

**Subject:** From the Board of Directors  
**From:** "Open Door MCC" <rev-3-8@opendoormcc.org>  
**Date:** Sun, August 13, 2017 11:26 pm  
**To:** email.listserve.subscribers

**At today's meeting of the Board of Directors, Rev. Miller presented the Board with a letter of separation, which is available below. This came after Rev. Miller entered a period of discernment that began in May of this year.**

**Rev. Miller contacted the MCC Office of Church Life and Health at the end of July, and the Board was in touch today to begin working with Rev. Pressley Sutherland during the transition. Please stay tuned and expect updates about farewell events with our outgoing pastor.**

**For personal support or to discuss the transition, feel free to contact Rev. Miller (607-232-0463), Vice Moderator Curt Judd (301-639-3998), or Board Member Jolene Capozzi (202-368-2866, 301-438-0095).**

Open Door MCC  
Board of Directors  
15817 Barnesville Road, PO Box 127  
Boys, MD 20841

Rev. Miller Hoffman  
533 C Street  
Carlisle, PA 17013



Open Door Board of Directors,

After much reflection and discernment, and with much sadness, I have come to a decision that I must leave the pastorate of Open Door. I believe that this decision is for the best future of both the church and myself. I hope that the fruit of our relationship and collaboration over the past six years will serve us both as we transition and move forward to new growth and new works. I am certain that the relationships and experiences that I have had at Open Door have transformed me and have made me a better pastor and a better leader. I am so grateful to you.

Our work together for several years has been focused on strengthening lay leadership on the Board of Directors and Ministry Leaders, making the congregation feel warm and welcoming to newcomers, and improving our ability to find healthy and respectful ways to respond to the inevitable conflict between us as social beings. I believe that we have made great strides in these areas. Visitors and new congregants and members consistently tell us that our warmth and welcome is a strong reason that they appreciate worshiping with us, and many long-time members have remarked on a changed climate of warmer, kinder, and more respectful interactions in services, church events, and Board meetings.

The membership of the church had remained fairly steady. While there has been attrition as congregants have moved away, died, or left for a better fit and other reasons, new congregants have visited, liked what they experienced, and become regular attenders. Many folks have become less regular in attendance, though (which may mirror a trend within MCC and other churches more broadly), and so our group feels smaller. Those in leadership have found themselves shouldering more of the work to provide the administrative and spiritual leadership and resources of the congregation. It feels critical at this time that the church focus on strategic growth and outreach to let more people know

that we are doing amazing and diverse worship and that we are friendly and inclusive.

While strategic growth and focused outreach are areas that I could find resources and develop strategies for, I believe that Open Door would be best served and benefit most greatly from a pastor who has more highly developed skills in these areas and who has fresh energy and excitement for growing a church body. Additionally, as part of my discernment about my own faith, politics, and profession, I am finding myself clearly drawn away from parish work.

You are precious to me. I have learned so much from you about leadership, about generosity, about working together with passion and commitment through the highs and lows of being in community. You consistently care for one another in times of need, you are able to create and collaborate in projects to great effect, you routinely show me new ways of framing and solving problems. You have shown an insatiable interest in learning more about injustice and how to better support and show up for one another as allies, even when you felt uncertain and uncomfortable.

You have taught me new ways and means of being accountable and humble as a leader. You have gently encouraged me to engage with my heart more and more, rather than to garrison myself safely behind intellect. You have reprimanded me, both playfully and earnestly, for not being more open to a God who is magical and meaningful in ways that are illogical and emotional, in addition to affirming my scholarship and reason. In these ways and more, you have been my mentors and have transformed me and opened my relationship to the divine and to the web of being. Thank you so much.

I pray that this transition is something we can move through with grace and strength, and that we will come through it closer to achieving our dreams and goals, both for ourselves and one another. You are precious to me.

Please accept my resignation from Open Door MCC. My last Sunday service will be September 17, 2017, at which time I will return my keys and give up access to all Open Door codes, accounts, and passwords. On that date I will begin a relational sabbath with the congregation, so that the transition team and the church can begin to build relationship. Before that date, I will supply Open Door with a detailed document that includes information that will be helpful to maintain the administration and ministries of the church, including helping to secure music and preaching rotations for two or more months after my departure. Until that date, I am available for any desired meetings and liturgies with congregants, Board and other bodies, and the church as a whole to bring closure and meaning to the end of our term together.

I will continue my commitment to send tithe checks to Open Door through 2017, and I request that a 2018 pledge card be sent to me at home.

Corrine will continue her commitment to send tithe checks to Open Door through 2017, and she requests that a 2018 pledge card be sent to her at home.

My dad John will continue his commitment to send tithes through 2017, and he requests that a 2018 pledge card be sent to him at home. John is willing to continue his ministry as the web manager. For this, he needs a new contact to receive sermon audio and text, calendar items, and newsletter pieces for the web site and FaceBook. John will continue as needed to post Board application materials and MCC announcements.

My brother Jon is willing to continue to help update the church letterhead; the Tasha's Follies graphics, tickets, and ad book; and as needed to update the website banner.

Please make arrangements for a Board representative (usually the Vice Moderator) to contact Rev. Pressley Sutherland at the MCC Office of Church Life and Health in order to begin your transition to an interim pastor. Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner of MCCNY is available to provide pastoral care and prayer to the church, as needed. Rev. Sutherland recommends that together we participate in an exit interview.

The following is a formal letter of agreement between me and the church, recommended by MCC Churches.

#### Letter of Agreement at the Time of Separation

This is a letter of agreement at the time of separation between Rev. Miller and the Board of Directors of Open Door. It is the result of a process of clarification of the former pastor's new role with respect to the church.

This letter is to be shared throughout the congregation so that others may understand changes in role and responsibilities and can cooperate together as the congregation and former pastor move into another phase of their respective lives. While the former pastor bears primary responsibility for maintaining healthy boundaries, all will attempt to honor this agreement.

1. Rev. Miller's resignation, effective September 17, 2017, signifies their understanding that all pastoral, sacramental, and administrative duties in this congregation are terminated as of that date. It is agreed that the Board will make provision for other pastoral ministry for the congregation.
2. Rev. Miller agrees that they will not attend church events at Open Door for at least a year, unless they are invited to do so in the capacity of a new role with MCC or another organization. They will also not attend social events at which a majority of those present are members of the church.
3. Rev. Miller agrees that they will not officiate at any baptism, wedding, funeral, or other rite or sacrament for members of Open Door. These occasions deepen the relationship between a pastor and a congregation and rightly belong to future pastors. This guideline will prevent divided loyalties in the congregation and pressures on future pastors or interim pastors. Rev. Miller does expect to exercise their ministry in other congregations as invited.
4. Rev. Miller agrees that they will not make or listen to any uncomplimentary or critical remarks concerning the future pastoral leadership of Open Door, nor will they become the confidant of anyone who wishes to express criticism of future leaders or ministries of the church.
5. In the increasingly virtual world in which we live, Rev. Miller will make every effort to maintain appropriate boundaries in online communications. Recognizing that they no longer bear responsibility for pastoral care or leadership of Open Door, they agree to remove themselves from all church-related email lists and groups. They will not actively initiate public conversations with members of Open Door on Facebook or in other social media situations.
6. If, after a suitable period of time, there is a desire on the part of the next settled pastor to review any of the above items, they may do so with the consent of the Board, provided that Rev. Miller is willing for such review and negotiation to occur.
7. Rev. Miller will remove their own vestments, equipment, books, and other possessions by September 17, 2017. Items they have used, belonging to the congregation, will remain at Open Door. Keys to the church will be returned by the same date.