

## Charlotte Mara Church Purchases Building

In September, 2018, the Mara Christian Church of Charlotte, North Carolina, bought a nearly 100-year-old church on 3 acres of land southeast of Charlotte. After five years of praying, fasting, intensive saving, renting, and with help from Mennonite Men, they are praising God for a permanent place of their own!



*The Mara congregation filling their previously rented space.*

The Mara, with their own dialect and culture, are a subgroup of the Chin people mostly in western Myanmar, many of whom are Christian. Thousands of Mara, and other Chin people, have fled Myanmar as religious refugees, with many settling in the U.S. and Canada. The Mara began arriving in Charlotte several decades ago and in 2013 a group of 25-30 young families formed the Mara Christian Church of America. After learning of Virginia Mennonite Conference, the Charlotte church developed a relationship with this conference and were received as a member congregation in 2015.

In the fall of 2015, the Mara church applied for a JoinHands grant from Mennonite Men toward the purchase of a building. This application was approved and in December of 2017 Lonnie Bartel of Mennonite Men flew to Charlotte from Iowa one Sunday morning and presented the congregation a check for \$40,000.



*Lonnie Bartel (left) and Daniel Yoder (right) with children of the church the Sunday after presenting the JoinHands grant.*



What a thrill and encouragement to this young congregation of immigrant believers! Less than a year later, with the help of this grant, they could purchase this beautiful church facility without getting a mortgage.



*Church building with fellowship hall in the rear*

In addition to purchasing the church without a mortgage, they did a major renovation. Through much sacrifice in time and finances, they enlarged the sanctuary. Doing all the work themselves, these dedicated, resourceful and gifted believers finished their project in time for the open house and dedication on December 1, 2018.



*The congregation at the dedication of their new meeting place.*

With grateful hearts the people of this congregation of over 150 offer thanks to God and extend heartfelt gratitude to Mennonite Men for their grant!

--Daniel Yoder