

Akron Mennonite Church Newsletter

1311 Diamond Street, Akron, Pennsylvania 17501

December 2009

VISION FOR AMC

Akron Mennonite Church will be fully engaged in God's mission in a broken world as we are called, equipped and sent by the Holy Spirit to follow Christ in life. Shaped by the gifts and vision of our members, we will keep Christ and church at the center of our lives as we reach out to neighbors near and far and witness to the world around us through an Anabaptist-Mennonite expression of faith.



Worship Notes
By
Dawn Yoder Harms

December is almost here, and reality is hitting: my time here at AMC is winding down. A number of you have kindly asked me how it is for me through this time of transition. Often I don't know how to respond, as there is such a mixture of thoughts and feelings swirling within me.

I do know that I find myself focusing much less on what lies ahead and much more on what we have experienced here together at AMC during the last twelve years. And during this season of Thanksgiving, I would like to offer my "heartfelt thanks" for our time together. Specifically:

- Thank you for becoming family for our family— surrogate parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins! We are grateful for the way you have embraced each one of us—laughing with us, crying with us, and caring for us.
- Thank you for allowing me the privilege of walking with you through the joys and struggles and extremely tender moments of life. It has been a sacred journey; God has been there, and I have been deeply blessed.
- Thank you for allowing me the space and the grace to grow into a pastor. When I began serving as Associate Pastor here, I had no previous pastoral experience. Now, 12 ½ years later, I am in a different place and am a different pastor (my knees no longer shake behind the pulpit when I preach! ☺). I am grateful for the many opportunities you gave me to grow and for all I have learned along the way.

Worship Series



**December 6 Dawn Yoder Harms
Baptism Sunday**

December 13 Jim S. Amstutz

December 20 Jim S. Amstutz

December 27 Dawn Yoder Harms

- A special thank you to the youth and young adults of this congregation, who have shared with me their perspectives, insights, questions and faith reflections throughout the years. Our conversations have been lively and profound. While many of our youth and young adults go off to college and don't return to AMC, I am confident that seeds of God's kingdom are being planted, wherever they land!
- Thank you for the opportunity to accompany you on this journey of striving to be "a model of Christ-likeness in a broken world." Long before coming to this place, this has been the vision that has guided my life. What a joy it has been to find a people to walk this path together with. I give thanks for the joys and challenges we have encountered on this particular journey together.

These are some of my "heartfelt thanks" as my time here comes to an end. Thank you for what you have shared with me and for the many ways you continue to share your love for God, each other, and the world.



Advent

It has begun again –
this month-long journey into the cave of nightfall-
our paths only visible
because of the candlelight flickering
from the old, old story.

~ Maren Tirabassi, "I Think I See a Star"

The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before. It is not possible to keep it from coming, because it will. That's just how Advent works. What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you...
Sit. Linger. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder.
There will be time enough for running.

For rushing.

For worrying.

For pushing.

For now, wait.

Something is on the horizon.

~Richardson, "Night Visions"

Calling all singers

The adult choir will be singing for two services in December – December 13 for the morning worship service and December 20 for the evening Christmas Program.

Two Sunday morning rehearsals are scheduled for December 6 and 13 at 8:00 AM.

See Patricia Martin for a folder of music.

THANKS AND THANKSGIVING

Akron Mennonite Church has received a gift from Irene Martin through her estate. It is a bequest of \$106,000, and its use is undesignated. We rejoice in this gift to Akron Mennonite Church and give thanks for it.

AMC does not presently have a policy concerning undesignated large gifts such as this. Stewardship Committee will be making a recommendation to Church Council by the end of January 2010 as to a policy that deals with major undesignated gifts. The committee invites suggestions from members of the AMC congregation as to what that policy should be.

Pass your suggestions by early January 2010 to any Stewardship Committee member -- Lawrence Rupley, Mark Weaver, Jerry Meck, Doug Dirks, and Don Mellinger -- or to Janet Weber in the church office.

Special services in December



Sunday evening, December 20, the Annual Christmas Program and Christmas Tea will take place at AMC. The program, scheduled for 6:00 PM, will begin with a prelude of piano music by AMC children and youth. Songs by the Men's choir, Adult choir, children and string ensemble will feature familiar Christmas carols. Additional Christmas carols will intersperse the reading of the Christmas story from the gospel of Luke. The Christmas Thank Offering will follow words of reflection from Dawn Yoder Harms. Following a benediction, all are invited to the Christmas Tea planned in honor of Dawn's 12 1/2 years of pilgrimage with us at AMC.

Thursday evening, December 24, the Annual Christmas Eve Service will begin at 7:00 PM. Christmas carols, a reading of the Christmas story from the gospel of Luke and a reading of Jonathon Toomey's *The Christmas Miracle* will culminate in the annual tradition of the candle lighting ceremony.

Come, worship and sing your praise to God for the wonderful gift He sent to us



The Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster invites you to join them in praise this Christmas season. They will sing at New Covenant Mennonite Church (Lititz) on Thursday, December 4, 7:00 pm, at St Edwards Episcopal Church on Saturday, December 6, 4:00 pm, at James Street Mennonite Church on Sunday, December 7, 6:00 pm, and at Elizabethtown Mennonite Church on Wednesday, December 10, 7:00 pm. Directed by Darlene Hein and Rosemary Siegrist Blessing, the 75-voice choir involving singers from grades 2 thru 12 will be joined by harpist Sarah Schrock.

Lancaster Chamber Singers will be presenting Christmas concerts including arrangements of *O Magnum Mysterium*, works by local composer Daryl Hollinger and popular carol arrangements at St. John's Episcopal Church, Lancaster, Friday, December 4 at 7:30 pm; Amtrak Train Station, Lancaster, Tuesday, December 8 at 5:45 pm; and Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Wednesday, December 16 at 7:30 pm. For more information contact Jan Brubaker, Diane Gehman or Ron Guenther.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

By
Mary Jane Crockett



**NEWS FROM THE JR. DEPARTMENT
NURSERY TO GRADE 5**

DATES TO REMEMBER

- December 13 **Share-A-Life** Grades 1-5 & Mentors
Christmas Caroling and Snacks
5:30-7:30pm in Assembly Room
- December 18 **Venture Club** Grades 1-5
Landis Valley Bonfire
Bring a food bank item for entrance
6:30-8:30pm
- December 20 **Christmas Program**
6:00pm
- December 27 *No Christian Education classes.*

JR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION Winter 2009-10 *GATHER 'ROUND* CURRICULUM

"Accept the Invitation"

We experience the meaning of Jesus' birth in Luke. If we accept the invitation in John's gospel, we'll find ourselves walking with Jesus and his first disciples, eavesdropping on strange and wonderful conversations. The quarter begins with the Advent (November 29) and ends with the First Sunday in Lent (February 21).

Primary writer Rose Mary Stutzman writes, "Seeing these John texts from a child's perspective, helps connect me with the essence of our humanity, our deep yearning for God's life-giving love. This yearning shows up in vivid images of living water, new birth, abundant wedding wine, bread for hungry travelers, and a shepherd's tender care. Pray that this quarter will fill the hearts and minds of children in ways that give life and hope."

DSECC NEWS

By June Hershberger



How do you teach a child to be thankful? Sometimes it seems like some children are born content with what they have and others are born always wanting more. Gratitude is a perception – a way of looking at things.

- I personally have found it helpful to keep a gratitude journal at different times in my life and to practice the discipline of acknowledging at least three things I was grateful for that day.
- We used to ask our children at the supper table to name a "high" of the day and a "low". That could be changed to name something they are thankful for and it could be written on a family calendar.
- Another idea is to have children make lists under three headings 1) what I want 2) what I need and 3) how lucky I am. This is an opportunity to discuss the difference between wants and needs.
- At Diamond Street, preschoolers have been making picture collages of what they are thankful for in the weeks leading to Thanksgiving.

Children can be trained to search for a silver lining in any situation and to appreciate the small things in their lives. But this is countercultural; in America we are trained to notice what is wrong, what still needs to be done, and what we want but don't yet have. Our busy lives are not conducive to taking time to appreciate what we have. "Gratitude is grown in the pauses, the exhales of life." (Deborah Spaide, familycares.org) Check your life rhythm. Does it have enough pauses to fill with gratefulness? Enough pauses to teach your children how to be thankful?



2009 CHRISTMAS THANK OFFERING PROJECTS



Outreach Commission is pleased to provide you with a list of 2009 Christmas Thank Offering projects. These recommendations were developed using the guidelines jointly developed by Outreach and Stewardship several years ago and approved by Council. Come prepared to give your contribution to the Christmas Thank Offering on December 20.

Members in Voluntary Service: As in past years we recommend that AMC members in Voluntary Service with Mennonite Central Committee receive small monetary gift in recognition of their efforts. This year we recommend that the following members each receive \$150: Randy & Amelia Puljek-Shank, Andres and Amy Zorrilla, Matt Harms and Peder Wiegner.

LOCAL:

DSECC Scholarships: DSECC puts into action AMC's mission to those "across the street" by enrolling children from low-income families from our community. During this time of economic downturn, there is an increased need for assistance for these families to maintain their children in a quality child care program. This Christmas Thank Offering will go to the Diamond Street Early Childhood Center to provide scholarships to children in need of financial assistance. Currently 28% of children enrolled at DSECC are from low-income families.

Ephrata Area Social Services Fuel and Energy

Assistance Fund: EASS was founded in 1971 as a privately funded 501(C)(3) non-profit organization with the mission of effectively channeling community resources into a network of support for neighbors in need of basic resources. It is a system of neighbors helping neighbors. EASS believes they will need at least \$45,000 to meet the 2009/2010 heating and energy needs of its clients. This Christmas Thank Offering Gift will go to support the 2009/2010 Fuel and Energy Assistance for Families Fund.

NATIONAL:

Philadelphia Mennonite High School: This Thank Offering gift will provide for student scholarships for individuals needing special help for this school year. Philadelphia Mennonite High School draws from Philadelphia's rich tradition of diversity by providing

educational excellence for students of diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. PMHS has a college acceptance rate of 100% and close to 50% of its students come from families at the poverty level.

Mennonite Education Agency Christmas Giving

Project: This Christmas Thank Offering gift will provide funds for African American and Native American students for training as congregational leaders, and for basic studies and development of undergraduate courses for Hispanic students and MC-USA congregational leaders in biblical-theological studies.

INTERNATIONAL:

Development of Water Sources in Africa: This Christmas Thank Offering gift will be provided to Mennonite Central Committee for the development of potable water sources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sources of clean drinking water are a major step toward sustainable living and controlling disease in Africa

Pastor for Shanmbhugang Baptist Church: This Christmas Thank Offering Gift will support hiring a pastor the Shanmbhugang Baptist Church in Bangladesh which is the home church of Richard Sarker. Hiring a pastor for this church will allow organizing the members in ways which will allow them to raise their standard of living. Richard is very active in support and planning for his church in Bangladesh which was started by his great grandfather. The goal for this position is not only to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in the community but also the spiritual and economic well being of the congregation. Richard hopes to involve MCC - Bangladesh in these efforts to shape a positive direction for this congregation.

The 2009 CROP walk, held on October 18, threatened to be cold, wet and windy. It was a relief for 35 Akron Mennonite Church walkers that the weather cleared up during the afternoon. Generous donors again supported these walkers and a total of \$7,578 was raised to provide food for local and global needs.

Three CROP participants who are fairly new to Akron Mennonite Church received beautiful CROP walking sticks made by Merv Landis. They were presented to Sue and Woo Youn who arrived this summer and are living with Lynne Beth; and to Esther Ruby who raised support from her co-workers. ~Marilyn Langeman



Give gifts that give thrice! When you shop at Ten Thousand Villages, Ephrata, **December 5**, 5:00-9:00 pm (*The Café* will be open) or at the new Ten Thousand Villages at Rockvale Outlets, December 13, 1:00-5:00 pm, your purchases are three-fold: fair pay to artisans in developing countries, 15% donation to Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties and a, handcrafted gift for under your tree. For more information call 394-7406 Ext. 107 or visit www.BridgeofHopeLCC.org.

Another benefit shopping opportunity for Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties will be held at the new Ten Thousand Villages, Rockvale Outlets on Route 30, **December 13**, 1:00-5:00 pm. 15% of your purchase will benefit homeless families. For more information call 394-7406 Ext. 107 or visit www.BridgeofHopeLCC.org.

Christmas Blessings!

Debbie Best, Program Coordinator

Diakon Family Life Services Training & Consultation

(W)holy, (W)holy, (W)holy Health, Healing and Wholeness Article

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses." (1Corinthians 12:4-7, 11)

Here we are, once again, in the season of gift-giving. For some, Christmas may be a little different this year, because economics have shaped the way we celebrate. Many have found it necessary to limit the amount of money spent on gifts to loved ones; some may have eliminated gift giving altogether. Some may be finding themselves celebrating at home vs. traveling by car or plane to loved ones in other states. This is not a bad thing! Perhaps it is time that we give more deliberate time and thought toward celebrating the season more simply, for when we don't make the connection between Christ and our gift-giving, Santa becomes the spirit of Christmas.

Throughout the past month, I've been gathering a few non-traditional ideas for gift-giving this Christmas, and I would like to share them with you.

- ✧ Instead of putting them away or tossing them, keep cards and well-wishes in a small basket where they can be savored throughout the year. Meditate on the words announcing the coming of the greatest gift that has ever been given.
- ✧ Instead of buying gifts, make donations to your local United Way or charity/charities that are significant in the lives of your loved ones. Mother Teresa once said, *"It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you ... Yes it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer your hand."* These gifts keep on giving long after the garland and tinsel are put away!
- ✧ Give handmade gifts this year.
- ✧ Give your children a Shepherd's pouch – a simple drawstring bag – in which to collect loose change throughout the month – use the money to purchase a gift for someone in need. Worship together before setting out to do so.
- ✧ Instead of a tree this year, arrange gifts under a crèche [manger].
- ✧ During a meal together, ask one another, *"If Jesus were sitting next to you, what would you give him this Christmas? Why?"*
- ✧ Buy baby items, wrap and place them with the other gifts – donate them to a social service agency that deals with infants.
- ✧ Host a baby Jesus Christmas/birthday party for your family and neighborhood kids. Have each family bring a gift to be donated to a service agency, or shelter that houses children.
- ✧ Give your children an age-appropriate crèche to play with. Tell them the Christmas story and have them act it out with the figures. Remember though, the Wise Men came *after* the birth of the baby Jesus!
- ✧ Throughout the coming year, have Jesus "grow up" What qualities did he possess? Pick Bible verses to read and discuss as a family.

Finally, one of the greatest gifts we can give is to be patient and merciful to others. For *"to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"*. Be the light of Christ to others not only on December 25, but throughout the coming year. Let others come to know him through your words and deeds.

**Samaritan Counseling Center
Nurse's Notes
December 2009**

There has been some confusion regarding how long one should stay out of work or school after flu-like illnesses. According to the CDC, individuals "with influenza-like illness [should] remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F), or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications". (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/exclusion.htm>)

Pull-cords on drapes continue to pose a threat of strangulation for infants and toddlers. The Consumer Product Safety Commission [CPSC] offers the following safety tips to prevent deaths and injuries associated with window covering cords:

- Examine all shades and blinds in the home. CPSC recommends the use of cordless window coverings in all homes where children live or visit. Make sure there are no accessible cords on the front, side, or back of the product.
- Do not place cribs, beds and furniture close to the windows because children can climb on them and gain access to the cords.
- Make loose cords inaccessible.
- If the window shade has looped bead chains, install tension devices to keep the cord taut.

Note: Most window blinds sold prior to November 2000 have inner cords (for raising the slats of the blinds) that can be pulled by a child and form a loop in which the child's neck can entangle. Consumers should immediately repair these types of blinds. For a free repair kit, call the Window Covering Safety Council at 800-506-4636 or visit www.windowcoverings.org In addition, ask your child-care provider to check their blinds and window coverings as well.

Liquid potpourri can harm your pet. "Filling your house with the smell of pine or peppermint may seem inviting, but if you're partial to heating your scented oil in a simmer pot, know that it can cause serious harm to your cat. These oils are toxic to cats, and even a few licks can result in severe chemical burns in the mouth, fever, difficulty breathing, and tremors (shakes). Dogs aren't quite as sensitive, but it's still wise to scent your home with a non-toxic candle kept safely out of your pet's reach." (*Prevention Magazine*, December 2009, pg. 126)

Did you know that only 2 tablespoons of sunflower seeds can supply nearly 40% of the recommended daily allowance of Vitamin E – an antioxidant that helps prevent sun damage? For a healthy crunch, sprinkle them onto your salad instead of croutons. (*Prevention Magazine*, December 2009, pg. 36)

**COMMUNITY HOLIDAY SERVICE OF
REMEMBRANCE**

On Sunday, December 6 @ 2:00PM you are invited to the Ephrata Church of the Brethren to remember loved ones who have died during the past years. Refreshments will be serviced. The program is open to the public at no cost or obligation. Childcare is available. This is sponsored by the Ephrata Community Hospital and Stradling Funeral Homes of Akron and Ephrata.

Table Talk at Garden Spot Village

GSV Chapel 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. December 2 & 9 Join the dialogue! A dialogue about issues of importance to Christians today. December 2 - "Just War/Peace" with Dr. John Lapp and Dr. Bob Spender. December 9 - "How We Read Our Bible," with Dr. Steve Nichols and Dr. Mark Wenger. These events are free to the public with donations accepted. More information at 355-6203.



Winter Shelter Contact Person Needed

Churches in the Akron-Ephrata area are moving ahead with a seasonal winter shelter for homeless persons in our area beginning January 18. Each congregation is asked to identify a coordinator to assist with lining up volunteers and logistics. The first host site will be at the Grace Evangelical Congregational Church on Terrace Ave. in Ephrata. A handbook is being prepared and each congregational contact person is asked to help shape the details as this new community ministry gets up and running. If you have interest please contact Lloyd Chapman, Chair of Outreach Commission or Pastor Jim S. Amstutz.

Change of Email, Phone number or Address

Gladys Gingerich – email: grgingerich@gmail.com
John Nissley – email: drjohn@nissleychiro.comcastbiz.net

Sounding the Call: A Ministry Team Proposal

Goal: To provide hand-made, wooden caskets and urns for AMC members/attenders as an option for burial.

Background: When a loved one dies there are hundreds of decisions to be made in a very short time, often under stressful conditions. One of them is choosing a casket for a traditional viewing/burial. Costs range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 or more on average. The cheapest casket available on-line from Wal-Mart is \$895. A simple hand-made casket can be built for \$450 or less. First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, OH has been providing this service for years with great appreciation and benefit among FMC members. Detailed drawings/plans have been secured along with pictures of the finished work.

FMC has three completed caskets (and small boxes for cremains) on hand at any given time. A team of volunteers construct the caskets at a member's workshop, covering the cost of materials from the funds contributed by families when one is purchased. Once built, they also need to be lined. Another volunteer team of 2-3 place the batting and cloth lining (details available) in the casket.

The small boxes for cremains are made to receive the standard size metal container received from the crematorium. They cost \$25.

Proposal:

- Form a Ministry Team to provide this service for AMC members.
- Find a team of volunteers to secure the materials, review the design and build the wooden casket and boxes.
 - Find a team of volunteers to secure the materials and install the batting and lining.
 - Determine logistics of where to build and where to store up to three caskets/boxes. An alternative plan is to have the components ready to assemble and have a team construct them as needed to take up less storage space.
 - Communicate this service to the congregation once the team is formed and ready to move toward implementation
 - Apply for Missional Challenge Fund grant for start-up costs with the assumption that this service becomes self-sustaining when a casket or box is purchased by AMC members/attenders.

Please contact the church office if you have interest in exploring this Ministry Team idea.

ε LOOKING AHEAD ε

December 1	<i>Church council meeting, 7PM</i>
December 3	<i>Men's breakfast @ Udder Choice, 7:00 AM; Lawrence Rupley, speaker</i>
December 5	<i>AMC Orientation Seminar, 9:00AM-2:00PM</i>
December 6	<i>Adult choir rehearsal, 8:00AM</i>
December 6	<i>Sunday Soup immediately after Discipleship Hour</i>
December 7	<i>Women's Bible Study @ Zem Martin's home @ 6:30PM</i>
December 12	<i>Life Planning Mystery Dinner</i>
December 13	<i>Adult choir rehearsal, 8:00AM</i>
December 13	<i>Men's choir rehearsal, 10:40-11:30AM</i>
December 13	<i>Share-A-Life Christmas Caroling @ 5:30PM</i>
December 18	<i>Venture Club @ Landis Valley bonfire, 6:30PM</i>
December 20	<i>Men's choir rehearsal, 8:00AM</i>
December 20	<i>Christmas Program @ 6PM, Dawn's farewell & Christmas Tea</i>
December 24	<i>Christmas Eve Service @ 7PM</i>
December 24	<i>Church office closed</i>
December 25	<i>Church office closed</i>
December 27	<i>No Jr. Christian Education/Discipleship Hour classes</i>

AMC Newsletter is printed monthly & distribution the last Sunday of the month. Give submissions to church office by the previous Monday.

Editor: Janet Weber

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Jim S. Amstutz, Co-Pastor; Dawn Yoder Harms, Co-Pastor

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www.akronmench.org