

Branching Out

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COME GROW WITH US IN 2012

AWESOME DEEDS FILLED YULETIDE

An evermore exciting and musically inspiring yuletide season climaxed with the Christmas weekend activities. On Christmas Eve, the adult choir sang a magnificent Contata and the enchanting children's bell choir also performed, along with Pastor Dan's brief message and traditional hymns.

On Christmas Day, at least 80 people enjoyed a continental breakfast served by Congregational Life Commission. More beautiful music, including the year's last performance of our adult Christmas Choir and the children's bell choir, greeted worshippers. Our youthful Praise Team led more enthusiastic singing.

The yuletide programming exemplified our theme: Being Aware of "God's Awesome Deeds." Certainly the awesome music led and organized by Larry Herris enriched each service! Along with our own organists and pianist and those playing in Praise Team, also had the Brass Society throughout one Sunday service. Several vocal groups, both adults and children also participated.

Our worship leaders and Pastor Dan prepared us for the long awaited birth of Christ, as did the MYF's presentation of "The Bethlehem Inn." The McKnights' striking banners and other decorations enhanced our celebration. Our carolers shared their musical gifts with the community. Sandy Roth served refreshments afterward.



MISSION NEWS

Combined efforts of MWS, Shepherd's Gate families and staff and Beech congregation contributed over 160 items to the Community Christmas Mitten Tree Project this year. Donations of winter coats from Angie Williams' family and the Yoders resulted in a large box of warm clothing being sent to Chinle, AZ, where Johnson and Lizzie John will distribute them to needy Navajo people.

On Christmas Eve, the Beech family gave \$2,231.61 to the "Gifts for Jesus" offering. These funds will be disbursed by the Missions Commission to local and world projects.

At the December 7th, MWS meeting, it was announced that 169 children's and adult comforters were made from January-December 2011.

WINTER MISSION PROJECT

Once again, MWS joins Missions in gathering supplies for Shepherd's Gate Child Care Center. Items needed, including paper supplies and snack food, can be placed in a box in the Narthex. See bulletin board for complete list.

"Worry is a dark room where negatives are developed."

As you read in Pastor Dan's column, Beech Church's theme for 2012 is "Come Grow With Us" - a natural progression from last year's "Come and See." Now those who have been attending here will be encouraged to make or renew their commitment. Your ideas are welcome.

JANUARY ACTIVITIES

Activities encouraging friendship and growth in Christ begin Saturday; all men are invited to a Beech Fellowship Breakfast at Bob Evans Restaurant, Lesh Road and Rt. 62. A worship workshop is planned for Wednesday evening, January 18 (details TBA), and Congregational Life Commission is planning a fun evening later in January.

WINTER ELF NIGHT

Because January often brings bad weather, a series of eight ELF nights begin Wed., February 1st, with an Ash Wednesday service. Light suppers start at 5:45 p.m. Under the capable supervision of Nancy Schneider.

Classes for all ages begin at 6:30 p.m. Adults choices: Jim and Rachel Witmer, lead discussions about the effects of the Civil War ("100 year Celebration") on people of peace; Larry Emery shows more Nature and Science Movies; Natalie and David Sommers continue their parenting classes and Patty Yoder leads craft sessions. There are classes for children, ages 2-4 and K-grade schoolers. (Pastor Dan providing Bible Memory and special music), and MYF. Childcare provided.

Corner

Just as Barnabas encouraged others in the New Testament church, let us encourage others here at Beech Church.

AN AWARD WINNING EVENING

Beautifully decorated atmosphere, low lighting as you entered the dining hall, delicious food and superb acting made for an absolutely fun evening at Beech Mennonite Church when the MYF presented "The Bethlehem Inn" on Sunday, December 4.

A dinner theatre atmosphere prevailed throughout the evening with various courses served by most gracious and efficient waiters and waitresses interspersed with six scenes from the comical but realistic portrayal of life in Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth.

The food was definitely 5 star-rated; seasoned to perfection, served family style at the right temperature. One couldn't ask for a better meal.

As far as the acting was concerned; that was superb. The lines were memorized, the actors looked like they were truly enjoying their work and they kept all who attended laughing and on the edge of their seat's waiting for the next scene. They were having fun which made the audience have fun.

The end of the play was absolutely fabulous. I knew what to expect but wasn't prepared for the feeling that came over me when I saw the live nativity scene on the patio in front of the church. I was one of the first persons outside to see it and when I walked out it felt like the temperature was warmer, the scene was so still yet alive with the children slightly smiling, the animals moving and the little manger with a baby doll. It was so peaceful. I truly had to fight back a few tears. To hear the nativity story read and hearing the Christmas carols sung was very meaningful.

This was a very special evening and a big thank you to the MYF and their sponsors for all of the hard work and energy put into this performance. Thank you also to all who participated in helping them to make this a success. Looking forward to next year!

--Submitted by Jean Emery--

As I was sitting in the service on Christmas morning, a sense of joy and fullness came over me. My mind wandered over the Advent season here at Beech. It felt like the best I've ever experienced. The Dinner Theatre, the children singing and playing bells, all the amazing music, the decorations, and the Isaiah readings that came alive in a new way. So many persons cheerfully volunteered their talents and time to give our church this amazing experience. I am still going to sleep and waking up with the memories. Thank you all!

--Submitted by Jeanette King--

A special thank you to Cliff Linder, Rich Linder and Glenn Hostetler for their gift of oranges to each person attending on Christmas morning.

--Stan and Alma Schloneger--

CONGRATULATIONS

Lois Leidig celebrated her 80th birthday on December 11 in the Fellowship Hall. Daughter, Shari, planned the event. Lois' picture and an interview were also in that Sunday's Canton Repository.

Alec Leaman was selected as the 8th grade Student of the Month for Louisville Schools, his picture was in a recent Louisville Herald.

Shepherd's Gate Child Care Center received a 100% compliance score during a surprise State inspection Christmas week.

Olivia and Ava Parrish were pictured in two recent Louisville Herald's.

NOTE FROM CHURCH TREASURER

You can help Wycliffe Bible Translators' Philippine missionary, Rudy Bariaan, in his work with language translation by supporting James Miller's planned March 2012 trip to work on building repairs in the Dibagat Village. Approximate cost is \$2,500. Contributions can be made to the church's "Philippine Fund."

*"To cast a great shadow,
you need to stand in God's light."*

*"Anyone who keeps the ability
to see beauty never grows old."*

--by Franz Kafka, Author (1882-1924)--

IN MEMORY OF:

John E. Miller, of Louisville passed away comfortably with his family by his side on December 12, 2011. Born in Canton, OH and raised in Beech Church, John was a retired dairy farmer and also retired from Canton Hotel and Restaurant Supply.

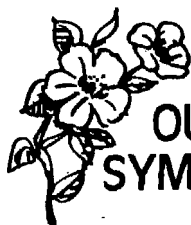
Preceded in death by his daughter, Susan Miller; a grandson, Jason Miller and a brother, Richard. John is survived by his wife, Patricia: a daughter, Karla (Doug) Hammen and sons, Kevin (Marylou) Miller; Derrick (Deb) Miller, Todd Miller, Collin Miller and John Jr. (Gina) Miller. He also has two sisters, Esther (Clair) Hostetler and Eldina (David) Nussbaum; two brothers, James (Marilyn) Miller and David (Bonnie) Miller; a sister-in-law, Margaret Miller; 14 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

John's service was conducted by Pastor Terry Bailey and family members at Beech Mennonite Church on December 20, 2012 with interment in Beech Mennonite Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to Hope Ministries, %Beech Mennonite Church.

Bernice Stutzman, a resident of Louisville, passed away December 13, 2011 in her home. An active member of Beech Mennonite Church, she was active in the ladies' sewing circle (MWS) and had been a Sunday School teacher.

Bernice was preceded in death by her husband, Vernon in 1992 and a brother, Vincent Hostetler. She is survived by three daughters, Carol (David) Tournoux, Janine (Todd) Henderson, and Judy Stutzman of the home; three sons, Ed Stutzman of N. C., Galen (Bonnie) Stutzman of N.C., and Ron (Christine) Stutzman of Louisville and two brothers, Mervin (Fern) Hostetler and Cletus Hostetler, both of Harrisonburg, VA; 12 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at Beech with Pastor Dan King officiating and burial was in Beech Church Cemetery. Memorial gifts may be made to Beech Mennonite Church.



**OUR
SYMPATHY**

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol.

- The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
- Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.
- Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.
- The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.
- The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.
- The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
- Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Prophesy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.
- The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.
- Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control.
- The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.
- The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
- The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

Merry (Twelve Days of) Christmas Everyone!!

--Submitted by the Christian Fellowship Class

May each of you

experience the fullness of Christ

as you begin the New Year!!

NEWS FROM SHEPHERD'S GATE

The children at Shepherd's Gate had a very busy December. They learned all about the baby Jesus. Jesus' birthday was celebrated with singing and a birthday cake. Many decorations and special gifts were made throughout the month.

Our themes this month are:

January 2-6	Ringin in the New Year!
January 9-13	Let's Sleep (Hibernation)
January 16-20	Snowmen on Parade
January 23- 27	What to Wear?

Please remember Shepherd's Gate before throwing out your Sunday coupons. We use coupons to make our budget stretch farther. Any coupons are greatly appreciated. Thank you to those of you that have been saving your coupons for us.

Currently Shepherd's Gate has enrollment openings for preschool ages 3, 4, and 5 year olds. We will have one toddler opening available February 23, 2012. We have only one school age opening left for after school care. Beech Mennonite Church members receive a 25% discount off their child's tuition. We also have sibling discounts for full time enrollees. Referral bonuses are issued to enrolled families that recommend new families who enroll their child. Shepherd's Gate is proud to offer high quality child care in a loving, faith based atmosphere. Please tell family and friends about our wonderful facility.

Thank you for all your prayers, love, and support. We are so blessed with such a wonderful church family.

All of us at Shepherd's Gate wish all of you a very happy, healthy New Year.

God Bless You!

In His Love,

Janet Mangus

Director SGCCC

SHARING WITH APPALACHIAN PEOPLE

In 2008, a small group of adults and youth went to Harlan, KY, for a week of service, home repairs, learning and fun. Sharing with Appalachian people (SWAP) is a well-run MCC project that emphasis service, love for all people and dependence on God.

This summer from June 25-30, 2012, we are planning another week at SWAP at the same location. The cost of the trip is \$325, which covers food, a place to stay, and materials for the home repairs. Other costs not included would be gas money, fast food on the way there and back, and ice cream at the nearby Dairy Queen. There is some money for "scholarships" for any who would like to go but don't want it to be a financial burden.

In order to coordinate the trip and make plans with the MCC SWAP office, a \$50 deposit is due on January 22 (check to Beech Mennonite and handed to Tanya Hershberger). The final payment is due March 31. We will meet as a group several times to prepare ourselves, learn more about SWAP and plan logistics.

A typical day starts with an early breakfast, a prayer circle, leaving the Pine Mountain Camp where we sleep and eat by 8, working at a Harlan resident's home (visiting, painting, roofing and who knows what else), traveling back to Pine Mountain at 4, showers, supper and a short evening worship service, free time and finally a well-deserved rest. It is a challenging but rewarding week. If you would like more information, have questions or need a scholar- ship, please contact Tanya Hershberger (330-588-8828 or thershberger@malone.edu).

Pieces of Peace With Justice

“Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to *make* peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of *making* peace between Himself and others.” II Corinthians 5:17-19 CEV

**“When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.”**

Howard Thurman 1899--1981

A question one heard often before Christmas was “Are you ready for Christmas?” It’s an innocent question but usually means “Are you finished shopping, have the house cleaned, have food ready for the celebration of Christmas? Should we not have a sense of Jesus’ coming and what that meant on the first Christmas. We are so enamored by the ‘me first’ culture around us that we sometimes forget, that, as a receptionist said to me “it’s in here” patting her heart. There are so many ways we can think of kindnesses to others in our daily lives such as a smile when someone is grouchy, letting a person with a few groceries go ahead if my cart is full or letting someone cut in front of me if need be when I am driving. Jesus people ought to be the kindest people in the community. We were the recipients of a ‘pay it forward’ experience when I stepped up to the counter at a restaurant to pay our lunch bill a lady standing in the candy line stepped up and insisted on taking care of it. We heard of many situations like that this year. Let’s try to keep those kinds of things on our minds the whole year around – then next year we can say, “Yes, I’m ready for Christmas.”

****On January 16 we will be reminded of another way to seek peace as we celebrate the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. The year 2012 will be one when we will need to speak out for justice, in our communities, our country and our world. We can’t speak of peace to persons who are hungry, homeless or are discriminated against because of their ethnicity. With elections ahead we will be confronted with a number of decisions. Will we be willing to live a public faith, to speak out on behalf of *all* the people instead of just our own needs or the will of a few? If we are Jesus people we will need to ponder what it means and find ways to act justly. This is a crucial time to pray for our government and let politicians know how we feel. We *can* make a difference!**

Looking Ahead – January 16 -- Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration-Coleman Center-Canton

January 24 –7:00 Worldview Forum – Malone College – Topic “The Morality of Debt” by proponents Ron Sider, an evangelical social activist and Ryan Messmore.

“Come Grow With Us” - Pastor’s Corner - January 2012

Looking back once again over 2011, it’s been a good year here at Beech! I have summarized some of our church family’s highlights in the Annual Report, so I won’t duplicate. But I’d like to reflect briefly on how our theme, *“Come and See”*, played out during the year. Thanks to Tim and Gayle, a new banner reminded us of our motto whenever it was hung in the sanctuary. We considered how Isaiah 56:7,8 could be seen as words of promise from God, about *“gathering still others besides those already gathered”* and *“giving us joy in his house of prayer”*. And true to his Word, God has drawn a significant number of new people to us this year. The sub-theme, you might recall, was to be aware of the “awesome deeds” that God is doing. It truly has been exciting to see God at work among us! We are by no means a perfect church. But by God’s grace, we can say, among other things, that we are a church family that....

...truly cares for one another.

...allows people to try new things, testing and using their God-given gifts.

...warmly welcomes newcomers and seeks to integrate them into the life of the Body.

...gives generously of time, talents, and finances beyond its walls to a wide variety of needs, both near and far.

As I considered what theme we might adopt for 2012, there seemed to be a natural progression from *“Come and See”* to *“Come Grow with Us”*. For all who have *“come and have seen”* the presence of Jesus here at Beech, now is the appropriate time to consider taking the next step: making a commitment (first time or renewal) to *“put down roots and grow.”* (If you recall, that was the idea Megan had for our Parade T-shirts several years ago, not knowing, I’m sure, that it would have extended meaning!)

Additional pieces to the theme puzzle have fallen into place, causing me to sit up and notice God at work. At our November meeting, Elders approved this 2012 theme and discussed several ideas to support it. The *Leader* magazine for the Lent 2012 season arrived recently. I was amazed at their chosen theme for Lent: *“Where do I sign?”* An invitation to respond to God’s call and to become engaged in God’s work in the world. And Sandy Roth must have had an “inside track” on the Spirit back in late August as she made plans for our Constitute Parade event. You might recall that she created Beech business cards to put in the candy bags. And what motto did she choose *“out of the blue”*? You guessed it: *“Come Grow With Us”*! (I have many more cards in my office if you could use some.)

As the year begins, I am developing plans for the first 6-7 sermons to center on ways we can grow in our spiritual journey. But I am certain that there are many more good ideas out there among Beech folks! So I invite your input as well. Look for a flip chart paper hanging somewhere near my office and jot down your ideas for promoting growth at Beech during 2012. I am excited as I imagine the good things God may have in store for us this year. Happy New Year!