

The Visitor

A publication of
Elkhart City Church of the Brethren

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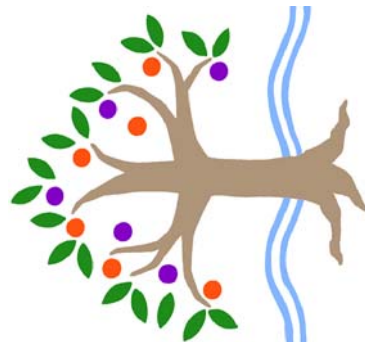
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The Visitor is published monthly to keep members and friends informed of church programs and to report news about the people of Elkhart City Church

Elkhart City Church of the Brethren
1716 Benham Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46516



• Rooted in God • Growing in Jesus • Bearing Fruit in the Spirit

January 2004

PASTORAL PONDERINGS ON DIRT

If you were not in church on December 21, you missed your Christmas present. Everyone received a parcel of property, compliments of the Land Acquisition Committee. It wasn't much, just a little zip-lock bag of dirt, or if you prefer the agronomically correct term, "soil"--sandy loam, to be specific. A label on the bags read-- "Christmas 2003: We bring you tidings of great joy. We are now landowners! Pray for the future of our church." It is now official. We are the new stewards of 19.35 acres of land on CR 113, between CR 26 and 28. The process took longer than anticipated, but our patience, persistence, and faith have been rewarded with the acquisition of an ideal site for a new church.

God has a delightful sense of humor. On the way to church a member confessed to feeling frustrated about the time it has taken to find

and secure land. She thought to herself, "It would help if we had something tangible. . . a shovel of dirt or something." Imagine her surprise when Farmer Steve DePue stood in the chancel with a shovel announcing a "done deal" while the ushers distributed bags of soil!



My bag is on my desk as an object for contemplation. Did you know that it takes 10,000 years to create one inch of topsoil? If you placed a soil sample under a microscope slide you would see an amazing array of microbial organisms and decayed matter rich in nutrients necessary to support plant life. Consider all the bushels of grain that were gleaned from the land during the nearly one hundred years it was a farm. Imagine all those night crawlers working the soil. A twenty acre worm farm! Wow!

I was given a song composed by a gentleman (or woman), named F.D. Hole. It is sung to the tune of, "Oh Give Me a Home Where the Buffalo Roam." It could accurately express the sentiments of the land's past and present trustees:

Oh, give me a home
on the deep yellow loam,
That supports the trees and the grass;
Where we hardly recall a bad crop at all,
and the crickets rejoice as we pass.

Contemplating my bag-o-dirt soil, I thought about the continuity of productivity. We must not take the land entrusted to us out of production. Our vision compels us to roll up our sleeves, plant seeds, and cultivate the crop to insure an ongoing harvest. Our crop will not be corn, soybeans, clover, or alfalfa like John Schwartzendruber harvested for many years. We will plant gospel seeds in people's lives that will take root and transform them into disciples of Jesus Christ.

"A sower went out to sow," Jesus said. He cast the seed indiscriminately. Some fell on the path and was stomped by pedestrians and eaten by birds. Some fell on rock and withered. Some fell among thorns and was choked. But some fell into good soil where it struck deep roots and yielded a hundredfold. We have a good plot of land for building a church. Keep the Cornerstone Committee in your prayers as they discern our mission and plan a facility that will help us fulfill it. The major task of building, however, does not rest with this committee. We cannot wait until we

have a building to plant. Each of us must ask how God wants us to tend our corner of the mission plot, beginning now.

F.D. Hole composed another soil song that is a striking fit for our new, landowner status. It is sung to the Shaker tune, "Tis a Gift to be Simple."

T is gift to have soil, 'tis a gift to have land,
'tis a gift to belong to the place where on
we stand.

And if we are contented with the work
that we are going.
We've discovered a community that's
energy renewing.

Chorus:
When true community is gained,
to bow and to bend we shall not be
ashamed.
To turn and to turn will be our delight,
till by turning turning we come right.

'Tis a gift to have seed, 'tis a gift to have
plants.
'Tis a gift to behold so much beauty at a
glance
As we survey a garden where we've
given hours of toil,
A community of flora, fauna, people and
of soil.

Give us the first note, Jan, and let's sing!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor David

Newsline (continued)

Five new grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund were approved in recent weeks, sending more than \$50,000 in aid domestically and abroad.

The largest of the grants is for \$20,000 and will support the Church World Service Seminars on Trauma Awareness and Recovery (STAR) program. STAR responds to the needs of clergy and lay leadership who are impacted by grief, anxiety, and trauma while serving in the wake of disaster or terrorism.

The program arose following the Sept. 11 response, aimed at building the religious community's ability to respond to such incidents. STAR is coordinated through Eastern Mennonite University of Harrisonburg, Va., which offers a Conflict Transformation Program. A pair of \$1 million grants from Church World Service (CWS) have funded the STAR effort. General Board staff and board members will undergo the training this March.

Another of the new Emergency Disaster Fund grants, for \$15,000, will support a CWS appeal for disaster response in the African nation of Kenya. Flooding in the region this past fall caused 77 deaths and displaced more than 60,000 people. The funds will be used to help provide food and other assistance to more than 10,000 people who were affected.

A \$10,000 grant will send continued support for CWS' recovery and rehabilitation work in Afghanistan. CWS has a long-standing presence in the region and has developed new programs in response to more recent needs. The funds will help rebuild homes, refurbish and re-supply schools, and provide means of income for the homeless. A fourth grant is for \$5,000 and will provide

additional aid for southern California, which was ravaged by wildfires in October. The funds will assist with long-term recovery through Church World Service, focusing especially on minority and uninsured communities. A grant made in October provided support for a Disaster Child Care response in the region.

The final allocation, for \$2,000, will support a Church World Service appeal for flood recovery work in northwestern Washington state. A record rainfall on saturated ground in November damaged or destroyed hundreds of homes. The funds will aid long-term recovery efforts.

A total of 33 grants have now been made from the fund this year, totaling nearly \$450,000.

Church of the Brethren General Board Prayer Calendar

Week of Jan. 4

As the wise men brought gifts to the Christ child, offer yourself and your gifts to Christ's service as we enter this new calendar year.

Week of Jan. 11

Praise God for the work of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, and for the witness that goes out to the world through the supplies and materials sent from its warehouse.

Week of Jan. 18

During this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, pray that congregations and denominations would find meaningful ways to work together to advance the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Week of Jan. 25

Ask that the Holy Spirit might bring discernment as new mission coordinators are called out for the church's work in Nigeria, to share the journey with a passionate and growing Nigerian church.

Newsline

The following articles appeared in "Newsline" and have been edited to fit this page. To view them in their entirety, you may receive Newsline by e-mail, by calling 1-800-323-8039, ext. 263, or write CoBNews@aol.com. Newsline is also available at www.brethren.org and is archived at www.wfn.org. Also see Photo Journal at www.brethren.org/pjournal/index.htm for photo coverage of recent events. Newsline is produced by Walt Wiltschek, manager of the General Board's News Services.



A logo based on the centuries-old Alexander Mack Jr. seal will adorn the halls at the 2004 Annual Conference in Charleston, W.Va.

Working with moderator Chris Bowman, Program and Arrangements Committee member **Rosanna Eller McFadden** designed the logo featuring the familiar cross, heart, and grape bunches in the center. It is encircled by the words of the theme: "Loving God and Neighbor. Heart, Soul, Mind, Strength."

In a statement about the logo, McFadden writes, "In the 1970s, my father, Vernard Eller, adapted the Mack seal to use in his teaching. I sat through innumerable (and seemingly interminable) lectures on Brethren history, doodling on that handout. Fortunately, adulthood has brought me a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the love of family and church that my parents made an inseparable part of my childhood."

She notes symbols in the logo that point to the vertical relationship with God, horizontal relationships with one another, Christ's love at the intersection of the cross, and the fruit we bear as we manifest that love. She says the "rough-hewn" appearance of the design echoes the church's heritage--"that what we Brethren need to guide us in the 21st century has been part of our history all along."

The logo will appear on the Annual Conference booklet, a banner in the worship and meeting hall in Charleston, and other materials. A downloadable electronic copy of the logo is available at www.brethren.org/download.htm.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) students Jeremy Van Deman of Indianapolis; **Crystal Waggy of Goshen, Ind.**; and Wendy Matheny of Peoria, Ill., have received fellowships from the Fund for Theological Education to support their consideration of ministry as a career. Waggy and Matheny are members of the Church of the Brethren. Each of the three received a \$1,500 award for education expenses; they are among 70 fellows named nationwide.

Beth Sollenberger Morphew has announced her resignation as coordinator of the Area 2 (Midwest) Congregational Life Team effective at the end of January 2004. She had served in the position since July 1997. She previously served as director of stewardship education for the General Board beginning in 1994 and before that as pastor and associate pastor for several congregations.

Sollenberger Morphew, who lives in Goshen, Ind., leaves to accept a call to pastor the **Elkhart (Ind.) Valley Church of the Brethren** beginning Feb. 1. Her husband, Tim, is pastor of the Bethany congregation in New Paris, Ind.

CALL FOR A LIVING PEACE CHURCH

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Master, Jesus Christ.

Annual Conference 2003 adopted the *Resolution: Call For a Living Peace Church*. In so doing we said that it is our intention to follow Jesus in seeking together an active Christian peace witness in our congregation and districts. We agreed to:

- ◇ Pray individually and together for transformation and courage as we struggle to extend our love for our neighbor to include our enemy;
- ◇ Undertake thoughtful study of the scriptures to discover afresh the things that make for peace and discern through honest and prayerful discussion how to put this knowledge into action.
- ◇ Address issues of violence and answer Christ's call to peace in a focused effort at least once each quarter through worship, education programs, prayer, and/or some kind of public witness; and
- ◇ Facilitate dialogue among those committed to Biblical nonresistance, those committed to conscientious objection to armed conflict and those committed to military action, to give expression to the Brethren witness to Jesus' way of making peace.

As we enter the new church year, let us be diligent in pursuing peace. These four avenues of exploration and action invite us to make less passive our efforts in peacemaking. We are especially encouraged to address these issues at least once each quarter. And as we gather in Charleston for Annual Conference in 2004, we look forward to sharing together as a living peace church.

With Peace,

Christopher Bowman, Moderator



*Continuing the work of Jesus.
Peacefully. Simply. Together.*

January 2004



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 9:00 Worship 10:45 Church School <i>Special Music by Mark Arnold</i>	5	6 4:30 p.m. Overcomer's @ MCL	7 9:00 Volunteer Fellowship 6:30 Children's Choir	8 7:00 Stewardship Comm. 7:00 Witness Comm. 7:00 Cornerstone Committee	9	10
11 9:00 Worship 10:45 Church School <i>Children's Choir singing</i>	12	13	14 6:30 Children's Choir 7:30 Adult choir	15	16 —Church Board Retreat	17 At Camp Mack—
18 9:00 Worship 10:45 Church School <i>Adult Choir singing</i>	19 7:00 Nurture Comm. 7:00 Cornerstone Committee	20	21 6:30 Children's choir	22 7:00 Worship Comm.	23	24
25 9:00 Worship 10:45 Church School <i>Men's Chorus singing</i>	26	27	28 6:30 Children's Choir 7:30 Adult Choir	29	30	31