



A Letter From Jim

McEachern Memorial United Methodist Church • 4075 Macland Road • Powder Springs, GA 30127 • (770) 943-3008

January 16, 2008

Dear Members and Friends of McEachern,

Our congregation is faced with a challenge and an opportunity.

Several years ago, we stepped out in faith in a number of areas. We were led to build the Christian Life Center and purchase the adjacent land as a part of the plans to accommodate the projected growth in our ministry. Completed in August of 2003, the CLC has enabled us to provide much needed space for our growing church family and also provide a myriad of ministries that we had not been able to consider in the past. With that change in facility and programming, over time, we added full-time staff in the areas of Missions and Evangelism. Support staff was needed to enable us to fulfill our mission of making disciples and operating the expanded campus. Most of the support staff were (and still are) working on a part time basis. There were also additional utility, maintenance, janitorial and other costs associated with the CLC. We realized that we probably would not have the funds available to cover all of the added operational expenses, but because of faithful stewardship in the past we were blessed with a large reserve to make up for any minor shortfall until our growth and giving caught up with our added CLC, property and ministry expenditures.

Over the past several years, we have been supplementing our annual budgets with the faithfulness of the past through using prior year's reserves, and have nearly exhausted them. Anticipating this, our finance committee recently changed our banking relationship and refinanced our debt yielding a very favorable fixed interest rate. This move will save us approximately \$228,000 per year which would normally be more than enough to eliminate the shortfall between the established budget and our expenses if giving remained at the same level. Unfortunately, we now find ourselves in difficult economic times due to the housing and credit crisis, as well as a slowing economy. We have seen a marked decrease in giving to our general operational budget over the past several months. Even with the restructuring of our loan, our finance committee is currently anticipating a shortfall in calendar year 2008. So, as we plan for this year and because we are called to be the best stewards we can be of God's money and property, we are challenged as a church family.

Last week I met with some of our key church leadership, and we have mapped out a plan to respond to our budget challenge:

- By using our remaining reserves and also because of recent "extra mile giving" from some of you, we will be able to balance the income and expenditures of our congregation for the next several months. Thus, we have adequate time to implement our other plans to address the projected shortfall.
- Every staff member is reviewing their individual operational budget(s) in an effort to reduce expenses.
- We are developing a special "Catch Up Sunday" to allow the congregation an opportunity to give the tithes and offerings which they have pledged.
- I will be working closely with our Finance Committee to develop a reasonable and balanced budget for 2008/2009.
- We are expecting a strong Stewardship Campaign result for fiscal year 2008-2009 which will enable us to effectively plan ahead.
- We are seeking to preserve our staff positions and current ministries, but realize that some duties and programs may need to be reassigned if our financial picture does not improve in coming months.

Each person in the congregation has a vote in this matter. Your prayers, service and generous giving in the past have all contributed to what McEachern is today. Your continued faithfulness will enable us to go into the future even stronger than we are today. I have only been here a few months, but I have learned you are a congregation that wants nothing more than the truth and you have always risen to challenges with an eye on opportunity. So, the truth is, we are a strong church in virtually every area of our ministry. And right now, it looks like we need both to reduce expenses and also give back a little more of what God has entrusted to us so that we can meet our financial obligations. You will hear more about the items enumerated above, but I encourage you to pray about how you will respond to the needs of your church and then to give sacrificially and joyfully. God will indeed continue to bless us so that we can also be a blessing to others.

Proud to be your pastor,

Jim