

Pastor's Perspective: Permeating Akron-Newstead **January 2019**

For quite some time now the image of roots has been slowly expanding in my mind and heart as if it is simultaneously a vision of our past as well as our future. You may have noticed, this developing idea informed the graphics of our interior directional signage updated a couple of years ago. I don't remember exactly when the thought first struck me but early in 2016 I documented in the margin of my NLT Bible this strong impression. I wasn't just having the impression but it felt more like I was receiving it. The note appears next to verses six and seven of Colossians 2.

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

With remarkable persistence roots penetrate over time deep into the earth and out into the surrounding soil bringing nutrients and stability to that which is visible above ground. The system is made up of various sized extensions that each accomplish a significant role as the whole integrates itself with the local environment. Every plant's health and very life is dependent upon where its roots have been established. What a wonder-filled analogy for followers of Jesus both individually and collectively!

Individually, this is a call from the Apostle Paul to press deeper into the character of Christ throughout the remaining years of one's life and it counters the oft too common misconception that making Jesus one's Lord and Savior is a one-time event. Jesus himself used the concept when he said "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me." (Jn 15:4) Our health and growth depends on the

roots that get established in Jesus. There is no other foundation upon which a follower of Jesus must build her/his life and so collectively we should be encouraging one another to continually deepen our roots in Him. Jesus is the source of life!

In a different slant of this analogy, I see that God has planted this particular group of people (CCAM) in the Akron-Newstead area for a specific purpose and I believe it's our calling to spread our roots even deeper into this community. A great number of connections have been established in CCAM's 95-year history as a congregation. Our roots now extend back multiple generations in Western New York. Having gathered in different meeting houses and under various names we've now been geographically located at 11500 Clarence Center Rd for 82 years and operating under the name Clarence Center-Akron Mennonite Church for the last 25.

Though "Clarence Center" remains in our name our focus has more and more radiated toward the village of Akron and town of Newstead. This is CCAM's town! It is where many of us live and work and thus where many of us can apply the Great Commission. It is my goal to see this town positively affected by our intentional presence within these boundaries. While I hope each follower of Jesus will attend to his/her own missional context (where one lives, works and plays) I want to see CCAMers, especially those who live or work here, intentionally involved in several different sectors of this community.; business, school, neighborhood organizations, etc.

As we intentionally connect with people in this way, while allowing our roots to grow deeper in Christ God will use us to make more disciples for His kingdom. His desire is that more and more of his creation become subject to and disciples of, His Son, Jesus: The King of Kings. Discipleship is the topic for the next issue of *The Pastor's Perspective*.