



# Bethel Mennonite Church

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## Newsletter

### Freedom Bound Advent – Epiphany 2015-16

Compiled by Ken Beidler

The Advent season is a time of reflection of how God’s coming in Jesus releases us from personal, social and historical chains that bind us. The theme for this Advent-Epiphany season is “Freedom Bound”. We live in the paradox that we are both bound and free, on a march to freedom but encumbered by the burden and sin we carry; we are carrying the scars of struggle but living with a new hope. God’s freedom takes us down pathways of justice, mercy, trust, love, service and inclusion. “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths” (Psalm 25:4).

Whether from imprisonment in Roman jails (Paul’s letters), or from exile in Babylon (the context of the prophets), or from the second-class citizenship of Jews in first-century Palestine ruled by Rome (the Gospels), our Advent-Epiphany scriptures speak to us of people struggling to live in difficult political, social and personal situations. In our North American context, it is impossible to think of freedom without bringing to mind the experience of African slaves brought to our continent against their will. The desire for dignity, release from unfair labor conditions, freedom from violence, and the right to advocate for change marked the civil rights movement. For Aborigines/Native Americans in both Canada and the United States, the arrival of European immigrants caused suffering, death and forced resettlement. Living with that legacy of hurt and pain with those who suffered most takes us on a journey of solidarity and healing.



Advent is typically seen as a season of waiting, but with all that God has yet to do through us we cannot be satisfied with a passive waiting. Our waiting is active, full of energy, lamenting, mindful of suffering, and hope filled. Advent is a time set aside for spiritual renewal, a time to develop a more robust and resilient faith.

Freedom is coming! The restless prophets of old, John the Baptist, Elizabeth and John, Mary and Joseph and Jesus himself sing this same song of God’s longing for mercy and justice for all. Will we join them singing on the paths of justice, mercy, trust, love, service and inclusion? Will we confront the parts of ourselves that keep us from hearing the clarion call to freedom? To his listeners in the gospel of John who heed his teaching, Jesus says, “You will know the truth and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). What truth are we being asked to see more clearly? What obstacles in God’s path to freedom are we being asked to put aside so that we may abound in love? Then, alive in the Spirit, we too may become communities of joy and peace sharing God’s song of grace with the world.

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## Announcements:

- ♦ We will host a farewell potluck for the Maurer Family on December 20th following the church service.
- ♦ Christmas Caroling is tentatively scheduled for December 20th at 4 pm. Watch the bulletin for any updated times or dates.
- ♦ Christmas Eve Service will be December 24th at 7 pm. This will be the Maurer's final worship time with our congregation before they move.
- ♦ Christmas Lunch will be served on December 25th, 2015. Watch for signup sheet to bring food and volunteer to deliver meals.
- ♦ Christmas Breakfast is Sunday, December 27th at 9 a.m. Please plan to attend! There will be no planned Sunday School so you may linger and visit.
- ♦ Community Movie Night is December 30th at 7:00 p.m. We will show Christmas classic, "White Christmas" In an effort to minimize cleanup afterwards, we are going to show the movie in the Fellowship Hall. Popcorn, cookie and cocoa donations as well as bottled water are appreciated, and a sign up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board.
- ♦ The next Red Cross Blood Drive is scheduled for Friday, January 29th. Time TBA .

## Bethel/Oak Grove Mennonite Women by Donna Lehman

It was a room full of 'busy hands' when we met for the November meeting, and that was a good thing, as the theme for the day was "You can't use up creativity." In line with this theme, Mary Psolla had decorated the tables with yard goods and sewing notions. We enjoyed a meal of taco soup with fruit and those with the last name initials L



through R brought desserts. After the meal, Kyle noted 2 special birthdays-Dave Maurer and Kathy Graber!

Business: Mary noted that at the Adriel Auction, the Drunkard's Path quilt brought \$250, a fall comforter \$90, table runner \$50, and the hydrangea wall hanging \$60.

Show and Tell: Sally showed her well kept childhood dolls, which had very creative clothes knitted and sewn by her aunt. Mary Kay had items from Pauline Yoder's estate: vintage templates for quilts and a photo of a wallhanging this group made in the 70's for a Japanese group--"A circle of friends to our sisters in Japan." Kyle

wore her grandfather's denim 'Lee's' jacket--over 50 years old and in tip-top shape. Suzy had made two mini-wallhangings, both star designs.

Mary, in her devotional regarding 'Creativity' had a quote from May Angelou, "You can't use up creativity; The more you use, the more you have." The scripture was taken from Exodus 35 and 36 regarding Moses' building of the tabernacle. People were asked to bring items to help with the project and in their willingness, brought more than was needed. Those that were skilled used their gifts

in various ways. Mary pointed out various gifts we share in this group. In the Lord's work, it takes us all, giving of our resources and skills.

Work completed: 13 health kits sewed and filled, 5 school kits sewed and filled, 1 newborn kit and 4 comforters. Attendance was 27.

In December, we will be decorating cookies for Adriel and others. The meal is a Christmas potluck.

### Contact Information:

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Pastor: Dave Maurer  
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Next Newsletter Deadline: Dec. 18, 2015

# Youth Group Focuses on the True Meaning of Christmas

by Youth Pastor Cheryl Shank

What's happening in youth group? I have been using some reflections from the book "Jesus in Blue Jeans" during Wednesday night gatherings. We have discussed how Jesus is a model for how we can find poise (serenity and inward calm); how we can groom ourselves to be anointed with God's strength and love; and how Jesus provides an example for us in choosing to seek an eternal perspective during our daily routines. How might all of these prepare us for the upcoming Christmas season? Here is a note I gave to the youth. Perhaps it can also help all of us as we prepare for God's greatest gift:

Sunday, November 29th is the beginning of the Advent season. As we prepare this week for Thanksgiving and being with family, stop and think about all the time and preparations that go into that celebration. It's fun to get together and celebrate family ties and love.

God also chose long ago to celebrate His family ties and love with us through His only son Jesus. As the Christmas season is upon us, take time to reflect a bit on what advent means and how you will make preparations for God's celebration.



The youth group continued "Rent a Youth" days in November, fundraising for next summer's mission trip, yet to be determined.

## ADVENT:

- Four weeks before Christmas; ends on Christmas Eve
- Means 'coming' or 'arrival'
- Prepare spiritually for Christmas (Christ's first coming) and also for His second coming
- Advent is a preparation, and the best way to start preparing is with a thankful heart.

**"Preparing a 'habitation' for Christ" = a place for God to dwell.**

How might we prepare our own heart to welcome Christ this Christmas? Reflect on these questions:

- Do I need to 'pick up' unnecessary clutter that's lying around?
- Should I 'decorate' with something special to remind me of the season?
- Are there dirty or dark places I need to sweep out?
- Should I let go of some unnecessary emotions that are blocking my joy?
- How can I 'unlock the window' of my heart to allow the Holy Spirit to bring in the fresh air of the season?

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Pay attention this week to times you worry, complain,  
or become preoccupied with unfinished business that distresses the mind and heart.  
Let it go and leave room for God to dwell within in you.

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Psalms 51:10





## Remnants of Peonies Prayer Trail

“It has been said that when everyone is certain that something can’t be accomplished, someone goes ahead and does it anyway.” Ira Thut, Manager of West Liberty Homes 1977

It all started with a bake sale. The small town of West Liberty had a dream of a home for elders that would allow them to age with purpose and dignity. The financing of one million dollars had the dream fading. But a women’s sewing circle refused to give up. They planned a bake sale that netted \$2,232, and the dream was taking shape. Seven years later a legacy was formed. It all started with this purpose statement:

“Our purpose is to meet the total needs – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual – of the older person, to offer a secure environment, a sense of dignity, and to help him retain his life style.”

Those words are so progressive. More than 40 years ago, in 1972 they were speaking in terms that many aging services providers strive to live by today. And they walked the talk, something only a few providers do.

What a beautiful legacy that a small group of people from a small town had a vision to care for elders and all their wellness needs. Their dream was simple – a ministry that allows elders to live in a community especially for them that is just like their home. That dream has evolved to include many services that support aging where you want and how you want.

Because people like you, Green Hills has always been on the cutting edge of how we care for our elders. We were the first nursing center in the state of Ohio to offer child care. We had the second specialized Alzheimer unit in Ohio. We were the leaders in affordable housing, the aquatic center, and even person directed care.

With your generous gifts, we continue to offer that same progressive thinking as an aging services provider today. Our goal is to support elders throughout Logan and Champaign Counties to live their lives to the fullest. The Daybreak Adult Day program and Care at Home, our newly accredited home health agency, round out our aging services.

We would love for you to be a bigger part of Green Hills purpose. As we celebrate 40 years we are adding the Remnants of Peonies Prayer Trail to our campus. Your support of this project will enhance the wellness of the

residents at Green Hills, fitness center members and those in Logan and Champaign County’s looking for a spiritual walking trail.

Studies show that elders who are physically, socially and spiritually active have an enhanced quality of life. We want to see the residents at Green Hills thrive not just survive. Your gracious support will allow us to build this prayerful walking trail and add fitness stations for elders. It will be built for walkers, someone that uses a cane, those in wheelchairs and even runners. There will be many stops with benches and scripture verses for people to rest and reflect.

The West Liberty community had a vision nearly 40 years ago. They saw a need and worked hard as a community to meet that need. They formed committees, shared ideas and came up with a plan that culminated into the legacy Green Hills Community is today. We would love for you to be a part of continuing that legacy with the prayer and walking trail. Please call Nita Wilkinson at 937-650-7146 for a confidential conversation to find out more.

# Noteworthy Dates

### December Birthdays

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 3 – Eleanor Shumaker | 22 – Kay Burkett     |
| 5 – Linda Roth       | 22 – Gary Lehman     |
| 5 – Josiah Maurer    | 23 – Kelsey Kauffman |
| 10—Tesa Jordan       | 25 – Daniel Horn     |
| 13 – Jason Robinaugh | 27 – Emily Kauffman  |
| 13 – Joe Wilkins     | 27 – Mary Lou Plank  |
| 14 – Lowell Kauffman | 28 – Ed Lehman       |
| 14 – Pam Lehman      | 28 – Dick Lindemer   |
| 19 – Mary Newcomer   |                      |

### December Anniversaries

- December 7, 1986 – Mary Jean & Dean Horn
- December 22, 2001 – Sarah & David Hostetler
- December 28, 1984 – Darin & Kathi Robinaugh
- December 29, 1974 – Polly & Mark Thomas