



## Lenten Worship Series: "Where do I sign?"

By Doug Steiner, Worship Chair

Like Advent, Lent is a time of preparation, a chance for us to embrace the narrative of Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection. It is not an easy story and it does not fit well with our society's narrative of wealth, independence and success. We must face the stark contradictions of Jesus call versus society's call. Then we must decide again what it means to follow Jesus. Is this call something we can sign up for, or should we choose another route?



to sign in, sign on and sign up. Do we understand the implications of "signing on" with God? What does it mean for us to maintain and grow our relationship with Jesus? What new areas is God calling us to explore and journey at this time? And what will that look like in our worship and in our communities?

This year's Lent series involves exploring the theme "Where do I sign?" and is taken from the Leader resource magazine, published by Mennonite Church, USA. God has an amazing way of repeatedly asking us

"Signing in, signing on, and signing up not only have implications for right now, but they also say something about tomorrow and next year."

-from *The Leader* Winter 2011/12

Lent begins on February 26. During the unfolding weeks leading up to Easter, look for "signs" along the way, and join us as we explore the radical call, and uncharted pathways, of God's obedient son.

# February Newsletter

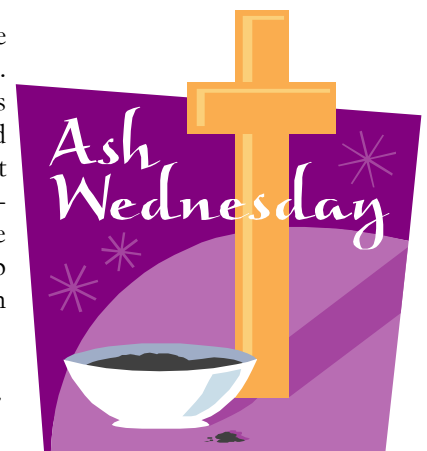
BETHEL MENNONITE CHURCH

### Ash Wednesday Service

By Pastor Rick Stoner

This year for Ash Wednesday we will be listening to the voices of the past. We are all shaped by different stories. Their national stories that shape us, entertainment stories that shape us, family stories that shape us and the list could go on and on. Yet, do we stop and think about the story that we are choosing to listen to? Well, this year for Ash Wednesday we are again taking time to consider the story of the martyrs from our own history. This will be a time to stop and listen and think about how their stories can be woven into our stories as we seek to be a faithful people of God.

*Light Meal at 6:30pm followed by the service at 7:15pm.*



## Looking at the Face of Small Groups at Bethel

By Sally Harshbarger

There has been a lot of conversation lately about small groups at Bethel. What does this all mean?

Well, to begin with, in our service to commission new leaders in October, we connected to our denominational vision of "Healing and Hope." God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ...and by His power...to grow as a community...so that God's healing and hope can flow through us to the world.

How do you grow as a follower of Jesus? In Sunday school? In worship through sermons, prayer, Bible study, and music? Through friendships? Through service? And how do we grow together as a community, when we are involved in so many other things? We would like to nurture this growth in both of these areas by expanding the small group program at Bethel.

To do this, we are getting better acquainted with groups that are already active.

We are also introducing two new groups to give opportunity to those who would like to join or try something new. The groups will meet for a 10-12 week interval, starting the first week of March. The groups will be led and hosted by teams from Bethel. They, along with members from the already existing small groups, will share their ideas and plans, during Community Sunday, February 12th.

**"...We feel that this can be an asset to Bethel to help us get to know each other and enable us to better serve one another as we reach out to our community..."**

Beyond our denominational vision, small groups are defined in the church's programming.... "provide a place of community and friendship within the church family." We feel that this can be an asset to Bethel to help us get to know each other and enable us to better serve one another as we reach out to our community.

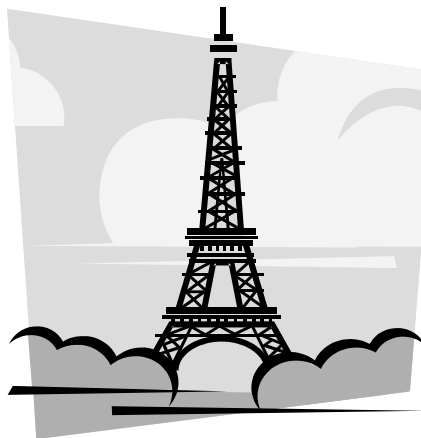
If you are interested in getting involved, there will be sign-up sheets available on the bulletin board. You may also notify Pastor Dave or myself of your interest or your questions.

**Bethel is in charge of the West Liberty Cares Food Pantry for the month of March**



### **F5 Saturday, March 10th 6pm** **By Pastor Rick Stoner**

The annual Fun, Food and Fellowship with Friends (F4) event has expanded to F5 (French, Fun Food and Fellowship with Friends) in honor of our upcoming trip to Montreal. This year we are holding our crazy night of eating, laughing, and dessert bidding on Saturday, March 10. The fun will be going down at 6:00pm in the Bethel fellowship room. The evening will begin with a French meal prepared by Chris Longennecker, and then let the craziness commence with the auction! Willie Yoder will be the auctioneer.



If you would like to donate an item(s) for the dessert auction we would ask that the item(s) be of a more gourmet nature (for example: pies, cakes, torts). However, if you would like to donate cookies, brownies, dessert bars, etc. those items will be placed in a silent auction, which people can bid on beforehand. In addition to the dessert items, we are expanding the auction to include donations of services like offering to cook a meal. Also, if you are a crafts-person, you can donate items that you have made. These items could include woodworking items, photography, jewelry, arts, etc. So, if you desire to donate something, please fill out the donation form in your box and return it to Pastor Rick.

## What's DIT?

By Pastor Dave Maurer

DIT...What could that possibly mean? "Done In Time?" "Do It Today?" "Dogs In Thailand?" "Disciples In Training?" No, DIT is short for Discernment Implementation Team and it could be defined as follows:

DIT is the current phase of our congregational work of discerning that began with our Facility Discernment Weekend and was focused by the Facility Discernment Task Force. Members of DIT included Pastor Dave, Pastor Rick, Dick Lindemer, Barbara Evans, Ken Shank, and Liesl Graber. DIT is prayerfully considering Luke 14:15-24 and seeking to encourage the congregation in praying for the Lord's leading, looking for connecting points to our community and acting out of our congregational gifting.

With this background, perhaps it might be more helpful to name what DIT is not...

**DIT is not a Building Committee:** DIT has not been asked to develop plans for remodeling or building. Rather DIT has been charged with implementing stage one of the Task Forces' plan: "Discerning the needs and passion, including the first three missional areas of prayer, gifts discernment, and getting to know the community." (ADCO Minutes 4/13/11)

**DIT is not a Vision Committee:** DIT

has not been asked to develop a new vision for the congregation and then hand it down for approval. Rather DIT is a focused effort to raise awareness of God's call upon us and ignite sparks of biblical imagination for missional practice in our community. We seek to aid the congregation in creative engagement with our changing landscape as we seek to re-order our world toward God's kingdom ideals.

**DIT is not Another Level of Bureaucracy:** DIT has not been formed to create one more group that must approve decisions before they proceed. DIT is a subcommittee of ADCO that is spending additional, intentional time looking at the bigger picture of God's call upon Bethel. As such,

DIT has no role in approving improvement projects. Rather DIT serves both as a group to foster congregational efforts to live out our faith and as a sounding board to committees and individuals at Bethel that have a vision for outreach.

DIT is a part of our congregational journey to fulfilling God's call upon us and our purpose "to experience and extend the gracious rule of God." DIT doesn't have the answers. God has those. Rather DIT strives to be a sign post continually directing our attention toward God and encouraging the congregation to be ever more about the work of seeking answers from the God we serve.

**discernment implementation team: n. a group of believers that gather to draw out, synthesize and carry into effect the insights of the congregation.**

**The Bible Quizzing  
Tournament is  
March 23-25th  
See bulletin board  
for information  
regarding hosting a  
traveling team.**

## Insight on Bible Quizzing

By Savannah Hostetler

This year I am involved in Bible quizzing. It is a very fun program that helps me learn more about God's amazing word. This is my first year quizzing, and my team's name is "The Vine and the Branches". I have seven people on my team: Ashley Rabenstein, Katie Hartsel, Alexa Smith, Grace Woodruff, Isaac Kauffman, Mariana Shank, and myself.



This year we are studying the book of John and for the first time in a while, the Invitationals will be held at West Liberty Salem School. I am very happy about finally being old enough to quiz, and I hope to continue quizzing through high school.

## The Minor Prophets So Far...

By Pastor Dave Maurer

In January, we began a journey through the Minor Writing Prophets. Why? Well, it was for a number of reasons. First, I believe that all of scripture is useful for study and nurture. This includes these prophets that we so often overlook. Second, Jesus refers back to the prophets; and if Jesus found value in them, shouldn't we spend time with them as well? Third, the prophets were faithful people living in very difficult times that were called to deliver unpopular messages. Perhaps they have something to teach us in our own day about living faithfully in difficult times with a sometimes unpopular message.

As we come to Ash Wednesday on Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of Lent, we will put our study of these prophets on hold until after Easter. By that time, we will have considered 6 of the 12. Perhaps this halfway point in the series is an appropriate time to consider what some of the lessons may be that we are learning from this study so far?

First, I believe that we see clearly and repeatedly that the people of God fall short of and often completely miss what God desires for them. With that comes difficult times, but also tremendous grace and forgiveness. When we are honest with ourselves, we also often fall short, if not completely miss what God intends for us. While we should keep striving to do as God wishes, we should also find comfort in God's grace and mercy in the midst of those failings.

Second, the prophets served as tangible signposts to God. In the midst of turmoil and destruction, of cultural and religious distractions, and of economic and social injustice, the prophets continued to direct the people's attention toward

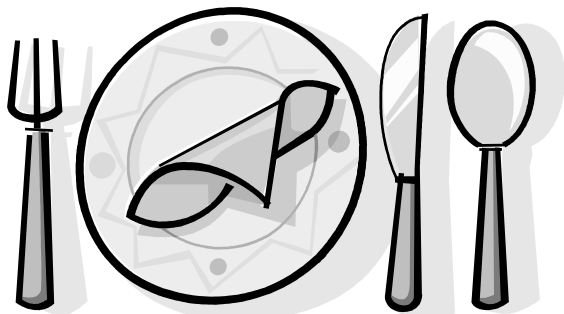
God. We too live in difficult times and we should be signposts to God. In loving and authentic ways, we should direct people's attention to God in the midst of their everyday lives. God is there all around us, and yet how often do we miss what God is doing?

Third, it is tempting to believe that following God is about effectiveness when, in reality, it is about faithfulness. The prophets were given a message to share with the people, warnings about impending destruction, and, at times, encouragements for the people to change course before it was too late. But it didn't work. The people of God continued to disobey God and ultimately received the punishment that the prophets warned was coming. The prophets' role was to be faithful to God, to deliver the message. It was up to God to worry about the effectiveness of the message. We too in our opportunities to share our faith with others may rarely be effective in bringing someone to Christ, but ultimately that is God's concern. Our concern is to be faithful to the call to share of our testimony or our faith in God.

It is probably fair to say that many of us struggle to read through the Minor Prophets, and that often times we tend to dismiss them as less important books of the Bible for us today. Yet we read in II Peter 3:2 "I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior." As such, it seems to me that in our study of these words of scripture, we are both fulfilling a call upon us and finding connections to our modern circumstances, perhaps even discovering lessons for how we can more fully live out our faith.

**Guess Who's  
Coming to  
Dinner?  
Sunday,  
March 4th**

## Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?



"Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" on March 4th? Plan now to participate in Bethel's annual fun fellowship event. Watch for the sign-up sheet in your mailbox soon!

## Memories of Dick Martin

By Mary Steiner Psolla

The passing of Dick Martin has spurred me and my family to recall many pleasant memories of the Martin family. For those who don't know the Martins, Dick was married to June and they have five children, Richard "Bruce," Tim, Rob, Heidi, and Nanci.

Orrie and Paul Harshbarger built a house for them just across the driveway from us on County Road 5. My son, Dan, and Tim were best friends through high school. Doug remembers Dick and June's old black Mustang convertible June asked Doug to drive to WL-S in the mornings when June worked at the school. Doug also played for the DeKalb "Cobbers," the local fast pitch softball team Dick's company sponsored and he coached. Jeff and Rob were in

the same grade and played ball together. Jeff and Matt also both recall riding with them to school during their high school years.

In my opinion, Dick was a "behind-the-scenes" type of person who made a significant and positive impact on many people in many situations in the West Liberty community. His obituary enumerates the many activities he was involved in during his years in the area.

I recall being on Bethel Church Council with him. We often walked away from those meetings commenting to each other about the discussion that we may or may not have agreed

with.

When Bethel Church was in search of a new minister, Dick took it upon himself to go to the Mennonite Seminary in Elkhart. There he recruited a young man who had just graduated, coming up with the person of Duane Beck, who remained pastor at Bethel for 12 years.

In Duane's message at the memorial service, Duane mentioned Dick's innate ability to detect a person's character when

first meeting them. I recall seeing Dick standing on the sidelines of a gathering, observing people and situations. One never knew what was going through his mind until later when perhaps he would make a contact or comment about

something/someone he had noticed.

I saw Dick as a humble man of few words who had a way of instigating positive happenings in many areas. It wasn't until after they moved from the West Liberty area that I realized the huge void and gaps that were left in Dick and June's place.

I know this is also true for Dick's family at the time of his passing on to the next life.

May God grant mercy and healing to those who are left behind.

**Richard O. Martin**  
**Born:** September 27, 1930 in  
 Duchess, Alberta, Canada  
**Married:** June 14, 1952, to  
 Elizabeth June Houser Martin  
**Passed Away:** January 16, 2012 in  
 Harrisonburg, VA

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We're on the web!  
 Check out:  
 bethelchurchwl.org



#### About our newsletter

This newsletter is published in February, April, June, August, October, and December by the Administrative Assistant.

Its purpose is three-fold:

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

## Happy birthday, Mennonite Church USA!



On Feb. 1, 2012, our denomination turned 10 years old. We invite you to join us in celebrating this milestone and giving thanks for the countless amazing ways that God's Spirit has been at work among us in this last decade—in our lives and relationships, in our congregations and communities, in our agencies and organizations. May God bless each of our congregations and strengthen us all in our efforts to live out our denominational vision: *God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.*—Mennonite Church USA national staff

