

Bethel Quarterly News

December 2010
Volume 33, Issue 4



JOIN ADVENT WORSHIP FOR THE FAMILIAR AND THE “UNEXPECTED”

By Doug Steiner, Ministry of Worship Chair

The theme for Advent worship this Christmas season is *An Unexpected Hour*, and comes from the *Leader* magazine, published by Faith and Life Resources of the Mennonite Church. The title suggests the dual themes of Christ's unexpected birth in Bethlehem, as well as our tendency in North America to create such busyness in our lives that we lose sight of God's abundance.

The worship resources suggest, “Perhaps we need a different awareness of time. This Advent, we invite you to do less. If it means Christmas shopping is streamlined and sparse, let it be so. If it means leaving the office early to go ice-skating with the youth group, enjoy! If it means fewer cookies get baked and everything isn't perfect, thanks be to God! We are living in the midst of God's abundance; the time-drought is a human

creation, and Christ frees us to drink from other wells. Both for ourselves and for our communities of faith, we are free to protect spaces of time to be alert. God is on the move. Will we wait and watch together as if we had nothing better to do?”

One of the ways we at Bethel will remind ourselves of our hurried pace is by creating short times of silence denoted by the ringing of a bell during each Sunday worship hour. The sound of the bell will be a “call to release our daily activities, allow the roar in our minds to quiet, and sink into a place where we can be open to God's presence.”

Other Advent worship activities will be familiar to us, including scripture, candles, special music, sharing testimonies, and plenty of singing. Join us for the familiar and the “unexpected”!



BETHELITES SHARE CHRISTMAS GIFT-GIVING TRADITIONS

Sally Harshbarger – In our family Christmas is really all about everyone coming “home” for 3-4 days, and having a huge slumber party and just being together. Since we rotate with the in-laws, sometimes it happens on Christmas and sometimes on New Year's. A few days before everyone arrives, Paul and I usually go out and choose a fresh tree to decorate, and prepare lots of food and goodies for the sudden influx of appetites. We enjoy playing games and late night conversations with our adult kids. The cousins of course, always enjoy time together.

We spend one of the days that they're home, going to Columbus, ice-skating at the “Chiller” rink, and then eating together at a special restaurant. It's become a Christmas tradition. In the past few years, in order to decrease “consumerism,” we limit the gifts to 1-2 per child, and draw names with the adults. The kids open their gifts in the afternoon or evening, and the adults share their gifts later, when everyone is tucked in for the night.

Carole Barrett – Currently, since our family is small, we give gifts to everyone but we are considering giving to just the three kids. I like to make at least one thing for each of the grandchildren.

We have several gift exchanges--one on Christmas with Son Jim's family, and we mail to our son, Bill's family, the years we don't go there. If we are together for Thanksgiving, we have our exchange then so we can see them open up their presents. We have cut back on what we give and I try to make the presents whenever possible.

Ellen Steiner – Every year at Christmas I struggle with whether or not to buy gifts for our extended family. For my parents I often donate to a charity. But Alex and Annie have established a tradition of exchanging gifts with their cousins in Canada. I used to try to talk them out of buying presents. I suggested donating to a charity or going tubing with their cousins at the ski slope. They always say no.

I have come to realize that gift giving isn't always about giving someone stuff. Alex and Annie each spend a lot of time thinking of the perfect gift. They wait in anticipation for their cousins to open their gifts. It is a special time just for the cousins. When I focus in on the idea of buying stuff, I lose the meaning behind the gift giving. The reason Alex and Annie want to buy the gifts is to show their cousins how much they love them. Isn't that what Christmas is all about!

(continued on page 2)



Christmas gift-giving traditions (continued from page 1)

Bridget Early – For our own family we get together on Christmas Eve, and each family member gives every other family member a gift. Rather than spending a lot on the gifts, we try to choose personal gifts that we know the other person would not buy for themselves. The most rewarding gift giving times are those years, when one of us learns of a family in need and an anonymous gift is sent.

Food is always a central part of our celebration. When the girls were growing up, the girls and I always spent a couple of days baking cookies, candies, and other goodies that were given as gifts to friends and neighbors. The girls are continuing the tradition by getting together every year possible to bake and introduce Laney to the tradition.

Kathi Robinaugh - We celebrate with my family on Christmas Eve before church, open gifts as a family on Christmas morning, and go to Darin's dad's house on Christmas evening. Several years ago we started the tradition of everyone taking turns opening a gift, from either youngest to oldest or vice versa, so that we can all see what everyone got. With our four boys, opening gifts has always taken so long that we have to stop and eat brunch, and then continue.

With everyone being older now, we are planning to cut back on the number of packages this year, and might even get Trace to let his brothers sleep in a little! We are also going to start the tradition of opening a small gift each Sunday of Advent, and I'm looking into some German traditions, as Trace is very interested in his family heritage.

I always make a lot of gifts, including ornaments for almost everyone. The boys all have large collections of their own ornaments, both handmade and store bought. I also buy as many handmade and vintage gifts as possible, because I like to give special, one-of-a-kind items that they can't return to Walmart!

Beth Maurer - We give gifts to all of the members of my family and Dave's family. In the last few years with my extended family we have started combining money and giving to a charity. Then we do a big white elephant exchange, which is always fun!!

This last year my mother put together an amazing Advent activity for us. Each day we opened an envelope and read a scripture passage, and had an activity or craft to make. The kids loved it. The kids also got to move a ring from one strand to the other. That way they could see that Christmas was getting closer.

On Christmas Eve, Dave and I hide a pickle ornament on our tree. The kids look for it and when they find it they get a small gift to open and take to the Christmas Eve service. We (and Santa) give the kids some gifts and stockings on Christmas morning. Then we open the rest of our gifts on Epiphany as gifts from the kings. This also helps to make sure that the kids are not completely overwhelmed with gifts on Christmas Day. After all, it is a season not just a day.

Lela Faye Graber - With our immediate family of five, we give each other one gift, and one stocking stuffer. Each year from birth to age 18, the children also receive a dated ornament, which reflects their interests of that year.

We open gifts whenever it suits between the gatherings of extended family. We usually have ours earlier to spread things out. Often we get excited and spontaneously surprise the kids by saying, "Tonight's the night!" I think our record for the earliest time is December 16. To take turns opening gifts, someone picks a gift to give and then it is that person's turn to decide which one to give. In recent years we have picked a mission to benefit such as Heifer Project or World Wildlife Fund.

Sharon Showalter – We exchange gifts according to the day we can actually be together. It is not always Christmas Eve or Day. One year with extended family we each either made something or gave something we had, and then did a silent auction with the money going to a missionary family. It was actually quite fun. As the years have gone by, we tend to do fun things together and downplay the gift angle.

Marla Longenecker – Since our three children are all young adults and gone from home, we draw names and each purchase one gift. In recent years we have also chosen a theme for the gifts, which has turned out to be quite fun. The themes so far have been ornaments (when everyone had to travel to San Francisco), books, and this year "extremities," or in other words, anything for the feet, hands or head. We open the gifts whenever it suits, usually Christmas or Thanksgiving morning since we are not together both holidays in the same year.

We also like to give to our favorite charities at year's end, and I especially enjoy shopping for Angel Tree or other toy drives. Limiting our gift giving has taken a lot of stress out of the holiday season, and allowed me to focus on other aspects, which I truly enjoy, like seasonal concerts and worship services.

Barb Landes – Our Christmas tradition has changed over the last 39 years, from visiting extended family in eastern Pennsylvania to wanting to remain at home to create memories within our own immediate family. Having four grandchildren under age 4 is great! We used to draw names for giving gifts or have a white elephant gift exchange. Now we just share gifts with our immediate family members.

We have also tried to make Christmas a time to share with others such as the Heifer Project or Angel Tree. Santa has never been much of a part of our Christmas, except for me as a child. (Remember non-ethnic Mennonites serve Santa a snack!) I love to decorate and make the house look warm and cozy, and especially like to have snow at Christmas. It is a spiritual time and a fun time for us, but I especially look forward to seeing the little ones have fun.

From the Pastor's desk...

“Mommy, where do sermons come from?” By Pastor Dave Maurer

Though not nearly as uncomfortable as the question of where babies come from, I’ve found similarities between this and recent questions about how my sermons come to be. How so? Well, both the birth of a baby and the birth of a sermon have certain practical components that must take place in order for the birth to take place; and yet there is also a certain level of mystery and wonder about the whole thing that we can only attribute to God.

For me, sermons begin with prayerful consideration of scriptures and topics that seem pertinent to the times or the way that the Holy Spirit seems to be moving in our midst. Because of how God has made me, I find it helpful to do a certain level of long range planning on this. Doing so also allows for other things to develop.

First, long range planning allows for greater lay involvement in the planning, shaping, and leading of worship. Second, this allows me more time to find applicable illustrations. Third, for those who find preparing for worship prior to coming beneficial, this allows opportunity to do so. Finally, this creates space for those sermons that take more than a week to write, grow, and develop.

Yet within these practical considerations, there is also a certain level of spontaneity in the development of the sermon

that requires the movement of the Spirit. While I have a theme or a passage picked out in advance, I often find that it is in the week that the sermon is to be given that God really meets me and the sermon takes shape.

Depending on the given sermon, I will consult commentaries, read articles, skim books, and search illustrations; but there is typically a moment when something clicks and the message comes together. Because of this, I believe that sermon preparation is more about an attitude of the heart than a method of preparation. It is more about being receptive to God than it is about the number of commentaries one consults. No matter how much preparation I do, all sermons are lifeless, until the Holy Spirit breathes life into them.

As I have begun preaching on a weekly basis, I have had to come to terms with the fact that not every sermon will touch every person and that each person will have a different opinion about the same sermon. No matter how good my sermon preparation may be, I can’t get around this. At the same time, I have been deeply humbled by the mystery of God using the words that I say to speak directly to a person’s needs that I know nothing about. While there is method involved, I thank God that there is also mystery infused in the birth of a sermon.

Bethel-Oak Grove Mennonite Women Quarterly Report

(This article was compiled from reports by Donna Lehman, MW Secretary.)

Fall themes for the monthly Mennonite Women meetings were Back-to-School for September, and colorful fall leaves, candy corn, and pumpkins for October and November. Sack lunches with apple crisp a la mode, pizza, salads, and fall pies were served at lunchtime.

New Co-Presidents, Mary Psolla and Kyle VanOsdol began their time of leadership by thanking Jeanette Hostetler for her years of dedication as the group’s president.

The devotional theme for this year is *Life is a Journey, not a Destination*. Those leading in devotions are encouraged to share their own personal faith pilgrimages. Mary shared her story in September and Eleanor Shumaker talked about her faith journey in November.

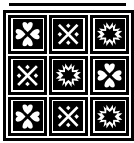
The October meeting featured guest speaker, Mark Thomas, who, with his wife Polly, volunteered at the Haggai Institute in Maui, Hawaii for three months this summer.

A highlight of the meetings is the Show and Tell time, during which ladies show quilts and projects they are working on, or that have special significance to them. Jeanie Swartz showed a quilt, which had been given to Sam and Eleanor from the Premont (TX) Mennonite Church. Barb Kauffman displayed an heirloom patchwork top from Byron’s mother, and Kyle showed a quilt given to her daughter by the Bethel MW 27 years ago. Mary and Kyle have also been busy making two quilts out of vintage blocks, which had been stored in the MW closet.

The meetings also include women sharing books they recommend, and deciding on mission projects and acts of generosity, including giving comforters to the village families who lost everything in a house fire in September.

Work completed this quarter included 3 newborn bundles, 7 comforters, one throw-size comforter, 4 health kits, over 30 school kits, and 2,000 soup labels and Box Tops for Education for Hopi (AZ) Mission School.

**Adriel Auction total
Over \$60,000**



Bethel Donations

Julia Yoder’s
Embroidered Quilt
\$600

Sara Ellen Stoltzfus’
Postage Stamp Quilt
\$200

Various Comforters
\$285

Reflections on going back to college **By James Lochridge**

Editor's note: This fall James Lochridge returned to the college world of Bluffton University to work on a degree in youth ministry. He recently sent an email with some of his thoughts on the experience so far.

I've been a student at Bluffton University for a semester now. The second week of December I'll be taking final exams. It's hard to believe that the semester is almost over. I took five courses and expect that my grades will be good; certainly I've learned a lot. I have an apartment off campus, and life is settling down into a routine.

Musically, there are a lot of guitarists around, so I've been playing the bass at some of our chapel services, and also with our music outreach team, *Shining Through*. We ministered at a prison in Marion recently, which was very inspiring. I also joined the BU Gospel Choir, our first year in existence. In November we put on a most jubilant and triumphant Gospel concert for a packed house and shook Bluffton up a bit. We'll do another concert in the spring. If it's anything like our first one, I'll highly recommend it.

Of all my classes I'm a little surprised to find that I like TESOL (Teaching English to

Speakers of Other Languages) most of all. One has to be creative to make grammar rules interesting and fun, and I've already got ideas.

One discussion in a Religion class that I'd like to pass on was particularly memorable. The professor was talking about gifts we give to each other, and made the statement that gifts always come with some expectation or some strings attached. I disagreed, saying that if it comes with strings attached, it's not really a gift at all. The professor said, "Then you probably don't get many gifts." That much is true enough for all of us – a gift that is truly a gift is rare in this world, and more precious because it is so rare.

My Bethel church family knows something about real giving with no expectation of return; my adventure at Bluffton is proof of that. It's only possible because of the support and love you have given me, and your faith in me inspires me to do well with this opportunity. Thanks again for your true gift and your generosity. It is rare and precious, and I love you all.

Studiously yours, James Lochridge

Treasurer's Report By Lori Lehman

(as of 11-21-2010)

Budgeted Giving YTD
\$32,578.46

Actual Giving YTD
\$29,732.13

Difference
(\$2,846.33)

Expenses
\$18,895.36

Net Income
\$10,836.77

Embroidery hobby keeps Julia Yoder in stitches **By Marla Longenecker**

Editor's note: We continue with our focus on the hobbies of Bethel members by featuring Julia Yoder and one of her favorite pastimes, embroidery stitching.

When five-year-old Julia and her big sister, Pat, moved into their new house* in the late 1940s, their mother, Grace, wanted to keep them out of trouble and out of the mud in the front yard. So, she sat them down and taught them how to make tiny embroidery stitches, first on dishtowels and then on dresser scarves.

"We probably still have some of those scarves upstairs in our cedar chest," says Julia. Her Aunts Luella and Jean would sometimes crochet a pretty edging on the scarves. Julia remembers one with dogs that she used in her room. She also had two dachshunds as pets at one time. The black one was named Trixie and the brown one Prince.

As Julia's craft improved, she began stitching quilt blocks. Her first quilt had an acorn theme and was made in three strips. She went on to complete six more quilt tops with such patterns as Tree of Life, Wreath of Roses and Baltimore Bride. After Julia's father

died in the late 1960s at the age of 58, Mother Grace began quilting. She went on to piece and quilt many of Julia's embroidered quilt blocks.

One time Julia ordered a complicated Jacob Bean quilt kit with 12 colors of thread. Her mother thought she should send it back, but Julia stuck with it and completed it. It takes her about two years to complete a kit, depending on how complicated it is.

In recent years the Bethel Mennonite Women's group has quilted Julia's works of art, some of which have been donated to Adriel's Quilt Auctions. Watch for her latest project, a beautiful Baltimore Bride pattern, which likely will be quilted in the coming year.

Julia has also done some knitting, making slippers and also bandages for the church sewing group years ago. Her other favorite hobby is doing word searches and occasionally Sudoku puzzles. She has a big supply of books in her closet, which came in handy during her recent recuperation period from surgery.

**Yes, the house that was new back in the 1940s is the same house that Pat and Julia still live in on Pickrelltown Road across from Bethel Church!*

Let's get acquainted with Daniel and Kathleen Vigil

Editor's note: Daniel and Kathleen Vigil moved to Bellefontaine on June 14 of this year, just two days after they were married in Colorado, so that Daniel could begin his residency at Mad River Family Practice. Let's get better acquainted with them.

Kathleen was born in Denver, CO and raised in nearby Littleton. Her parents are Richard and Marilyn Fay and she has one brother, Patrick, who is married and has two children. Daniel was born in Las Vegas, New Mexico and moved to Denver at the age of four. He has also lived in Chicago, and in California, Georgia, and Egypt while serving in the US Army. His mother and two married sisters and their families all live in Lakewood, CO. His father passed away in 2007.

Kathleen graduated from Littleton High School and attended the University of Colorado (CU) at Denver, graduating with a degree in communication. She also spent one college semester studying Spanish in Taxco, Mexico. After graduation from Regis Jesuit High School, Daniel attended CU Boulder and the University of Chicago, obtaining a degree in mathematics. He went to medical school at CU Denver.

"We did not go to church when I was growing up," says Kathleen. "I started becoming curious about spirituality when I was a teenager." She began attending Pathways Church in Denver about 13 years ago, and "little by little I have given my life to Him," she says. "I seek to know Him more every day."

Daniel grew up in the Catholic Church but fell away in his teens. Reading C.S. Lewis' book, *Mere Christianity*, was instrumental in his journey back to Christ about a decade ago.

In June of 2009, both Daniel and Kathleen went to Rwanda on a mission trip through Pathways Church partnering with Food for the Hungry. Back home they began dating and got engaged last winter. They were married on June 12, 2010, two days before moving to Ohio.

Kathleen works as an Administrative Assistant for the Transportation Research Center (TRC). She had been working at her Dad's forensic engineering firm in Denver, so TRC feels a lot like home, she says. Daniel is currently a first-year resident doctor at Mad River Family Practice.

The Vigils started attending Bethel after Randy and Marla Longenecker invited them to visit. They had visited other churches in Bellefontaine, but were drawn to Bethel because of the friendly and welcoming people. "It is such a joy to be part of a church that has such a strong community," says Kathleen.

In their leisure time, the Vigils like to watch movies, play board games, and eat Middle Eastern and Indian foods.

Welcome to our church family, Daniel and Kathleen! We look forward to getting to know you better in the coming months.

CROP WALK Report



**October 3, 2010
Bellefontaine**

**37 walkers
32 donors**

**Total raised by
Bethel: \$3,583.95**

**Loose change
donated: \$390**

**Change from cars
donated: \$93.42**

**Thanks to all for
your generosity and
care for the world's
hungry people!**

West Liberty Cares Toys for Christmas Project Wednesdays, December 1, 8, 15, 22 – South Union Food Pantry

Food Pantry families will have the opportunity to choose gifts for their children ages 0-18 years when they come to the pantry. Parents may choose one gift per child and then wrap them. You can help by bringing unwrapped gifts and/or wrapping supplies to South Union on Wednesdays, beginning December 1. Or you may give cash for the purchase of gifts. Gift suggestions include games, puzzles, art/craft kits, play dough, sports equipment, dolls, toy cars, Legos, blocks, baby or toddler toys, watches, hats, gloves, socks, and slippers.

Getting to know Patrick Graber **By Rick Stoner**

The December Newsletter youth spotlight falls on Patrick Graber. The eldest child of Rodney and Lela Faye Graber, Patrick is currently a junior at Ben Logan High School.

If you are looking for a conversation partner or just need someone to chat with Patrick is a great candidate. If you would like to invite him over for a meal make sure you have a plethora of beef jerky on hand, and it would be good if you held off on the wheat products. While you are chomping down on that delicious jerky, you can rock out to alternative/Christian rock music.

And, to spice things up even more you could pull out Patrick's favorite board game, *Acquire*. If you are not into board games, Patrick also enjoys playing and watching soccer, hunting, running, computers, school, and video games (but not necessarily in that order). However, if you are too tired for these activities, then you all could just take a nap because one of Patrick's hobbies is sleeping.

Patrick hopes to some day attend a Christian college. He says that what he likes most about Bethel are the people here.



Hangin' at The Place

Mondays & Thursdays
3-5 p.m.

New this fall is a banner in bright colors chosen by the youth. Several neighborhood youth have been attending regularly. If you would like to volunteer or provide snacks, talk to Pastor Rick.

What are our youth up to this winter?

WL-S Power Lifting:
Lindsay Hostetler

WL-S Band:
Lindsay Hostetler



Ben Logan Choir:
Liesl Graber

Elite F.C. Soccer:
Patrick Graber
Lindsay Hostetler



Chuck Wagon Meal provides warm fellowship

By Elaine Newcomer, Fellowship Chair

On October 2, Carl and Elaine Newcomer hosted a Chuck Wagon Meal at their home. The hope was for a balmy warm evening, however the day was chilly and rainy.

So, we had to switch from Plan A to Plan B. Harry Graber brought a tent to set up outside the barn door to cook under and the food wagon was kept in the barn along with chairs and bales of hay on which to sit.

Outside games were canceled, but several ambitious youth decided to jump on the trampoline despite the drizzle and chill. They

soon gave up because it was too cold and wet.

Harry and Kathy Graber made venison stew, Dick and Nellie Lindemer made chili with sausage (replaced wild boar), and Carl and Elaine made moose stew from a moose donated by Karl Smith. These were put in kettles over a fire. Those who attended added potluck dishes to the meal.

Approximately 45 persons attended the meal, including seven guests of the Bethel family. Everyone seemed to enjoy the food and fellowship.

Answers to Junior Youth Matching Quiz on page 10

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1 – LG | 2 – Ash R |
| 3 – Ann S | 4 – BW |
| 5 – TR | 6 – RS |
| 7 – Ab R | 8 – SH |
| 9 – Al S | 10 – ML |
| 11 – MS | |

From the Youth Pastor's desk . . .

Christmas can still change the world By Rick Stoner

Missiologist, Paul Hiebert, tells the story of a time when he was in a South Indian village watching a Christmas pageant. The villagers played out the Christmas story beautifully, and Hiebert thought about how the message of Christmas had been translated well to these people. Then it happened. Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, and the angels were all gathered around the baby Jesus, when all of the sudden Santa Claus jumped out from behind the curtain and handed out birthday presents to all the people on stage. (*Paul Hiebert, "Transforming Worldviews" Mission Focus, 10(2002): 5*). What had gone wrong?

Clearly the missionaries had brought with them two different stories of Christmas. One centered on the world-changing event of Christ's birth. The other story revolved around Santa and gift giving. Now before we point fingers at the missionaries, and talk about how they mixed their culture with the gospel message, we need to step back and think about how we have adopted (relatively uncritically) an alternative Christmas narrative as well. Essentially, we have adopted a version of Christmas that is similar to the version we see in the Christmas pageant of the Indian villagers.

I have been wrestling with this in my own life over the past couple years. How can I get back to what Christmas means? I remember when I was little, and my sister and I helped decorate my grandparents Christmas tree. One of our favorite ornaments was one with a scene of two small children standing outside looking through a frosty window at a cozy living room with a fire in the fireplace and a lovely decorated

tree. Well, for me, I have felt like those kids. I feel like I'm standing outside looking in; trying to find meaning again in Christmas.

The *Advent Conspiracy* has helped me get back to the life changing nature of Christ's birth. The authors of the conspiracy say, "Missing the prophetic mystery of Jesus' birth means missing God-with-us, God beside us—God becoming one of us. Missing out on Jesus changes everything . . . We become lost in crowded malls, financial debt, and endless lists of gifts to buy. The false doctrine of consumer religion insists, again and again, that money equals love—a convincing enough tale to make believers out of non-Christians and Christians alike." (*Rick McKinley, Chris Seay, and Greg Holder, Advent Conspiracy, 10*).

Yet, the message of the *Advent Conspiracy* is that Christmas can still change the world. We can move past the message that our culture wants us to uncritically accept, and tell the real story of Christmas with our lives and our words. This thinking has been life giving to me, but now I have to live it, and in a culture that is trying to pull me in another direction this can be hard. Yet, if we all join together then we can once again proclaim with the angels that Good News for all people has come into the world.

(To learn more about the Advent Conspiracy, join Pastor Rick and the youth on Wednesday evenings in December as they lead a discussion of this book.)

Pastoral Care Team provides important ministry

New PCT members:

*Mark Thomas
Dennis Sanford*

Continuing members:

*Dave Maurer, Pastor
Barb Landes, Chair
Chuck Swartz, Crisis
Eleanor Shumaker
Barbara Kauffman
Sharon Showalter
Carl Newcomer*

This fall the Pastoral Care Team (PCT) has seen some changes in personnel, but its members continue "to be aware of the spiritual and physical needs of the congregation and to coordinate with the pastor for their care," as stated in the job description.

"Our purpose is to reach out in friendship to people from Bethel who are hospitalized, in confining situations, or have specific needs," explains Barb Landes, chair of the team. "We provide a supportive role to the pastor, striving to be good listeners as well as look for needs expressed to us."

The team members take turns being "on call" for one week at a time according to a rotating schedule. The person "on call" each week is listed on the back of the bulletin each Sunday. The PCT meets quarterly in member's homes for fellowship, bonding,

and communication. They also attend an occasional conference, which helps them do more effective ministry.

A pastoral care visit is usually short and adjusted to the person being visited. "If you are aware of a need or would like a visit or call, please let us know," says Barb. "We are open to suggestions as to what is meaningful to meet the pastoral care needs of the congregation."

Last year the team began making and giving fleece blankets to persons they visit who are experiencing life changes such as a death in the family, hospitalization, or illness. The blankets are symbols of love that are meant to "refresh weariness, give comfort in suffering, and consolation in loneliness," adds Barb.

Reflections on conflict transformation in the church

Editor's note: A Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches Workshop was held at Bethel on October 30. Led by Bob Williamson of Lombard (IL) Mennonite Peace Center, the workshop attracted over 70 participants from 17 churches in Ohio and Indiana. Following are impressions and learnings from some of our Bethel leaders who attended.

Doug Steiner – I was impressed with the teachings about conflict from Matthew 18:15-22. This passage is used in Bethel's constitution as a guide for responding to conflicts and for discipline. This passage also gives us a nice framework for encouraging negotiation, mediation, and arbitration when conflicts occur. Jesus encourages us to transform conflicts from a primary focus on an issue or position, to a focus designed to restore our relationships within the church.

Sharon Showalter – I appreciated the review on listening skills and learned that a problem correctly identified is a problem already half solved.

Jim Burkett – Anxiety underlies conflict, and we need to learn to manage our anxieties. People develop patterns in dealing with conflict situations. These patterns contain elements of genuine usefulness but problems develop when we overuse or use them in a negative way. For example, distancing is useful when one needs to gain perspective, but it can be taken too far when it leads to withdrawal. Sharks, owls, foxes, turtles and teddy bears (ways to describe different conflict response styles) all have their place. Steps that lead to conflict transformation: state concerns, document interests, develop ideas, and find agreement.

Dave Maurer – The training was a good reminder of the family-like dynamics that are present within congregations, and the important ways that these dynamics shape our interactions with each other.

Dennis Showalter – The speaker had an endearing sense of humor while giving us some very important tools to use to resolve conflict. I think these tools can be very helpful to Bethel if we utilize them individually and collectively.

Carl Newcomer – The examples the speaker gave of church conflicts and how they were handled, along with a Sample Agreement on Procedures, was enlightening and useful for reference.

Steve Lapp – Some brief statements to think about: God is always present no matter what. Remember, God's ways are not our ways. God can take what is intended for our harm (high anxiety) and turn it into something good for us (faith). Take people at face value, at least initially. Don't judge, remain emotionally neutral. Be honest with yourself and others. Recognize when your thoughts, words, and actions increase anxiety. With God there are always options. Do not despair.

Rick Stoner – Conflict transformation moves beyond issues and position statements to the heart of people's desires. Seen in this light it becomes extremely important to the mission of the church. This is tough work, but when we are able to live this way, we can begin to teach the people around us that it is possible to disagree with a person and still love them.

Conflict transformation moves beyond issues and position statements to the heart of people's desires. Seen in this light, it becomes extremely important to the mission of the church.

~Rick Stoner

Workshop Topics

The Nature and Role of Conflict

Conflict in the New Testament: Finding Renewal in Conflict

Understanding and Improving Your Own Style of Response to Conflict

Interpersonal Peacemaking Skills: How to be Effective When People are Angry

Congregational Conflict: Understanding Conflict in Groups and How to Manage It.

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEA – *Living More With Less 30th Anniversary Edition with New Stories and Suggestions for Living a Sustainable Life*, edited by Valerie Weaver-Zercher

*Our own Esther Shank is one of the story collectors, and included in the book is a story she "collected" from Dean Horn about the Habitat ReStore in Bellefontaine. In addition, Church Secretary Marla Longenecker has a church office recycling idea that is posted on the book's website. A story about the book and story collectors may be found on pages 24-27 of the December 2010 issue of **The Mennonite**. They are also posted on the lobby bulletin board.*

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Bethel Homework Help serves local elementary students

By Elaine Newcomer, Manager

Bethel Homework Help (BHH) has started the year with 13 West Liberty-Salem students referred by teachers from grades 3-5. Several students are on the waiting list. A typical day begins around 3:00 p.m. when energetic students arrive from the bus.

A snack is served on arrival and then the students are assigned to the homework help volunteers to begin their homework lessons. The students do either reading or math for 45 minutes, followed by a ten-minute break of exercises and stretches. Pastor Dave usually comes once a week during the break to lead some fun exercise songs. The favorite of the students is the Bubble Gum Song. During the song, the students and Pastor Dave continuously jump up and down. Elaine leads exercises in Pastor Dave's absence.

First-session math students switch to reading and first-session reading students switch to math for the second session. When finished with math and reading assignments, the students may do any other homework they have. When all homework assignments are completed, students may choose from various activities such as working on math facts with flash cards or math-related games. Reading activities include games such as word searches, crossword puzzles, reading a

book, or playing games that include spelling or constructing sentences. Parents pick up their children at 5:00 p.m.

The students earn Bethel Bucks for completing their homework, attendance, good attitudes, and staying on task. They can earn up to five \$1 bucks per day. Every other Thursday we have a "store" where the students can spend their bucks on various \$5, \$15, or \$25 items. Sometimes a student will choose to save their bucks until they have enough for a \$25 item, but most spend their bucks on several \$5 items.

Some of the students who come to BHH are curious, some are not afraid to say most anything that comes to mind, some are active, and some are very hard workers. It's always interesting to hear comments they make. Once after leading exercises I heard, "I didn't know that grandmas could do these kinds of things." Another time, after leading a very fast exercise, I heard, "I didn't know that you could go that fast." One student wanted to know "who runs this church" and what a pastor is, so Pastor Dave explained what he does as a pastor. Another student said that she liked this church and would like to work here. One day the students asked if they could see the rest of the church building, so during break we took a tour.

The program wouldn't work if we didn't have wonderful volunteers to help the students with their homework. Regular volunteers include Kay Burkett, Barbara Evans, Jeannette Hostetler (Jim), Sarah Hostetler, Miriam Lapp, Michelle Link, Sam Joe Plank, Donna Risner, Linda Roth, Ralph and Gloria Schultz, and Chuck and Jeanie Swartz. Substitutes are Mary Kay King, Pastor Dave Maurer, Dan Risner, and Pat Yoder. Dena Hostetler is the director and Elaine Newcomer is the manager.

We can always use donated snack items such as granola bars, juice, fresh fruit, cookies, snack crackers, pretzels, and animal cookies. Snack donations may be placed in the donation box on one of the filing cabinets in the kitchen.

What's going on at the Bethel Church library?

By Jeannette Hostetler, Librarian

Thank you for the positive feedback on *The Naked Anabaptist*. There are two copies so that you can discuss it with someone as you read it.

I have removed older books from the Craft and Teaching Assistance shelves. They can be found on a table between the Primary Department and the kitchen. I'm hoping that perhaps those coming and going in the Homework Help program or Sunday School classes might like to take some of these books.

We have several new donated books. Titles are *Quitting Church, She Has Done a Good Thing: Mennonite Women Leaders Tell Their Stories*, and *The Day of the Lord is at Hand*.

I was looking for the Christmas Veggie Tales DVDs in the children's library, but haven't found them. Has anyone seen them? Check the library after Christmas for more new books for winter reading.



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See us at:
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Junior youth enjoy refurbished Sunday School classroom

This year's junior high Sunday School class is meeting in a redecorated and refurbished room. The group is made up of three sixth graders, four seventh graders, and four eighth graders. Their regular teacher is Beth Maurer with Peggy Wirick teaching on the fourth Sunday of the month.

The ideas to make the room more youth-friendly came last April during the Facilities Discernment Weekend when several youth met with some of the moms and came up with ways to make the room a comfortable place to hang out, have fun and learn. Ellen Steiner and Kathy Lehman led the efforts to paint the room a pale blue, get rid of the junk, install additional electrical outlets, and paint the entire north wall with magnetic and chalkboard paint.

"My favorite thing in Junior High S.S. is the writing on the walls that we do each Sunday," says Becky Wilkins. "And all the stories with the conversations and the side conversations." Larissa Graber also likes the chalkboard wall and snacks.

In addition, the youth have an air hockey table given by Beth's mom, where an elimination tournament is going on, and a hot drinks table where they can make themselves

hot chocolate or other hot drinks while waiting for class to begin. About once a month they enjoy snacks during class.

The group came up with their own idea of what to study this fall, says Beth, choosing the books of I and II Kings. "We wanted a book from the Old Testament, with lots of people in it," explains Annie Steiner.

Formal class time begins with sharing, followed by some singing, prayer, and the day's lesson. "I like how we study the Bible, instead of just listening to someone tell us what's in the Bible," says Abigail Rabenstein.

"I like the fun teachers," say Ashley Rabenstein, Savannah Hostetler, and Matthew Snyder, while Rebekah Snyder enjoys the games and discussion. Both Alex Steiner and Michael Lehman enjoy the freedoms that come in junior high.

Dreams for Bethel include more people coming (Annie), an indoor gym (Alex), getting the younger kids more involved with the church (Ashley), getting rid of the stairs and rickety old elevator (Larissa), and getting the window fixed (Michael). But Savannah says, "I like Bethel the way it is!"

About the newsletter:

This newsletter is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by the church secretary.

Its purpose is three-fold:

~Inform the church about events

~Acquaint persons who attend Bethel with each other

~Inspire us to Christ-like living

Can you match each junior high youth with his or her favorite church song and Bible story?

(Answers on page 6)

NAME	SONG AND STORY
Michael Lehman	1. Days of Elijah; Acts 20:35
Abigail Rabenstein	2. Can't decide; Psalm 5:1-10
Rebekah Snyder	3. When long before time; Job
Alex Steiner	4. Blessed be your name; can't decide
Savannah Hostetler	5. Lord I lift your name on high; Moses
Becky Wilkins	6. Refiner's Fire; Esther
Larissa Graber	7. All in all; Abigail in I Samuel
Annie Steiner	8. Angels we have heard on high; The Creation
Matthew Snyder	9. Amazing Grace; Elijah on the mountain
Ashley Rabenstein	10. Amazing Grace; the talking donkey
Trace Robinaugh	11. He is exalted; The Tower of Babel