

Menno-Life



First Mennonite Church • Bluffton, Ohio • Vol. 62, No. 9 • September 2015



While creating a display of Bluffton First Mennonite Church for the Swiss Mennonite 175th anniversary, Joanne Niswander unearthed some great photos, like this one dated 1956. We've identified these children and their teacher, but if you think we're wrong, please let us know. Clockwise from far right, Evelyn Luginbuhl, James Pannabecker, Shirley Brauen, Joan Kreider, Jeanne Niswander, Conrad Gratz and Debbie Diller.

Rosalynn and Jimmy Carter

I remember it well. As I was leaving the dining area after eating dinner one evening at the 2003 MC USA convention in Atlanta I noticed an overhead door into the convention center open and an entourage of cars drive in. I knew instantly that it was the arrival of the guest speaker for the evening, former President Jimmy Carter.

His address was simple. He called us a Mennonites to be "little Christs." I don't remember it as a great sermon filled with in-depth biblical exegesis nor as in any sense a political rally speech exhorting his audience to think one way or another. It was a sincere call for us to join with him to carry out the work of Christ.

As he more recently spoke of his present-day journey, now having been diagnosed with cancer, I was taken back to that time in Atlanta. I know that many of you watched the news conference live (and if you have not you can access it via youtube.com). Here was a person at ease with the diagnosis, ready to

face whatever might lie ahead of him, surprisingly calm and serene as he talked about the treatment that would take place later that day as well as further treatments in the next few months.

His deep religious faith, he said, was at least partially the reason why he was not depressed or angry at the diagnosis. I sensed it was also related to how he had carried out important work “feeding the 5000” in the work of the Carter Center. One of its greatest achievements is the phenomenal progress in eradicating the Guinea Worm on the African continent. According to the Carter Center website incidences of Guinea worm disease have been reduced from an estimated 3.5 million cases in 1986 to less than 150 in 2014.

Under the rubric of “Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope” the work of the Carter Center has impacted for the good literally millions of people. In his press conference, he called being president the pinnacle of his political career. But the work of the Carter center has been more satisfying.

In my August 23 sermon I called him a “spiritual giant” and quoted him as saying “The basic principle of Christianity is that we don’t start living our future life after we are dead, but we start living our better future life now” (Huffington Post). Surely he and Rosalynn have been at the center of bringing “the better future life now” to many. May God raise up more like him to be a “little Christ” carrying forward the work that Jesus carried forward. And may we also do what we can fulfill our calling to be a “little Christ” in our neighborhoods and around the world.

– *Lavon Welty*

Among our neighbors and friends

Happy birthday to:

Richard Weaver, 95, Sept. 3

Ruth Naylor, 81, Sept. 3

Betty Engle, 95, Sept. 13

Christine Purves, 96, Sept. 14

Margaret Bixler, 98, Sept. 15

Elfrieda Ramseyer, 81, Sept. 21

Willadene Keeney, 91, Sept. 24

Joanne Niswander, 86, Sept. 24

Happy anniversary to:

Margaret and Isaac Tiessen, 51, Sept. 5

Shirley and Roger Yoakam, 50, Sept. 11

Ruth and Stan Naylor, 61, Sept. 25

Births

Congratulations to Andrea and Tyson Goings on the birth of their son, Jayden Drew, born August 3 at St. Rita’s Medical Center. Jayden’s brother and sister are Braylon and Ariana. He is the grandson of Anita and George Lehman.

Congratulations to Tara and Kyle Miller on the birth of their daughter, Vivian Rose, born August 21 at Blanchard Valley Hospital. Vivian’s brothers are Everett and Isaac.

Congratulations to Erin and Jason Kerns, on the birth of their son, Logan Clark Kerns, born August 17. Logan is the grandson of Paul and Laurel Neufeld Weaver and the great-grandson of Richard and Margaret Weaver.

Congratulations to Neil Yoder and Youngju Yoon on the birth of their son, Henry Yoon Yoder, born Aug. 12. Henry is the grandson of Steve and Janet Yoder.

Deaths

We express our sympathy to the family of Irene Hamman, who died August 6 at Mennonite Memorial Home. A memorial service was held at August 23 at FMC. Irene is the mother of Ray, Beth Thompson, Tim, Bill, Laurie Blackburn, Ruth Provost, and Jill Caskie.

We offer condolences to Jane Hooley and Don and Mary Ina Hooley and their families, as they mourn the loss of Jane’s husband and Don’s brother, Dave Hooley. Dave died August 18 at

Blanchard Valley Hospital, Findlay. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 5, at FMC. The family will greet friends and family from 9-11 a.m. in the fellowship hall.

Notes of gratitude

Dear Congregation: Thank you very much for your support. I have arrived safely in Albuquerque. I have not been given a job yet. Please support me in finding the right service job for me. Your prayers are very appreciated. I look forward to seeing what God has in store for me this year.

-- Thank you, Lily Schumacher

First Mennonite Bluffton, I can't thank you enough for your support as I begin my year of service in Kenya. The encouragement I have received from this congregation is more than I could have hoped for. I feel blessed to have an opportunity to see many new places and meet many new people.

Thanks again for your prayers and support.

-- God bless you all, David Hooley

To First Mennonite Church, Thank you so much for your generosity in hosting us. A special thanks to those who prepared the delicious lasagna meal. It has been an honor to share the Fuller Center for Housing vision with you. May the Lord bless you as you work for the Kingdom in this part of the world.

-- Blessings, Fuller Center Bike Adventure

Mennonite Women

Once again Mennonite Women is using the theme of the Women's Bible Study commissioned by Mennonite Women USA and Mennonite Women Canada. This year's book is "Spark: Igniting Your God-Given Creativity" by April Yamasaki. MW invites all women to their monthly meetings for learning, sisterhood and fellowship. Detailed programs will be placed in church mailboxes in early September.

"God is the original Artist. Creativity shows itself in all of life. Creativity is not a passing fad or reserved for a chosen few," writes Yamasaki. This year, we'll learn that "created in the image of God means being created to create" (Yamasaki).

1. Listen to stories of God's creative Spirit at work.
2. Uncover, develop and embrace the gift of your creativity.
3. Discover which of these can be considered creative:
 - a. Take a nature walk
 - b. Talk to your plants
 - c. Spend 10 minutes daydreaming with God
 - d. Try a new ice cream flavor
 - e. Sew gift bags instead of using wrapping paper
 - f. Experiment with a new recipe

Rediscover the joys of being created in God's image and nurture your own creative spirit. Looking forward to seeing each of you the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

MW officers: Judy Buller, Lori Nester, Mary Ina Hooley, Barb Stettler and Ginger Theis.

Music ensemble rehearsals

Music Ensemble Rehearsals to begin: Note the dates, times, locations and ages for the church's music ensembles. Please consider offering your musical gifts to this important part of worship for our congregation and encourage others to join. We would gladly welcome new additions to the ensembles and will greatly enjoy the return of former members.

- Chancel Choir (**adults of all ages**) begins on Wednesday, September 2 at 7 p.m. (Mark Suderman, director) – sanctuary
- Adult and Youth (**Grades 7-12**) Bells - both begin on Wednesday, September 2 at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. respectively (Ray Raeburn, director) – assembly room

- Cherub Choir (**ages 3-grade 1**) will begin on Wednesday, September 2 at 6-6:30 p.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children’s choir room. Parents of 3 year olds are encouraged to come to the first few rehearsals.
- Jubilate (**Grades 2 - 5**) will begin on Wednesday, September 2 at 6:45-7:30 p.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children’s choir room.
- Youth choir (**6th grade and up**) will meet on Sundays from 8:30-9:15 a.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children’s choir room.

-- Mark Suderman, director of music

Buller returns to Germany 60 years after service

("This article originally appeared in Mennonite World Review. To subscribe call 800-424-0178 or visit mennoworld.org.")

Anne Buller of Bluffton returned this summer to her old neighborhood in Germany to celebrate a ministry she started 66 years ago but only recently learned was still operating. Buller and her late husband, Harold, traveled to Berlin in 1948 with Mennonite Central Committee.

The newlyweds established a neighborhood community center before moving on to other MCC work in Europe. For one reason or another, they never followed up on what happened to the center. That is, until Buller was talking with a visitor last year in Bluffton. She said she often wondered what happened to the Nachbarschaftsheim Kreuzberg. The visitor suggested she search online.



“I discovered it was a full-fledged, thriving center,” she said. “So of course you can imagine how excited I was.”

She shared about it at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, and fellow member Bill Suter told her she had to contact the center.

“I said, ‘They wouldn’t care what an old lady has to say,’ ” Buller said. “He said ‘OK, then I will write.’ And of course they were very excited to learn that there was a lady who could speak about the beginnings.”

Her timing couldn’t have been better. After the center was up and running, MCC handed it over to local organizations in 1955. The 60th anniversary was July 3,

and she was to be the guest of honor. Buller, her children, her siblings and her siblings’ children — 17 in all — made the trip.

A changed city

The center’s building, built in the Kreuzberg neighborhood in the late 1800s as an officers’ club, avoided bombing through two wars. It hasn’t changed much, unlike the rest of the city.

“It’s a big thriving city now which I don’t recognize at all,” Buller said. “So much of it was in ruins. Many times we had this old beat-up MCC VW that we drove along the streets. Many times we’d be the only car driving the main streets.

“When we landed at the airport [in July], I said to the taxi driver, ‘What’s going on? There are a lot of cars here.’ He looked at me like, ‘What’s with you? It’s like this all the time.’ ”

At the celebration, Buller was asked to say something to the group, which she expected to be a couple dozen — 50 at the most.

“There were 250 people in that auditorium, that room where we had the original opening festival August 3, 1949,” she said. “The mayor of that part of the city and dignitaries, and then Anne Buller was supposed to get up and talk. Fortunately, I had the wisdom of writing something up and translating into good German....“I got a standing ovation of I don’t know how long. It was absolutely unbelievable.”

Caring for people

About half of Berlin was destroyed when the Bullers arrived, which meant they faced the challenge of convincing government officials that an intact building should be used for a neighborhood center. The one they eventually located seemed perfect.

“But when we found it, they were using it for 100 terminally ill patients, which it was not suited for,” Buller said. “We determined that if we did nothing else, we would do them a favor of finding a place that would give better care.

“That’s another big miracle that eventually, little by little, we were able to find places where they were able to take care of the patients.”

The Bullers established several projects, including a library, sewing room and recreational activities.

“I can’t help but be very excited about it and thanking God that an MCC project started by people who didn’t know beans about what they were doing has grown to this proportion,” Buller said. “They have dozens of wonderful activities they do every week.”

In addition to those original activities, today the center offers church services and English and kindergarten classes.

“Our main aim was that whoever entered that building would feel welcome and cared for as best we could,” she said. “To my great joy, that is exactly what they are doing now.”

Senior High Fellowship

From Shannon Thiebeau, youth ministry director

SHFY starts up for regular meetings in September, meeting on the first and third Sundays of the month from 7-8 p.m. in the youth room unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, Sept. 6: Fellowship Kick-Off, 7-8 PM! Finally on the calendar! Meet in the Senior High youth room and get ready for a night of games, friends, and snacks. This is a SHYF and JHYF combined event and parents are welcome to attend. Get to know the new youth director, Shannon Thiebeau, and get the new school year off to a fun start!

Sunday, Sept. 20: UNITE. Bluffton University is holding a free youth event on campus. We will meet in the church parking lot at 4:30 p.m. to walk to campus and return back to the parking lot by 8 p.m. where we will formally dismiss. We will connect with other youth groups in the area, play games, fellowship (with pizza), and experience worship led by Bluffton alumnus Daniel Hughes. This event will be emceed by Andy Lynch, an anchor from WTLW44.

*Please check your email, the Facebook group, or Twitter (@fmcyouthmin) an hour before an event in case of changes. If you have any questions, email me at shannonthiebeau@gmail.com or call/text at 419-773-9446.

Junior High Youth Fellowship

From Shannon Thiebeau, youth ministry director

Regular JHYF starts back up in September! JHYF will meet on the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 2:30-3:30 p.m. in the Junior High youth room unless otherwise noted. We will start off with a series called “Hope in a Hopeless World.” We will be looking at topics that range from forgiveness and second chances to figuring out our role in big world issues. Listed below are additional events!

Sunday, Sept. 6: Fellowship Kick-Off, 7-8 p.m. Meet in the Senior High youth room for a night of games, friends, and snacks. This is a SHYF and JHYF combined event and parents are welcome to attend. Get to know the new youth director, Shannon Thiebeau, and get the new school year off to a fun start.

*Please check your email, the Twitter page (@fmcyouthmin), or the Facebook group (First Mennonite Church JHYF) an hour before an event in case of changes. If you have any questions, email me at shannonthiebeau@gmail.com or call/text at 419-773-9446

Five-week SS class offered for college/university students

Calling all college and university students: Join the conversation for five Sundays in the fall as five Bluffton University staff/faculty members discuss the role that faith has played in their lives. Grab a cup of coffee or tea in Fellowship Hall on the way and join the discussion in the church parlor. They will discuss some of the following and more:

- What role did faith play in your early years?
- Did faith help you in making college/career choices?
- How does faith help shape your academic work?
- Have you ever faced a life crisis in which faith was helpful?
- When has faith been tested in your life?
- How is faith nurtured in your life?

Five Sundays in the Fall of 2015:

- September 27 – Walt Paquin
- October 11 – Jeff Gundy
- October 25 – Karen Klassen Harder
- November 1 – Lamar Nisly
- November 8 – Melissa Friesen

Any questions? Contact *Associate Pastor Steven Yoder*, 419 358-5766 or fmc.steve@bluffton.edu.

Hands and smiles needed

Volunteers needed: FMC needs greeters and hosts for Sunday mornings. Every Sunday, we have a host(s) in the fellowship hall and a greeter(s) at each entrance before Sunday school and before church. Consider volunteering with your child, grandchild, or a friend. If you'd like to volunteer a few Sundays or a full month of Sundays in this capacity, please contact Mary Pannabecker Steiner in the church office, or at fmc@bluffton.edu.

Visual memories of Bluffton VBS2015 – “Blast from the Past”



Seven area churches partnered in the community-wide vacation Bible school during July. Steve Yoder and Melinda Estell led children in nightly activities at the Mission Quest Cave where the children were encouraged to serve others. Judy Buller was among community workers who were honored for their work in serving others.

Melinda Estell and Steve Yoder lead a group of children down Main Street as they carried signs thanking community workers for their service. The children made their posters during an activity at the Mission Quest Cave during VBS.



Other organizations

Brazo en Brazo: "...encourage each other..." | Thessalonians 5:11, is the theme for the Fiesta Familiar on Sunday, Sept. 20, from 4-7 p.m. at Lima Mennonite Church. All are invited to celebrate this ministry supported by Bluffton, Lima, Pike and Salem Mennonite churches. For more information, see the poster in the fellowship hall. *-- Paul and Ann Conrad*

The Et Cetera Board, Inc. is seeking qualified applicants for the vacancy of interim store manager for the Ten Thousand Villages store in Bluffton. This person will oversee the daily operations of the store. Applicants must understand and embrace the mission of Ten Thousand Villages to support artisans in developing countries. Business and/or retail background is a plus. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume to Linda Suter at suterlr@bluffton.edu by Friday, September 4. Linda can be reached by phone at 419-358-5801.

The Bluffton Food Pantry is in need of the following supplies during September. Canned peaches, pears, mandarin oranges, applesauce, mixed fruit, canned spaghetti sauces and pasta, ramen noodles; canned meals, pasta dishes, stews, ready-to-heat soups, hamburger helper, chicken helper, tuna helper, canned vegetables (no corn or green beans), ketchup and mustard, prepared sandwich mixes, canned meats -- tuna, chicken, beef, turkey, pork, cereal, paper products – toilet paper, tissue, paper towels, feminine hygiene products, baby products, shampoos, soaps. **NOT NEEDED:** macaroni and cheese, canned corn, green beans, water- added soups, garbanzo beans, chick peas, navy beans, black beans and northern beans. Items should be dropped off at St. John's United Church of Christ.

The Celebration of Health's free clinic at the Lima YMCA annex needs a volunteer to greet patients as they arrive and call them in to be seen. The clinic is open most Wednesday evenings during the school year from about 5-7 p.m. The position could be shared. Contact Bobbie Chappell at 419-358-4306 for more information.

Camp Friedenswald retreats

Camp Friedenswald's annual women's retreat is Sept. 25-27. The theme is "Women Rising: Naming, Claiming, Transforming," featuring Biblical scholar and chaplain Laura Brenneman as the speaker. She will draw upon the key scriptural imagery of trees to engage participants in a dialogue about the meaning of authenticity, leadership and wholeness in a broken world.

The retreat will begin Friday evening and close Sunday after lunch. Cost is \$150. Scholarships are available. Women 25 & under may attend free of charge. Register at http://www.friedenswald.org/programs_womens/retreat, 269-476-9744 or camp@friedenswald.org.

If you are interested in joining a choir to sing "I Come from Women," contact Contact Marcia E. Nelson, coordinator, at sunboat@soltec.net or 217-359-0034 for info and music.

Watch the Mennonite Women pillar in the fellowship hall for more information about the retreat.

Camp Friedenswald's annual men's retreat is Oct. 16-18. The theme is "Kindling the Gift of God, Prayer: its Problems and Potential," with Alan Kreider, speaker. Alan and his wife spent 30 years living in England, where he worked as a missionary, teacher and lecturer. He has traveled all over the world speaking and preaching, and is also a retired professor at AMBS.

Music will be led by Hal Hess, performer, conductor and retired music teacher, and former director of the Friedenswald music camp. Retreat activities include the annual Mennothon (kayaking, archery, 5k run, 10 mile bike ride, and Frisbee toss), primitive fire building, outdoor service project, wagon rides, and boating.

Register at http://www.friedenswald.org/programs_womens/retreat, 269-476-9744 or camp@friedenswald.org.

Swiss Mennonites celebrate 175th anniversary



On August 30, Swiss Mennonites celebrated the 175th anniversary of first Mennonite church in this area. Above, Carrie Phillips, Bluffton University archivist, speaks about the university's collection of rare ornate Bibles.