

Branching Out

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Mission programs

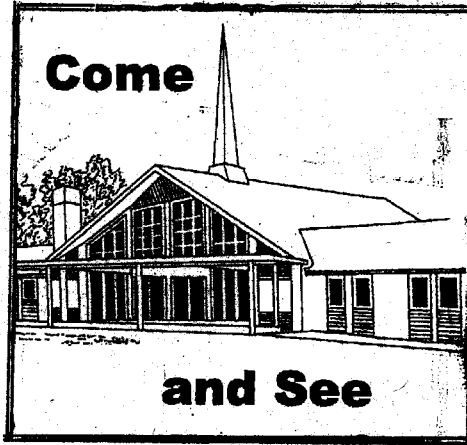
Today is the last opportunity to donate warm clothing, snack food and personal health products for homeless adults who will attend a special Sleep-In project at Union Baptist Church in Canton on January 23. This week, boxes of supplies, including 20 comforters hand-knotted by MWS members, will be delivered for the event.

Mission and Service Commission thanks everyone from Beech and Shepherd's Gate for 135 items, including mittens and gloves, hats, scarves and matching sets collected for the Giving Tree and delivered to Trinity Church in Canton, the area collection site. Several church groups and Shepherd's Gate also bought gifts for sponsored families from the Community Christmas project.

In December Patty and Vernon Yoder delivered a carload of bedding to the Canton Salvation Army and Nancy Schneider delivered food items collected at recent dinners to the Louisville Food Pantry.

Mission Commission chair, Tanya Hersberger, announced that over \$6300 was given Christmas Eve to the annual Gifts for Jesus offering. These monies are being divided among various local organizations including Hammer and Nails, the Food Pantry, Habitat and Alliance Pregnancy Support Center as well the Stutzmans at Wycliffe, Shannon's school in Paraguay, the Sutters in Thailand and international Mennonite groups such MCC and MDS. Some funds have also been reserved for local needs.

Game night starts winter activities



Beech's theme for 2011, was introduced with the above banner, the latest McKnight creation, during last Sunday's service. Pastor Dan's sermon, based on Psalm 66 and John 1:35-51' gave suggestions for sharing the theme, "Come and see!" These are reviewed in his column on page 4.

Some physical changes have also occurred at Beech. Two Sunday School groups have exchanged rooms with the MYF giving their room to the Beech Women Serving so they would have a permanent and easily accessible area for quilting, knotting and storing their materials. MYF is now upstairs in the refurbished classroom vacated by Friendship Class's move into the Conference Room.

Another change is the installation of a cabinet in the Conference Room to hold historic items such as old pulpit Bibles, photos and records. Information on this project, which is being organized by Anna Belle Schmucker, will be forthcoming in the next few months.

Last evening, a family game and pie night was held in Fellowship Hall to kick off winter activities being planned by Congregational Life Commission. (CLC) The Committee members brought homemade desserts and everyone contributed their favorite card and board games for a relaxing and fun evening. There were also activities for the young children.

The traditional Wednesday evening sessions, now known as ELF, will restart on February 2nd. Again, supper will begin at 5:45 p.m. with classes for children and adults from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. There will be two five-week sessions with an Ash Wednesday service held in between on March 9th.

Along with the perennial Hearts and Hands Serving, the CLC is planning a slate of interesting topics for the adult sessions. Other topics for the first five weeks are: There is more to health than not being sick; Spiritual Journeys and Wildlife and Science Films. Other topics for the second five weeks include: Boundaries: When to say 'Yes'; when to say 'No' to take control of your life, Spiritual Journeys and Minor Prophets. The complete schedule will be placed in mailboxes soon.

Upcoming mission projects

Since participation in the Homeless Sleep-In project developed very recently, the planned project for January-February, Relief Kits, for MCC refugee camps, has been moved back one month and will now begin in February. A list of needed items will be available

Corner

Just as Barnabas encouraged others in the New Testament church, let us encourage others here at Beech Church. If you would like to thank someone for a job well done, place your item for "Barnabas' Corner" in Deanna Slater or Rachel Witmer's mailbox.

Passing the Torch

Sunday morning, January 2, 2011 was a service with special meaning for the congregation and also opened our eyes to new opportunities for the coming year. Part of the service was a commissioning event for Ken Weibush, member and participant at Beech. Ken's spiritual journey has been shared freely by him and his decision to study at Rosedale Bible College was celebrated during his last Sunday worship before leaving for school.

As I was standing on the platform with a group of persons laying hands on and praying for Ken, I was privileged to see a passing of the spiritual torch from our former pastor, Melvin Leidig, as his hand rested on Ken's arm. Our present pastor, Dan, facilitated Mel's involvement. I hope the congregation was able to hear the prayer of blessing on a younger brother that day. What a joy to be witness to this moment! What a call for each of us to remember and bless those whose lives touch ours.

The words of the apostle Paul seemed especially fitting at this event: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. rw

Branching Out is the newsletter of Beech Mennonite Church. Its purpose is to keep the members and regular attendees informed of coming events and of the church organizations' activities.

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Thank you

We really appreciate all the efforts and cooperation in providing us with a room for our sewing. Nancy Schneider did a great job in coordinating the move. Thanks to Lavera and family for cleaning the carpet, shelves, etc. and all the painting. Also thanks to Arden for putting up the sturdy wall shelves for us. Thanks to the youth, elders, trustees, council and Sunday School classes for all their cooperation and assistance.

We met in our new room Wednesday, January 5th, and the ladies remarked how great it was not to have to lift, set up and tear down each time. They especially enjoyed the sun shining in the windows!

Blessings to all of you this new year,

Beech Women Serving

Navajo thank you

Deanna, Roger and Patty,

I thank you so much for the materials and clothes for those that need jackets. We pass them on. They are appreciated. Being thankful for materials, I made some comforters out of that materials and she (Patty) send me instruction how to make comforters that really helps. One of my Granddaughters took some pictures of me doing hand sewing.... Tell her I (am) really thankful to her for materials and instructions.

May God bless you all. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Johnson and Liz

(The pictures and original note are posted on the Missions Commission Bulletin Board.)

I know of few people who have a heart for the less fortunate like Patty Yoder. She is the "Energizer Bunny" when it comes to heading up projects for quilts, comforters, care packages, etc. for local ministries. I have given up trying to stay abreast of her activities! Obviously she has many supportive "team members" at Beech who give countless hours to help meet physical needs in our area. But she is the tireless one who keeps things moving. Thanks, Patty!

dk

Did you know...

...that Ken Weibush last week began religion classes at Rosedale College, Irwin, OH? He is living in a dormitory on campus and can be reached by cell phone, mail or email:

xkkwsteelerfan@aol.com,

...that Krista Helmuth has arrived in Fort Defiance, AZ on the Navajo Reservation? She and a friend from Ohio Northern University School of Pharmacy will spend six weeks of their rotation interning in the Indian Health Hospital facility there.

Dates to remember

Today – Noon Mission Meal in FH –following service; sing-along after meal.

Thur. – MYF Movie Night; time tba

Jan. 20 –9:30 a.m. - Lavera's Bible Study

7 p.m. – Church Council

Tba – MYF Movie Night

Jan. 23 – 12:30 p.m. Ohio Conf. mtg., Kidron

Jan 28-29 – Mother-Daughter Retreat, "Exploring Creativity" (see Bbd for registr.)

Wed., February 2 – MWS all day meeting

ELF Night resumes - 5:45 pm meal;

6:30 classes for children & adults

Thurs., Feb. 10 – Shepherd's Gate Spaghetti

Dinner and Bake Sale, FH, 4:30-7:30 pm

Fri-Sat, May 20-21 – Shepherd's Gate Con-

signment Sale in Fellowship Hall

Feb. 17 – 7 p.m. Conference Cluster meeting,

Sonnenberg Mennonite Church

Feb. 25-27 – Sustainable Food & Farming Conf,

Laurelville. See flier on bulletin board.

Shepherd's Gate report

Enrollment openings continue to be available at Shepherd's Gate. During the past month, we have had some new openings, both full-time and part-time. We now offer a 25% discount to children of church members, a sibling discount for full-time enrollees and a referral bonus to enrolled families who bring us new children. Please share with family and friends that we offer quality, faith-based child care to the community.

Special thanks to Lavera Helmuth and her grandchildren for doing work in the Child Care

Shepherd's Gate news (cont.)

Center office over our Christmas break. The old wallpaper border was painstakingly removed, the walls painted, and the carpet cleaned. Before Christmas, Lavera also prepared a wonderfully delicious Christmas brunch for the staff. Thanks also to Gale

Sommers who donated a portion of her holiday sales to Shepherd's Gate. Tim McKnight sharpened the teachers' scissors for us, too.

We appreciate the support of all the church members who faithfully support us through-out the year.

Our Shepherd's Gate families donated nearly 20 items for the mitten tree and collected nine boxes of gifts for our Community Christmas family. We are blessed to have families who set a positive example of stewardship for their children.

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Spaghetti dinner

Shepherd's Gate will be holding a Spaghetti

Dinner and Bake Sale on Thursday, February 10 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Donations for dinner supplies and baked goods will be accepted. Look for sign-up sheets on the door of the church copy room. Bring your family, sweethearts and friends for a relaxing evening of great food and fellowship as you can support Shepherd's Gate.

Spring Consignment Sale

Remember to keep our second annual Spring Children's Consignment Sale, slated to be held May 20 & 21 in Fellowship Hall in mind as you reorganize and clean out your closets over winter. Children's clothing, toys and games, baby equipment and maternity clothes are among the items that will be sold. For more information, contact Jen Hartzler at jenhartzler2@gmail.com.

More "Come and See" Thoughts**- Pastor's Corner**

There's no shortage of pessimism to go around these days! Disappointment with government officials who are at each other's throats, a sluggish economy, senseless violence, widespread neglect of God's standards, and a decline in church participation, especially among young people....to name just a few. So it might appear absurd and naïve to say that I am optimistic as 2011 begins! But I am. Maybe it's because I know God is ultimately in control of this messy planet, even if it doesn't look like it. Regardless of the "opposition", God's reign ultimately will come and God's will is going to be done on earth just like it's done in heaven. Years ago I told my church in Miami, FL (and I may have said it at Beech also), "*The darker the darkness, the clearer and brighter any light will shine, regardless of its size.*" Think of the joy and comfort you've received on a pitch-black night in your camping tent when you finally, Braille method, locate your small flashlight and turn it on.

Do we really believe that our little "Beech lights" can make a difference? You betcha! That's why we are going to be more pro-active in 2011 to issue this invitation to friends and neighbors: "*Come and see.*" To review last Sunday's message, here are three things people can see when they come: the awesome works of God on our behalf, the joy of seeing God answer prayers, and, most importantly, the very presence of Jesus among us! Although we are far from being a perfect church, if Jesus is here, that is all we need.

There are many ways this "*come and see*" invitation can be given. Everyone can be involved. The yellow pledge card you received on Sunday can be put in a visible place to remind you of your commitments. Other ideas have been stirring in my head. I have shared a number of them with the Elders this week and will post their handout on the "Outreach" section of the bulletin board near my office. Please check it out. If you do, you may notice very little mention of "advertising", such as newspapers, radio spots, or billboards. Those may have their place, but I believe the most effective method is still "*word of mouth.*" That is why I included the following in our pledge card, "*to speak positively of Beech to others.*" Each of us has our own list of things we appreciate about Beech. Collectively, the list is probably longer than we think! So let's focus on the good things that God is doing here at Beech. Let's work at healthy relationships with each other, so that guests who come will sense the warmth of God's love among us. And let's keep our eyes open for opportunities to extend the "*come and see*" invitation to others.

I am looking forward eagerly to this new year of opportunity to expand God's Kingdom! Are you?

- Pastor Dan

Pieces of Peace With Justice – January 16, 2011

“We believe that peace is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God’s peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation and practicing nonresistance, even in the face of violence and warfare.”

---1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective

The shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, along with the deaths of six persons and wounding of 13 others in Arizona is cause for us to pause and reflect on how we as followers of the ‘Prince of Peace’ respond to such events. According to her colleagues ‘Gabby’ as everyone called her was a ‘reconciler’ – a person who reached out to others regardless of ethnicity, social standing, or political views – she was a good listener and was doing that very thing on that Saturday morning at the shopping center in Tucson.

The sheriff of Tucson said this must be an occasion for ‘soul searching’ for all of us. Jim Wallis, (Sojourners) said this week, “A central calling for Christians is to be peacemakers. Peace, we understand is not simply the absence of current conflict, but the presence of a just community. . . and that ‘we need to reflect deeply on how we speak to and about one another, and how we create environments that help peace grow, or allow violence and hatred to enter. Many of us who would never consider violence of the fist have been guilty of violence in our hearts and with our tongues. We need to be able to relate to others with who we disagree on important issues without calling them evil.” (Read the entire article on the MCC/Peace/Justice bulletin board:)

President Obama, speaking to the large crowd at the memorial service in Tucson, in recognizing each of the persons who lost their lives, said this is a time of sadness and grief, but also a time of hope for a divided country – hope because of the persons who rose to the occasion and acted heroically to save lives, without concern for their own. He gave an impassioned plea that we come together in a way that heals, not wounds. He said that it is not wealth or fame that matters but how well we have loved and what we have done to make people’s lives better, and that we want to be sure our conduct is worthy of the honor of those who lost their lives. In talking about the active, young nine year old girl who died he said, “I want to live up to her expectations. I want all of America to live up to her expectations.” As Christ’s followers, let’s use this challenge to reach out to all people with love and grace and hope for a less violent, more just community and world. Let’s also pray for the families and community of Tucson that they might find healing amidst grief.

On January 17, we celebrate the birthday of another person, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who lost his life, trying to bring hope and justice to persons of color and those on the fringes of our society. As a church of white privilege, we still have much to learn about the issues of racism, equality and fairness. Check out various services in our community – Malone College and on Monday the service at 12:00 at the Community Center, 1400 Sherrick Rd. SE in Canton.

-Lois Leidig

CHECK IT OUT!**New Children's DVDs**

1. It's a Meaningful Life - Veggietales
2. Sweetpea Beauty – Veggietales
3. Where the Wild Things Are
4. Mandie and the Secret Tunnel

Youth Bible Study DVDs

1. The Kingdom is Big Enough for You
2. Bridge to Forgiveness
3. Vocation! Vocation! Vocation!
4. Don't Sit on You Stuff

New Books

1. Sensing Peace - What does peace smell like? What does it taste, feel, sound or look like? **Suzana E. Yoder** encourages children ages 4 to 7 to see what peace looks, sounds, feels, tastes and smells like their everyday moments—things like laughing, cooking, gardening, singing or sharing ice cream.
2. Walking in Peace - *Walk in Peace* reflects the wish of parents around the globe as they send their little ones off to school, to play, to do chores, to encounter an unfamiliar world. Moms and Dads assure their children of God's love and protection, reminding them to *Walk in Peace*.
3. Simply in Season, Expanded Edition - With over 94,000 copies sold, *Simply in Season* is more than just a bestseller—it is meeting an important need for information and inspiration about living and eating simply and well. This new expanded edition contains additional recipes, together with stories that reflect on the food we buy and the way we eat—and how it affects our local and global neighbors.
4. Saving the Season: How to can, Freeze, or Dry Almost Anything - You can't get much closer to the source of your food than canning or preserving it yourself! Loaded with helpful tips, charts, and user-friendly recipes for beginners and experts alike, *Saving the Seasons* shows how to enjoy the season's bounty all year long.
5. Under Construction: Reframing Men's Spiritually - Are warriors and monks the only images for male spirituality? **Gareth Brandt** says no. Using the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis, he shows that male spirituality reaches its height when it shows compassion to all people, and finds meaning through promoting peace, love and justice.
6. Living More with Less, 30th Anniversary Edition - Revised and updated by **Valerie Weaver Zercher**, this 30th anniversary edition is true to author **Doris Janzen Longacre's** spirit of living in ways that keeps poor people, God's creation and each other in mind—and is loaded with new and practical tips in areas such as money, travel, clothing, housing, celebrations and recreation.