to date is 68. Clearly there have been some Sundays with a worship attendance in the 70-75 range. Remember an average includes those weeks we were iced in and those traditionally low attendance times. Worship attendance includes those who attend onsite and online. For those online, we only count those we can identify not views. Identification includes those who registered using the Connect link or made comments or were "seen" (name came up on Facebook or YouTube as live viewing online).

The number of people we have seen in worship is much larger than our average would indicate. Since January 1, we have seen, onsite or online, 232 unique individuals! 107 of those people have attended three times or more. For technical reasons, this number does not include the attendance of those on YouTube! Realize that we reach and serve a great deal more people than you "see" on a given Sunday.

Pastoral Care

This has been a very busy season for pastoral care. We have had congregants undergoing life-changing situations. Thanks to a team of dedicated volunteers and Rev. Bodhi, we have been able to provide support, practical care, and visitation. People have been visited in the hospital, prayed with and for by the pastors and our Prayer Team. Furniture has been moved and doors removed to help mobility and accessibility. Members have been assisted legally and financially to protect themselves through updating wills and other documents. A member has been assisted to make the move to long-term care. Rev. Bodhi has been invaluable as have our generous volunteers. Our volunteers have even done laundry!

Our Prayer Team has received your prayer requests every week. I know that they pray actively for all of you and for the situations named. Thank you to those on the Prayer Team. Thank you to Rev. Bodhi, who shares the prayer requests weekly.

At our last Congregational Meeting, we thanked CB Morrison who passed the administration of our Food Pantry to Mercie Chick. Mercie looks after maintaining the statistics and ordering the food, while Cathy Hunley manages the food supplies and deliveries. Thanks to Cathy for all her generosity and time in getting food to those in need.

We have provided benevolence for people needing assistance with rent/mortgage, food, gas, utilities, and/or medical expenses. We have also continued to pay the tuition fees for a young person in Rwanda to attend school. Your generosity has allowed us to be generous with others. Between the Medical Expense Fund and Benevolence Fund, we have given out

$7,434 so far in 2026! That is amazing and life-changing for so many. THANK YOU. As a note, our Medical Expense Support Fund is now empty although we do still have funds in Benevolence.

Education

We have continued with two long running small groups. One meets on Zoom on Tuesdays at noon and one meets onsite on Wednesdays at noon. We have completed the following studies/books: The Way, Esther, Voices of Resistance, The Bible With and Without Jesus (A Christian and Jewish perspective), Abundant Living, Spiritual Gifts. Wednesday Lunch 'n Learn is currently studying The Authentic Letters of Paul. We have already completed the Introduction into Paul, 1 Thessalonians, and Galations. We are now in the midst of 1st Corinthians. Tuesday Touchstone has just begun the James Cone book, "The Cross and the Lynching Tree." Rev. Bodhi has been an immeasurable help with both of these groups! Rev. Bodhi led the Spiritual Gifts study and has covered sessions with both groups when I was unavailable.

In addition to the above, I have led 2 Membership Classes since our last congregational meeting.

Thank you to those who have taught our young people and those who have assisted. The numbers of young people goes up and down yet there remains the need and the curiosity of these young people to learn about spiritual things, Christianity, and our church. Thank you for loving our young people and making them feel welcome, even when they get a bit noisy.

Partnerships

We know that together we can accomplish more than we can alone. For that reason, we value our partnerships. I continue to serve on the APATT (A Place at the Table) Board, FACT (Faith Communities Today) Steering Committee and Research Team, and to assist our denomination as requested. In this period, I have hosted webinars with two Elders, provided feedback on projects to two staff members, and assisted two denominational projects. I also participated in our special General Conference and in the preparatory Discussion Circles. Rev. Bodhi now serves as the Vice-President of Pride Interfaith Knox (PIK). I have attended some of their meetings as well as those of the new Multi-Faith Leaders Network on Immigration. I am grateful to Kathy and Jill for more regularly representing us! This fall, I attended the training for Justice Knox and facilitated our two "house" gatherings, as well as met with their executive director. We will officially join Justice Knox in November.

Additionally, we partner with our sister Church, Hope and Unity MCC, Johannesburg, South Africa. The Pastors and I meet most months. We were blessed to have a group of clergy

candidates from various African countries worship with us for a few weeks and for two to participate in worship one week.

Social Justice

Our social justice core value is woven through all that we do and all in which we participate. In addition to the things mentioned already, Rev. Bodhi and I also participated in the Multi-Faith Network Leaders on Immigration press conference at the County Jail and the public statement that was printed in the newspaper and shared extensively online. We are active in the planning of the upcoming Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) Candlelight Vigil. In our presence and participation with our partners, at pride events, in our invitation to preach, and in our worship, we express and demonstrate our commitments to social justice.

Events

We introduced "Bread & Belonging", a dinner church model of sharing in community and learning. Our first event featured the experiences of trans clergy Rev. Elder Carmarian Anderson and Bishop Josie Russell. The second featured a book talk on trans youth by author Nico Lang. We had good turnouts for both events.

Our Yard Sale was held in May with 50% of proceeds going to our Food Pantry and 50% to the church operating fund.

MCC Knoxville was present and visible at three Pride events this year. Rev. Bodhi organized a great crew of volunteers who set up our booth and staffed it at SoKo Pride, WeKnoNow Pride, and I had another crew in Dandridge for Jefferson County Pride. We planned on attending two more Pride events but cancelled due to rain and volunteer changes. Still, this multiplied the previous year's participation. Thanks also to those who donated giveaways.

Outreach

Outreach has included our presence at Pride events and our partnerships. It includes the handing out of brochures and business cards and now the wearing of our T-shirts and polos! We have increased our social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok although it has been less consistent than desired due to my time constraints. Recently, business cards and fliers for the Bobby Jo Valentine concert were placed at the new Stone's Throw Café (LGBTQ owned and focused). We are planning a Friendsgiving event in partnership with a number of organizations, thanks to Donna Braquey!

We hope that the promotion of our 50th Anniversary events will assist our outreach efforts in 2027, especially the Flamy Grant concert we are sponsoring.

Our digital ministry allows us to include those who live beyond the Knoxville area and those who cannot attend for various reasons. Rev. Marie has been serving as our Digital Pastor helping create the Zoom community experience before and after worship as well as dialoguing with those on Zoom, Facebook and YouTube throughout the worship service. When Rev. Marie is out, Rev. Bodhi takes on this role, which we appreciate. We want to build community with our online attenders. Our streaming worship is one of our digital outreach tools.

The best outreach happens when each of you invites those you know to attend worship or to one of our events. Each new person who joins us brings with them their circle of contacts for potential outreach. Sharing our faith and love, one person at a time, is the best way to grow the church. It matters greatly that we are consistent with our values, our words, our actions, and our commitments.

Other

During this time, we formed the 50th Anniversary Committee to plan our celebrations. The very first service of MCC Knoxville was held February 20th, 1977! We are planning 5 months of celebration events. Donna Braquey, Donna Kendrick, Rick Sawyer, Dwane Dishner, Kathy King, and Jill Kapiloff have been meeting regularly with me to plan these events. These are the folk who initiated the T-shirts to do outreach and raise some funds designated for our anniversary expenses. The Word has announced the events we are planning: an old-fashioned hymn sing, an extra-special Easter celebration, a Homecoming Sunday and luncheon, a Flamy Grant concert, and a community Pride Picnic! Incidentally, since MCC hosted the first Pride Picnic, this will be the 50th anniversary of Pride in Knoxville!

Since the last congregational report, I have also conducted a Marriage Prep class, attended The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries conference, and attended Governor Lee's 2026 Faith and Community Summit. I continue to participate, as often as possible, in the weekly Queer Preaching Group of MCC affiliated clergy.

Volunteers

The strength of our church is in our members and attenders. So many of you volunteer. Thank you! We could not conduct the ministries of the church without you. The role of the clergy is to equip the saints for the work of love (based on Ephesians 4:12). It is dangerous to try to list all of our volunteers at the risk of leaving someone out. Let me instead list the areas of ministry served by volunteers. THANK YOU to all our volunteers!

- Worship – liturgists, lectors, prayers, music, AV tech, worship arts/decor
- Events – Pride, concerts, potlucks, game nights, hosting other groups like PIK
- Pastoral Care – prayer, visitation, cleaning, moving, physical labor

- Board Members – financial, administrative, corporate & legal.

I will risk saying thanks to a few long-term volunteers who serve quietly on a weekly basis. These folk have been serving in their capacity for many years. Thank you to Kathy Hyland who prepares the weekly newsletter! Thank you to Steve Dashper who not only leads our A/V team but also does all the updates to our website! Thank you to Cathy Hunley who delivers the bulk of groceries from our Food Pantry! Thank you to Robert White who has shared his skills and time to keep our financial records current, accurate, and clean.

THANK YOU ALL for all that you do for one another and those beyond our church community. Thank you for being LOVE in action. Thank you for BEING CHURCH!

In Gratitude,

Rev. Colleen Darraugh
Lead Pastor