



**Discover Joy Church**  
**Mastersonville, PA**  
[www.discoverjoychurch.org](http://www.discoverjoychurch.org)

Pastoral update 5/3/09

We have now completed four months of service with 17 Sunday worship services and 9 midweek services. We enjoy our ministry and getting to know the church and we look forward to continuing serving the Lord together.

- Thank you for your faithful support of the work of the Lord here at Discover Joy in your attendance, service and finances. Offering and attendance info is posted in the bulletin (the first couple of Sundays when I get the report in and a financial summary report is available each month.)
- Today following the service I will be glad to speak to any who may want any elaboration on the church progress during this time of transition.
- We now have job descriptions for most ministry positions. These will be reviewed by the vision board and then distributed.
- We continue working on the rotations. Those of you who signed up to help in various ways are being contacted over time. Thank you for your patience as you wait to be contacted and those "troopers" who hang in there even as we work through this process.
- We encourage you to pray for our outreach type events scheduled and to do your part in helping them be effective. The Women and Girls Social on Saturday evening May 16 is a great way to connect with family and friends and introduce our church to them. Even if they are in another church this will be an edifying evening.
- The Transport for Christ ministry and Mobile Chapel will be here on Sunday May 17 for a special day to appreciate truck drivers. We will have an article in the Merchandiser, posters up throughout the area and are distributing personal invitation cards. We hope to use this as an outreach. Who might you invite?
- We continue to have some shakings and departures related to the transition but I feel there is a core group that wants to move forward and is becoming more and more unified.
- The Vision board meets monthly. Please pray for this leadership team.
- Sunday services include blended worship with Brooksyne leading a praise team, prayer, offering, Scripture reading and message. There seems to be a good spirit with people entering into the service and good fellowship before and after the service.
- We have an active website <http://www.discoverjoychurch.org/> This has info about the church, photos and links to material with spiritual resources. We also post a .pdf link on the website to the bulletin each week.

## Identifying our Identity

Over the last several months I have been observing the church and realize of course that our history, both recent and past, has a bearing on who we are now. One of the issues that I want to consider is our church's identity. There can be confusion regarding identity and this can lead to disunity.

In a sense each pastor brings on a new identity to the church with his focus and outlook as a leader. This is inevitable. The variety of possible pastoral styles and ministry outlooks has sure increased during my lifetime.

In making these observations I certainly am not being critical of recent pastors but do feel identifying their apparent focus and how mine may very well differ is important, although it may not necessarily please everyone. My insight is based on observation and discussions, not speaking to these men. I had never met the pastor at the time the church closed several years ago. I met Jim briefly and heard him preach at Mount Pleasant once and here once.

Pastors are under great pressure to follow trendsetters who have successful churches. We may be frustrated at the size of our church and feeling a need to get it jumpstarted. Church growth conferences and materials abound (usually expensive) that tell pastors how to do this and there are scores of Willow Creek, Saddleback and other successful church copycats all over. For some it works, for others it doesn't.

It seems to me based on observation that both recent pastors apparently had a vision to make the church "contemporary". I assume the selling of the pews and pulpit was based on this outlook. Indeed there is a train of thought that in order to be successful the church must be contemporary and there are indeed contemporary churches such as LCBC which draw large crowds.

Of course my vision won't be the same as a starting pastor or even one with an intended long term tenure of service. I essentially work within the framework of our existing church but like all leaders have my own views and outlook.

Pastor Bob of Mount Pleasant BIC refers to churches like Mount Pleasant and I would think here at Mastersonville as "Heritage churches", distinct from new church plants which have no history. Although Mastersonville BIC did close for awhile and reopen as "Discover Joy" in my view it is a heritage church and I feel that's a blessing! I just can't ignore the prayers and contributions of those who faithfully served through the years.

Vision or mission statements are often short statements that churches seek to develop to express their purpose. I like one used in a Christian boy's scouting program we had in my church many years ago: "To reach, teach and keep people for Christ."

### **As your pastor I desire that Discover Joy be a place:**

With well organized services (but not intentionally stiff or formal). **Note:** Early in my ministry I equated informality with spirituality and formality with unspiritual. I learned that this is just not necessarily the case and I realize now that too often our informality lacked dignity and substance.

I am not anti-contemporary but frankly I'm disappointed in a lot of what I see in the contemporary church, an entertainment oriented approach to bring them in and often in my observation a negative attitude toward tradition and expressions of worship such as singing hymns, reading the Scriptures, expository sermons and so forth. Of course there will be contemporary elements as there always has been. But I'm just not in a hurry to jump on the latest fad.

A church where people are welcomed and sense the love of God and of His children.

A church where God's Word is faithfully preached.

A church where blended worship is used, not merely as a concession to various preferences but rather due to truth being expressed in both historic and modern music. I see nothing wrong with using the hymnal

and singing songs the way they were written and that people are accustomed to singing them (versus a new arrangement to make the song "contemporary", which is what many churches are doing with a hymn when they do choose to sing one.)

A church where we strive for spiritual unity but not mandated uniformity.

Understanding our part-time role:

Brooksyne and I work together and are indeed grateful for the compensation we receive from the church. But we must also keep our other sources of income since this role is part-time and non-specified as to duration.

In some areas our level of service is no different than a full-time role.

- Preparing services and sermons,
- Providing basic pastoral care.

Differences in a part-time role.

- Maintaining a regular scheduled church office presence.
- Extensive planning for special events like VBS, carnival outreach type events and so forth.
- Being involved in the community and the area ministerium and denominational meetings.
- Intensive and repeat counseling type services and pastoral care

## **Summary**

### **What's Right about Discover Joy?**

- We have a core group who desires to maintain an identity as a local church in the Mastersonville PA area.
- We have a flexible leadership arrangement since I am multi-vocational and share my ministry resources with other
- We have a relatively well maintained building and grounds that are not an issue in my view.
- We have a rich heritage.
- Financially we have a solid income stream with many committed to support of their local church, some reserve (although limits on use have been placed by Bishop) and no outstanding debt.
- I definitely feel a local church in Mastersonville has a place in God's Kingdom. It's a remote area and we are the only church in the village. It has a community church feel in this regard. Other churches are several miles away and the nearest towns are Manheim and Mount Joy.
- However we certainly have more order and structure than the church was accustomed to which seems welcomed by many. The Sunday service order is similar to Mount Pleasant, which is also similar to how I was accustomed to doing church when I pastored elsewhere.

### **Looking ahead**

I see our role as holding together and seeking to get our church to pull together (cooperate). Of course I am also organizing and as mentioned above starting other ministry outlets.

I don't have a specific limit to how long I would be willing to serve but understand the situation will be reexamined in the fall regarding the status of the church. The uncertainty does not really contribute to a sense of stability or confidence among those who may consider coming. I hope in time the Bishop will lift this sense of uncertainty.

Due to the lack of organization the role has been a bit more extensive than I anticipated and since there is no administrative assistance we do much of that as well.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

OK, actually all of these questions haven't actually been asked but they would be good questions and I suspect some have thought of them!

**I am concerned that we lost several people in the last four months. What do you think?** Of course I am saddened to see people leave, but I am not necessarily surprised. My style is very different than Pastor Jim's. If one had started coming and really appreciated his administrative leadership, his ministry style and emphasis they may very well not appreciate mine and seek another church that has a focus similar to his. Regardless of who became pastor this January you would likely have lost some folks in the transition. This is true by the way in all transitions, whether a troubled church or during a normal transition.

**Will we be losing more people?** Realistically we probably will, but perhaps not necessarily due to the transition. This is inevitable in the modern church age when people switch churches much more readily than they did 50 years ago. This is happening in all churches.

**But we're not getting new people!** We have had visitors and some may be potentially interested. However I am actually not surprised as the church heals from the division and stabilizes that new growth is slow. Bluntly I consider the reputation of this church which will take awhile to heal. It closed completely several years back and I understand there were problems at that time. It reopened and had a spurt of growth, but it appears to have struggled for several years before the troubling events of last fall and again a consideration of closing. I am sure this has gotten out in the community and affected our reputation and the likelihood of people choosing to affiliate with us at this time. I also suspect the tentative nature of how long we are going to stay open is a factor and hope this will be lifted soon.

**You mention above that you will not have a specific focus on being a contemporary church. Won't we lose all our young people?**

Indeed many younger people prefer a more contemporary LCBC type approach. However:

- Bluntly I observe this church has been losing many young people before I come even with a purposeful intent to be contemporary. In my view this is true of many heritage churches who try to be contemporary; some can turn the corner in this transition but many others end up pleasing neither the young or the old!
- However not all young people prefer a contemporary approach any more than all older prefer a traditional church. Discover Joy, under our leadership, will have elements of contemporary such as using the Powerpoint and newer choruses. But we will also sing hymns, have Scripture reading and other elements of a more traditional church. Interestingly enough, there are recent statistics showing that more and more families are longing for a more traditional style of worship than in recent years.

### What is a successful church?

We are a small, older heritage church in a remote, rather sparsely populated rural area. Our success must not be measured on the same basis as California mega churches or even some of the super churches here in Lancaster County! We may have forty people, perhaps 75 or even 100 or more. But numbers don't necessarily make us successful and fewer numbers don't mean we're unsuccessful.

Here are some marks of success in my view:

- Faithful to the Gospel and preaching the Word.
- Upholding Biblical-based moral standards.
- Joyfully and cooperatively working together.
- Comprised of devoted followers of Christ
- A spirit of love and unity.
- Committed believers using their gifts for God's glory.
- And there are of course more.

Working together for the Kingdom of God,

Pastor Weber