

Special Anniversary Edition



Logo by Lucetta Kanetzke

Please Write to Us about MCC's 40th!

The Ad Hoc Anniversary Group needs your input about MCC's 40th anniversary! There's no way we can contact all of the MCC veterans for individual interviews, and we **do** want to hear from you, whether you're a current or former member. Choose any or all of these questions and email up to a page of comments to Emily Wixson,

ewixson@library.wisc.edu, or Mary Bowman, mvbowman@tds.net, by March 1st.

What are the most important things MCC has given you? Describe.

Describe some of the most satisfying (or improbable) accomplishments you've been involved in at MCC.

What do you see as the greatest strengths and/or challenges for MCC as it moves ahead?

Is there anything else you'd like to say about our anniversary? THANKS!

Howard Kanetzke is the MCC Historian and also a Charter Member.

Finding Our Way with Shared Education

From Howard Kanetzke (MCC's lead archivist):

Education was a priority for the men and women who guided the founding of the MCC. Exploring ways to reshape traditional Christian experiences, including education, was discussed by the Steering Committee that shaped the MCC. This set of needs or guidelines for youth education is found in the November 20, 1968, minutes:

Need for youth to have the opportunity for greater self-expression in such areas as photography, drama; the opportunity to demonstrate original talent;

Need for greater exposure to eye-opening experiences;

Need for additional social and recreational facilities – for informal social contact;

Need for adults to listen and counsel (informally);

Need for trained personnel for structured counseling, and the place for this to happen;

Need for informational center – for summer employment and unusual experiences;

Need for informational outlet to inform local youth of worthwhile national movements, etc.;

Need for a ministry to youth who have cut loose from home.

Certainly this was a bit in advance of what denominations were offering at the time in educational packages for churches to use. The Board decided to assign education at the MCC to a sub-committee of the Program Committee. The Program Committee had been given the task of creating and overseeing all of the projects and programs shared by the congregations.

Following the sale of the Chapel Hill property on Sheboygan Avenue and the move to Covenant Presbyterian Church, the three congregations developed and shared a joint education program. This time at Covenant provided input from a third congregation, and proved a good model for shared education. This experience also proved that cooperation produced good results.

Following the move to our present location, the sub-committee produced a teacher covenant, and Sunday school classes were held in the lower level, where the Middleton Pre-School is housed today. Classes were held between the two worship services. (A copy of the teacher covenant and a list of teachers and students in classes through grade 6 is posted on a bulletin board in the Shalom area. Check these sheets to recall that first year!) We started with a Lutheran curriculum for our first season, then used some creative and progressive materials developed by several Roman Catholic nuns.

Some dissatisfaction with curriculum materials remained. A group of adults, led by Dan Schmiechen, Ray Lester and Obid Hofland set about creating intergenerational materials to involve whole families in the education program. The theme of the first 8-week session was SHALOM. It was followed by an Advent/Christmas series. A highlight of these December sessions was a nearly daylong Advent Workshop that featured “stations” throughout the building for families to make candles, candle holders, cookies, marzipan candy, ornaments, and other holiday items. Several more 4- to 6-week sessions were created for the spring semester, ending with JOYONA (joy to you).

These intergenerational programs required time and effort. They placed huge responsibilities on the developers and teachers to create materials and lessons. [Editor’s note: They also couldn’t

be reused and recycled, because the programs were directed to only one group of “students:” the families of the MCC. The only students who hadn’t heard the entire course were those who had joined after the original curriculum was offered. For those who recall the old Sunday school stations around the big education common room – now Middleton Preschool – remember that “open classrooms” were another aspect of the intergenerational emphasis in the 70’s.]

After that one year of frantic creativity, the next summer found us without sufficient energy to gear up for another year, so we used the Roman Catholic materials once more. By the end of that year, our denominations had each made great strides in developing Sunday school curriculum, so we alternated between Lutheran and UCC materials for several years, choosing those that seemed best for our needs.

Adults who brought children to Sunday education wanted additional educational programs (for themselves). That year of intergenerational education planning and creativity had given many of our adults experience in planning and developing educational themes. Some of these people turned their attention to providing leadership for adult programming in individual workshops and extended sessions.

Other Thoughts - Those of us interviewing long-time members find that “innovative education” was a major factor in attracting them to the MCC, forming a crucial part of what made the MCC “kid-friendly,” in Jean Pfeifer’s words. One of the MCC’s core values was education for all generations.

“I was excited about us developing our education program,” Chuck Pfeifer recalls. “We were equipping people for real engagement in the world....The three pillars of any church are **worship, mission, and education**—equipping the saints. You can have a nice belief system [for yourself], but it takes training to bring that system into the world [and share it with others].”

In interviews and in group discussions in adult education, members recalled that we put on some outstanding workshops, bringing in

prominent (or soon-to-be prominent) theologians and church figures. In a series of periodic lectures called Interflow, we brought in such people as Walter Brueggeman, Dick Broholm, Rosemary Reuther, Brian Wren, and Herb Brokering. Celebrating our 20th anniversary in 1988, we had a series of visiting presiders and lecturers over six weeks, including among others Dr. Loren Halvorson, from Luther-Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul; Rev. Eleanor Meyers, then dean of St. Paul Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.; and Rev. William Hulteen, Jr., of the UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership.

**From Kathy Johnson,
a charter member of MCC:**

My earliest memory of our Adult Education was a meeting in the downstairs of the parsonage on Sheboygan Avenue, to talk about Christian ethics. It was led by Stan Graven, who was in charge of the Neonatal Department at St. Mary's Hospital. I remember our discussions over several weeks and some of the hard choices we talked about. One that sticks in my mind is the cost of keeping several almost-brain-dead babies alive, versus the cost of sending one minority student to college. We discussed many different challenges such as these.

I was fresh out of college, and the discussions opened up many true-life challenges for me, beyond some of the ones I had heard from adjoining tables while in school. One that I liked to shake my head over was whether a not a chair someone was sitting on existed! I really couldn't stand those kinds of discussions. But Advent and the MCC opened so many new challenges to thinking and living out your faith, and have continued to do so over the past 40 years.

Developing our own curriculum across all generations was very intense and time consuming, but also a way for the two congregations to move beyond what was offered by each synod or conference. Some of our sessions or workshops included a Catholic group from Queen of Peace called the John the 23rd community. They had been meeting in their church basement, and for a while they considered joining the MCC. This was truly a creative time at the MCC.

In time we settled back into age group classes, with curriculum materials from the [Catholic] Church, as well as some interfaith materials that depended on the scripture reading for each Sunday. We had a much smaller group of members, both children and adults, to draw on to teach and attend our classes. One person, called the Sunday School Superintendent, usually was in charge of finding the teachers. We tried for two teachers per class, with some willing to substitute if needed. I remember one August when I was Superintendent and still needed a few teachers. I was looking through the directory for possible teachers. Thinking it might be worth a try, I called a mother of two who hadn't taught before. When I asked her if she could consider teaching, she said she was having a meeting at her house in February (six months away!) and therefore couldn't teach that year. Fortunately for MCC education, that reaction wasn't common.

Both the confirmation programs and youth ministry have been strong in the MCC. I think part of keeping youth involved in the church is valuing them for who they are, and having opportunities for friendships between adults and youth from different families. Certainly the canoe trips have been bonding experiences for both adults and kids in this community. Topics in adult education have been wide-ranging, providing adults with opportunities to connect with members of both congregations.

Our present number of children and young families in both congregations suggests we are doing a good job of being a place of welcome, not only to long-time members, but also to new families who come to us as strangers, but remain as friends. The various groups that meet outside of Sunday morning [such as prayer groups, breakfast groups, community group] are also sources of support, learning, and fellowship. From "Monday school" which met in the mid-70's to our new group for families with children under 3, even preschoolers have found a place to learn together. Songs we sing about weaving us together and gathering us in are more than words at the MCC. They are what we are all about, and the longer I am a member of this community, the more I believe them.

