

## Series Highlight in a Year of Worship

By Doug Steiner

Several worship series of study, reflection and praise highlighted the year of 2013 on Sunday mornings at Bethel. In January, we began a three Sunday series titled "Worship Focus" examining three essential movements of worship; 1) a transforming encounter with the living God, 2) honest engagement with ourselves and community, and 3) lively empowerment for faithful response. Isaiah 6 and Luke 24 were the scripture settings for this series.

In February and March we had a series which took us through Lent and Easter highlighting the theme of "Ashamed No More". This series focused on repentance, patience, preparation and response.

A study of the seven "I AM..." descriptions by Jesus occurred in April and May. Visuals were used each Sunday to help us connect to the images used by Jesus in the gospel of John.

During the summer months we helped create and then reflected on the "12 Scriptures Project". It was fun to hear different folks share about the scriptures they found most formative in their lives. The children drew pictures depicting each scripture, which were used

for bulletin covers. A highlight of the series was a quilt made up of blocks representing each scripture. The quilt took shape each Sunday as each new scripture was presented. The quilt has since been completed with an accompanying brochure explaining each block's symbolism to its scripture.

Missions month occurred again in November and Rick preached a series on Anabaptist Gospelization, based in part on things he has learned in his doctoral studies. Rick drew his messages from Mark 7, Psalms 150 and Ephesians 4.

The year ended with the Advent series on the theme "O, the Mystery of God's Dwelling...", reflecting on different aspects of God's incarnation in our lives. Beth lead the children's story by building the manger scene successively each Sunday until the Christ child arrived!

Each series throughout the year seemed to have its own identity and leave its own impression on our life of worship. How was God revealed to you? How did you experience and worship God? Maybe you have a series idea for 2014!

## Christmas Celebrations!

**Bethel Members Share how they experienced Christmas this season**

Our Christmas was celebrated after New Year's Day this year. Sam and his family traveled here from Georgia on Thursday, Jan. 2nd, then were joined by Maria and her two children (and dog) the next morning. We exchanged gifts and stayed close to home on Friday. The kids tried tubing but found the snow too shallow on our hill, so we took them to Mad Mountain's tubing trails on Saturday when the sun was shining and temperatures were much more agreeable. They had a blast! It was a great bonding family time. Fortunately they were all able to get home on Sunday before the winter weather turned for the worse again. Maria got a foot of snow in Findlay on Sunday evening. Thankfully, our precipitation was mostly rain on Sunday, resulting in only 2 inches of snow.

Mary & Art Newcomer



## Christmas Celebrations continued...

Our Christmas celebration this year went in many directions. It was first, a reunion for me and Paul, ending a separation of several months while he was in Chicago helping Chad and Denise. We started the season by enjoying an evening with Ruby Byler, at the Green Hills Christmas dinner. We also joined our church family with worship and singing, at the Christmas Eve service. Then, after a quiet Christmas day for Paul, and a day of working in the Birth Center for me, we were joined by our kids and their families when they came to Ohio for 4 days of fun. We ate lots of food, played games, visited late into the night, and had our traditional trip to Columbus to the "Chiller" to ice skate followed by a meal at the Japanese Steak House. We ended the season with a Harshbarger extended family gathering on New Year's Day in Elkhart, IN. We feel blessed to be again surrounded by family this year...and thankful for a new beginning of focus and discovering God's gifts as we allow the birth of Jesus to change our lives. Sally and Paul Harshbarger

I spent Christmas at Bethel, visiting with local people who come over to help or just talk and eat at the local outreach. I wish I could remember which events are 'bring a small dish' and which are on this grand

## Visitors from the East

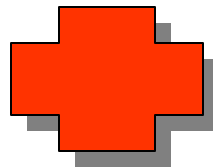
Bethel lent hospitality again to the Central Christian high school group visiting Adriel January 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>. This is the group's fourth year working with Adriel residential youth to fulfill a mini term class, and Bethel has hosted the group at the Potter's Place the last two years. Six freshmen girls and an adult leader made up the volunteer group. During their three packed out days, the girls worked with the Adriel youth one on one during the school day, attended Bible study and Adriel Live, ate meals with youth, and did nails with one of the girl homes. They also received a lengthy orientation on what Adriel is, the type of youth they serve, some of the behaviors they might see, and a crash course in social services. The Bethel youth group and activity coordinators attended Adriel Live and stayed after Wednesday evening for games, snack, and fellowship. The Bethel youth extended hospitality by cleaning the Potter's Place for their visitors and gave of their time to get to know the Central Christian youth.

Adriel is grateful for volunteers who give their time to the youth. Adriel youth, especially with other youth, can just feel like a regular kid. Volunteers have an opportunity to express God's love through giving the gift of presence, spending time with youth with no gain to themselves. Adriel also hopes to make a positive impression on volunteer youth and open their minds to career possibilities and give an example of what service looks like. Between Adriel, Central Christian, and Bethel, it is a beautiful opportunity for the Body of Christ to work together! One of the comments from the Central Christian youth during debrief time was in response to how they say God working during their visit: "God is watching over the youth of Adriel. With Adriel's structure, the youth have an opportunity to know God and be close with Him." And all God's people said "Amen!"

scale or roaster-sized ... but am learning. Nice to see everyone who dropped by. Nice music!!  
Leslie Beam

We adopted three needy children this year and bought clothes for them. We also prepared trays of cookies, brownies, chex mix etc. and delivered them around our neighborhood. We even caroled the recipients!  
Tesa and Lee Jordan

My family came to my house the Sunday before for food and family time...hunting the pickle by the older kids and receiving of pjs by the kids still in school. On Christmas Day we went to my sister's for more food and presents 60 miles away.  
Kyle VanOsdol



**The next  
Bethel Blood  
Drive—  
Will be Friday,  
January 31st  
from 1-7pm!**

## A Letter to the Editor

**Below is the letter submitted by local pastors on Adriel's behalf...**

Recently Adriel in West Liberty has received a lot of negative publicity in the local media regarding some incidents that have occurred. While trying not to negate the seriousness of those incidents, as pastors of many of the churches which represent the community, we feel that it is important that Adriel be represented fairly.

Founded in 1896 as Mennonite Children's Home, Adriel has evolved over the years. While the programs it offers have changed, its primary mission has remained the same, "to provide quality care for children in the spirit of Christian love." The residential facility located in West Liberty cares for as many as sixty youth, ages six to twenty-one, at any given time. Not only providing residential care, Adriel also provides family foster care throughout much of western Ohio. Most of the children have experienced many years of abuse and neglect and have been assigned to Adriel as a last step of intervention that might help the youth become productive members of our society as adults.

Adriel has a very professional and dedicated staff who feel called to work with this type of children. Much support is needed in order to heal these wounded children and provide a new outlook and structure for life; because of this Adriel is the second largest employer in the Village of West Liberty with 145 full-time and part-time staff.

The campus in West Liberty is not a correctional facility, which means by law it cannot be "locked-down." One of the most common incidents of misbehavior is when youth walk away, much like other youth walk away from their homes in times of conflict and stress. In the majority of instances the youth are continually monitored by staff and return without incident. Almost all of these incidents are reported to the local police both for community awareness and for the safety and protection of the child, hence the high number of calls to the police.

Adriel strives to be good partners with our community. The youth volunteer their time at Green Hills Retirement Community, the community garden, and serve meals at the annual community Christmas dinner. Adriel partners with West Liberty-Salem School and Logan County Educational Services Center to provide education for the youth. Since 2005, whenever Adriel's youth are housed at the Logan County Detention Center they have reimbursed

Logan County for the lodging, something they are not required to do. We greatly appreciate the services that West Liberty Police Department, Fire Department and Macochee EMS provide and their sensitivity to working with youth with unique challenges.

As area pastors we honor Adriel's positive influence in the lives of youth and their families. We experience hope for the future that these children may have because of Adriel's intervention in their troubled lives. And we value Adriel's witness to the ongoing work of Christ in the world to heal the broken-hearted, offer hope, and change lives; a witness that our whole community can participate in without having to go far and wide.

Sincerely,

Pastors in support of Adriel's mission in our community

(Dick Barrett & Alex Dye, Oak Grove Mennonite Church; Paul Forrey, West Liberty United Church of Christ; David Maurer & Rick Stoner, Bethel Mennonite Church; Lee Ortman, West Liberty United Methodist Church; Bill Walker, Quest Community Church; Tony Doehrmann, Jubilee Mennonite Church, Bellef.; Floyd Lundy, McKee's Creek Chapel; Matthew Williams, South Union Mennonite Church, and Matthew Sandlin, First Friends Church, Bellef., Cheryl Siegenthaler, Philadelphia Lutheran Church, Robin & Sheila Riggs, First Church of God, WL)



**Bethel Youth and Central Christian youth fellowship for an evening at Adriel. See more on Page 2.**

## Christmas Celebrations continued...

I spent this Christmas Eve at the mother's apartment of a close friend named Ana. Ana is a fun-loving, thoughtful person who I met last fall when I moved to San Antonio, TX for Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS). Ana's only sibling, and older brother, Carlos, was visiting for a few weeks from Guadalajara, Mexico. It was a casual and relaxing evening. We designed a wintery scene out of foam (anyone remember the days of gak and similar odd substances?) and Ana's mom attempted to teach Carlos how to knit. Ana and Joanne have their own how-to knitting channel on you tube called Joanne's Web!?! After some creative play, Ana's mom offered us posole (*"noun Mexican Cookery—* thick, stewlike soup of pork or chicken, hominy, mild chili peppers, and coriander leaves: traditionally served at Christmas"....according to dictionary.com) with fixings of radishes, fresh oregano and lime as well as a side of ingredients for avocado tacos. For dessert, we all shared a chocolate, mint cheesecake dessert that my grandma Thomas typically makes for Christmas--a way that I am able to feel

close to family even when they're far. It was disappointing to be away from family for the holidays but I was very thankful to have friends and my local church family to share them with. I'm especially grateful to families who include "outsiders" in family holidays---remembering the stranger in their midst.

Lane Thomas

We have all of our children and their families (as many as can come) home for a Christmas celebration sometime between Thanksgiving and New Years each year. Before the gift opening, each family shares a Christmas reading, a scripture that is meaningful, a song, or a short play that they have made up. It's interesting to find out each year what the families are going to share. This is a tradition that is handed down from Elaine's family. We then light the advent candle using various readings for each candle. Instead of a gift exchange among the adults, a gift idea is chosen from the World Vision catalog and money is sent to World Vision for our chosen project.

Carl and Elaine Newcomer

## Bethel/Oak Grove Mennonite Women

### By Donna Lehman, MW Secretary

November and December were busy meeting times for this group. You might think 'eating' a priority because we do have some good 'eats' when we get together. November featured a pasta meal...and we had delicious lasagna thanks to Tesa Jordan and salads/desserts from S to Y (last name initials) and fall leaf table decorations thanks to Kathy Graber, assisted by Doris Enns. The December meeting was a 10:30am brunch with some tasty breakfast casseroles (Mary Psolla, Kyle VanOsdol, Barb Evans) and side dishes from those with A to K initials.

Jan Smucker had cousins who gave liberally (many boxes) of yarn goods which will be available for use in projects for Adriel and MCC. A card was sent in thanks to them.

In our ongoing 'Courageous Women of the Bible' devotionals Barb Evans (Nov) shared about the mid-wives in Egypt who showed their courage which spared a child named Moses, and Barb Schultz (Dec) gave insight on a young girl-Mary-whose courage to follow through on God's plan gave us Jesus.

Next month (January) the meal will be Stone Soup, and each attender is to bring a cup of uncooked vegetables. Our winter project of Health Kits continues. (Need 1-dark hand towel, 1 tooth brush, 1-6oz tube tooth paste, 1-4oz bar soap, 1 finger nail clipper (leave all items in wrappers). Work completed Nov/Dec: 37 health kit bags sewn (20 went to Oak Grove), 9 health kits completed, 5 comforters. Average attendance was 24.

## January Birthdays

5 – Chuck Swartz  
8 – Bill Barrett  
10 – Bob VanOsdol  
13– Kyle VanOsdol  
14 – Steve Rabenstein  
19 – Kathi Robinaugh  
19 – Tara Sanford  
21 – Trace Robinaugh  
22 – Jeanette Hostetler  
26 – Donna Risner  
26 – Wanda Shumaker  
31 – Pat Yoder



## February Birthdays

1 Paul Harshbarger  
1 Royce Link  
6 Nellie Lindemer  
8 Tim Lehman  
9 Roy Byler  
9 Lee Jordan  
11 Dennis Showalter  
17 Lori Lehman  
27 Rodney Graber  
27 Donna Lehman

## Christmas Memories through the Years

By Donna Lehman, Historian

The Messiah started being presented in the community in 1939. The first leader was Chauncey Kauffman, uncle of the most recent leader, Byron Kauffman.

For many years, Bethel helped with the Christmas dinner at the Orphans Home (later Adriel). In most recent times (since 2007) Community Christmas meals have been served at Bethel on Christmas Day.

Back in the 1990s, a fun time for the youth during the holidays was a Mall Hunt. This consisted of searching for Bethel members in disguise during the busy shopping season.

Some drama programs put on by the children (or youth) were highlights in the past. One year, 'the Gift Goes On' and another 'Wise Guys and Starry Skies.' Youth did 'Christmas in Cricket Country,' but most generally, reenactments of Mary, Joseph, and the Babe were presented.

The King's Daughters were treated to brunches for quite a few years at the home of Rachel Kauffman.

Many classes, or groups, had caroling parties. In 1995, the Youth and Mentors bundled up and traveled via Sam J. Plank's tractor and hay wagon and caroled around West Liberty...then on to Steve Lapp's for games/refreshments (brrr..rr...rr!!!)

For several years, Bethel had floats for the West Liberty Christmas parade. One year (cold!) the children were on a float dressed as shepherds and angels, another theme was 'Jesus, Light of the World,' and two years ago, a giant Christmas gift (with windows).

Advent candles continued to appear in the children's mailboxes, a tradition for many years, began by Dorcas Kauffman, then Susan Krabill, and now thanks to Nellie Lindemer.

## Pursuing God's Will Together

By Pastor Dave Maurer

In the introduction to her book, Pursuing God's Will Together: a discernment practice for leadership groups, Ruth Haley Barton suggests that in the process of growing in our ability to discern God's leading we should...

"Feel free to do *something* before you do *everything*; pick the one thing you think you can do, and do it with all your heart. God faithfully comes into any bit of space we create for him, and pretty soon the one thing you do before you do everything leads to another thing and another, until you find that leadership is not the burden it once was. It is a dance in which God leads and you follow. It is a wave that God sends, and you ride it. It is the breath of God, and you are the feather that floats upon it. It is a wind of the Spirit that blows, and you lift your sail to catch it. It is a powerful current that is already flowing, and *you* are in that flow." (emphasis hers)

Barton is speaking directly to leaders here, but it seems to me that this rings true for all of us. I say this especially given that Barton spends two thirds of her book focusing on the significance of individual and corporate preparation for discernment. She names the importance of preparing the

ground per se to create fertile space for meaningful and effective discernment.

As Bethel continues into a more intentional period of discernment, council has been inviting us to prepare the soil of our hearts and spirits to hear the leading of the Holy Spirit for what lies ahead. Council has invited us to operate from a modified purpose statement. Our congregation has gone through a process of discerning our 12 scriptures and we have spent time dwelling with these both in worship and in our council meetings. And we have entered into a season of prayer that has included fasting and the discernment prayer offered by JR Woodward

**Continued on page 6**

### January and February Anniversaries Wedding Anniversaries

January 14, 1966 – Nellie & Dick Lindemer  
January 16, 1965 – Jeannette & Jim Hostetler  
January 25, 1980 – Deanna & Mark Kauffman  
February 3, 1985 – Jeff & Terri Steiner  
February 9, 1969 – Paul & Linda Hostetler  
February 15, 1975 – Ed & Kim Lehman

## “Pursing...” continued

This preparation is necessary because the culture around us has shifted. The church is no longer the center of our community. Additionally traditional feeders to our congregation like Adriel and Oakhill no longer bring new attendees. And our congregation has gone through a season of change as people have been called away and our resources have shifted. These changes impact us and yet we remain a healthy congregation with tremendous ongoing potential. Still as our realities change, there is a need for us to refine our focus and adapt as God leads.

In our corporation driven culture, it is natural for us to want to come up with a plan, enact it, and invite God to come along with us. But perhaps a more faithful approach is first to go before the Lord naming our questions and our concerns, offer-

ing ourselves to the Lord in prayer, and dwelling in the word of God. Then out of this waiting on the Lord, to seek God’s direction that we might catch God’s breeze with our church sails, because we know that God is already moving all around us.

This is neither a quick nor an easy process, yet we trust that it is one that is faithful and thus will also be fruitful by God’s kingdom standards. And so as we enter this new calendar year, we invite us all to the ongoing preparation of the discernment soil, knowing that in the coming months we will be making important decisions about God’s leading and what this means for staffing. But also trusting that God has the future well in hand and that as we open ourselves to God’s leading, God will direct our paths.

**See the prayer on page 7.**

## The Place Where We Are Right By Pastor Rick Stoner

I love to be right. In fact it is one of my worst character flaws. I want to be the one who knows it all and can tell people what to do. But, what if in seeking God’s direction we need to move beyond being right to something deeper? What if being right is getting in the way?

As the Jewish poet, Yehuda Amichai, suggests when we seek to be right we often times trample the ground, which stunts growth. Now this seems to run against all that we are taught in our culture. We conditioned as a people to learn what is right. We need the right answers. We need the right structures. We need the right people in charge! But perhaps in our dizzy rush to the get things right we are running rough shod over the Spirit. Perhaps we have pounded the ground of our souls into a hard crust because we needed to be right.

I think the need to be right can drive us mad as a faith community. Sometimes it turns faith into nothing more than an ideology thus making the faith community into little more than the protector of a disembodied faith. And at other times we want to be “right” in the sense that we want to be, well, liked. In other words we want to be the “right” congregation for people to attend; in which case we might seek the right faith formula to simply plug in.

But God calls us to something deeper. God calls us to embody the love of Christ in the world, and in order to do that we must first faithfully lay

ourselves at the foot of the cross. Faithfulness, then, is about downward mobility, where we fall into the love of God. It is about becoming irrelevant as we fade into God and allow ourselves to enter into the deep pain of the world around us.

### The Place Where We Are Right

*by Yehuda Amichai*

From the place where we are right

Flowers will never grow

In the spring.

The place where we are right

Is hard and trampled

Like a yard.

But doubts and loves

Dig up the world

Like a mole, a plow.

And a whisper will be heard in the place

Where the ruined

House once stood.

## “The Place...” continued

We are not seeking another formula to plug into as a faith community. No, we are seeking that quiet whisper of love that will plow us up as a people and rearrange our souls. The early Anabaptists had a word of this *gelassenheit*, which basically meant that they wanted to be plowed through by the Spirit as a farmer plows the earth. This is a radical form of self-surrender that opens our lives to the work of the Spirit. And, this is our desire in the year of discernment; to be plowed through by the Spirit. To cry out to the Lord, “Search us O, God and know our hearts! Test us and know our anxious thoughts!” So let us lay aside the need to be right. Let us lay aside the need to build an ideological tower where we can sit and be comfortable, and let us instead step out into the unknown where doubt and love dig up our world, where we relinquish our grip of our lives and allow the love of God shapes us into something beautiful!

## Bethel’s Year of Discernment Prayer

Father,  
We yearn to be the church you want us to become,  
Shape us into something beautiful.  
We recognize that you are the Potter and we are the clay,  
Please continue to mold us into the image of Christ.

We want to join in what you are already doing in the world.  
In our worship and life together, in our ministry and service to others,  
We want to give people a glimpse of your intentions for the whole world.

Help us to welcome the outcasts, love our enemies,  
And form a Community that is visibly different from the culture around us  
As a sign of what you are doing in the world.

Help us experience your love and grace,  
Grow in our relationship with Jesus,  
And experience the power of your Spirit  
As we offer your good news to others.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen!  
-from [Creating a Missional Culture](#) by JR Woodward

### Bethel Mennonite Church

416 Washington St.  
PO Box 549  
West Liberty, OH 43357

Email Addresses:  
Pastor Dave Maurer  
pastor@bethelchurchwl.org

Pastor Rick Stoner  
associate@bethelchurchwl.org

Administrative Assistant,  
Erin Dye  
secretary@bethelchurchwl.org

We’re on the web!  
Check out:  
[bethelchurchwl.org](http://bethelchurchwl.org)



*The purpose of our newsletter*

This newsletter is published in January, March, May, July, September, and November  
Its purpose is three-fold:

- Inform** the church about events
- Acquaint** persons who attend Bethel with each other
- Inspire** us to Christ-like living