

FAREWELL FROM PASTOR CARPENTER



When Dawn, Jordan, Ethan, and I came to Covington seven years ago, we were not prepared for the kindness with which the church overwhelmed us. We immediately felt accepted, and we were very grateful for the way in which the church welcomed us. Likewise, we could not have been prepared for all that the church wanted to accomplish. It has been my privilege to witness the Spirit working among you all. The lay leadership of this church and the spirit of volunteerism is simply amazing. It is striking what you have done for the kingdom in just seven years. Below are just a few of the things you have accomplished:

You have:

- created MorningSong on the Square as an alternative worship service which continues to reach into the community and will soon move to our Christian Life Center;
- adapted a needs assessment identifying the need for various ministries in the community;
- adapted a long term, three phase facility expansion plan;
- raised money for and almost completed the first phase of a Christian Life Center;
- established a Bread of Life Feeding Ministry, meeting the needs of thousands;
- created a coat closet;
- created a prayer ministry on Sunday mornings for the worship services and community;
- started worship services on Saturday with the community at Bread of Life;
- partnered with the city to provide utility assistance with Round-Up;
- enlivened the Good Samaritan Fund of the church, which helps the poor and the dispossessed of our community; (Always remember Proverbs 19:17: "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.");
- partnered with a congregation in Ukraine and provided funds to allow for the construction of a building;
- sent work teams to Nicaragua;
- supported Habitat for Humanity;
- offered support to Grace Place;
- supported Reelfoot Rural Ministries;
- partnered with the schools in tutoring ministries;
- created a new Ministry team for Older Adult Care;
- created a rotational model of Sunday School and creative space for the children's ministry;
- opened doors to new relationships with the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches with the Advent Service and the Sunrise Service;
- purchased adjacent property for future use;
- increased the size of the ministry staff;
- increased the annual budget by 21%;
- repaired and cushioned the pews in the sanctuary;
- tiled the floors of the educational building hallways;

- completed a major renovation of the Steeple of the church.

In addition, you have continued the ministries of Holy Week Services with area churches; the Men's prayer breakfast; imaginative Vacation Bible Schools; and you have faithfully maintained healthy attendance for Sunday worship.

All the while, the church has had a net increase of 77 members and has continued to pay 100% of its Apportioned Funds. And this, by no means, is an exhaustive list; it is just a snapshot of where the church has been in the last seven years. It has been my joy to be your pastor during this period; to watch it all happen and to preach and teach in such a lively congregation.

I look forward to all you will accomplish under Wade's leadership. As the area around Covington continues to grow in population, needs of the community will increase. They will just as quickly be met by this church as you continue in your desire to serve Christ. Lives will be won to Christ. Families will be aided. The poor will receive compassion. Children will be taught the gospel. And God will continue to bless your efforts as you remain devoted to his calling. The new building and future construction will be accomplished. Through it all, I trust you will continue to heed his voice, being faithful in your daily walk; sharing Christ in your home, your work, your school, your friendships, and with those you meet.

When the Cox family arrives, I know they will be greeted with the same overwhelming kindness that welcomed my family. God is providing a very talented, caring, and skilled pastor for this church in Wade. I am proud to include him among my friends. I know his heart is with Christ and his talents are well-suited for leading this faithful church in the years to come. I wish for him the very best.

My heart will always have a special place for all of you. I will remember the joy of births, baptisms, confirmations, weddings, communions, Christmas Eves and Easters. With bittersweet memories I will recall many persons who have gone to be with the Lord who cared for this church and left their impact on us.

I also want to thank the church staff that enables so many ministries to happen. It has been humbling to work with so many talented people and to see God's hand in their ministry. I believe Covington First UMC has one of the finest church staffs in the Conference and I pray the church will continue to appreciate their efforts and recognize what talent God has brought to Covington in their efforts. I will miss working with them all.

It has been my honor and privilege to be your pastor. Be in prayer for me in my new appointment as the Superintendent of the Asbury District. I will be in continued prayer for Covington. I look forward to coming back from time to time and celebrate all God has planned for you in the years ahead. For I truly believe greater days lie ahead for you!

On behalf of Dawn, Jordan, and Ethan, thank you for this time we have had with you. May God bless and keep you in his wonderful care.