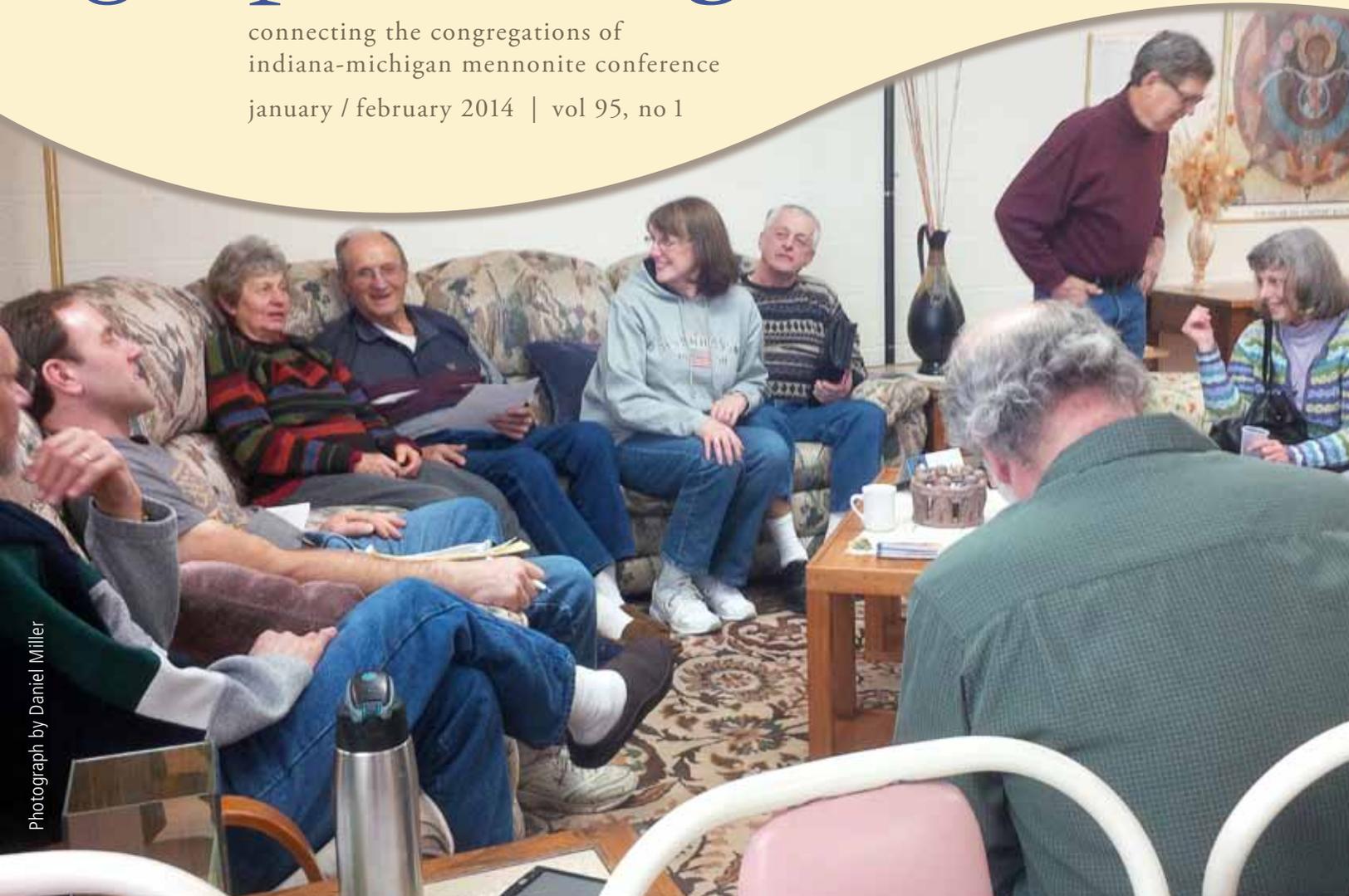


gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

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Photograph by Daniel Miller

Above: Participants enjoy fellowshiping with each other at the annual retreat for pastors and spouses. Pictured are Dave Cadarette, Leighton Miller, Barb and Jim Gerber, Debbie and JD Livermore, Jim and Anna Troyer, and Tim Miller.

Being Salt and Light Northern Michigan Pastor & Spouse Retreat

By **Kathy Cadarette**, Hilltop Mennonite Fellowship

Pastors, church leaders, and spouses from the Northern Michigan region met for an annual retreat January 17–19. The weekend's theme centered on illustrations of how Christians are called to be salt and light to the world.

"We are called to live in such a way that other people come to us because they see that what we have makes a difference," said David B. Miller, who facilitated the retreat at the Augustine Center

in Conway, Mich. Miller is the director of Missional Leadership Development at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Miller reminded the retreat participants of the history of the church before, during, and after "Christendom." Our challenge today, he said, is to reach unbelievers not by our rational explanations, but rather by our demonstrations of forgiveness and love.

(continued on back cover)

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A Vibrant and Adaptive Congregation

By Rachel Denlinger, Communications Coordinator

Marion Mennonite Church is a rural congregation that sits roughly seven miles northeast of Shipshewana, Ind. While its setting is fairly remote, its reach into the surrounding community goes deep.

Marion began as a church plant of Shore Mennonite in 1941. Since that time, it has seen its fair share of change. In just the last five years, the church's size has more than doubled from 70 to nearly 180 regular attendees. But numbers don't really tell the story.

Marion's story is one of a vibrant and adaptive church with a prayer-centered approach to issues that have brought conflict in the past. A decade ago, a painful church split reduced the congregation to half its former members. But it has found healing and grown in healthy ways. The evidence is reflected in the diversity of ages and large range of religious backgrounds present in its participants.

With the recent increase in regular attenders, church leaders began to pray about how to handle their overcrowded sanctuary. Should they launch a church plant or build an addition? They created a prayer wall to pray about the issue. People from the congregation signed up for 15-minute slots so that prayers were being offered around the clock.

Elder Mike Mast and longtime member Gary Mast both point to the prayer wall as the reason they were able to

peacefully navigate a season of expansion. With financial counsel from Everence and prayerful deliberation, the congregation ultimately decided that building a new sanctuary was the right decision. And last Fall they successfully completed the addition, raising funds and working together as a group to make decisions about their shared future. They held their first worship service in the new space in mid-December of 2013.

A number of factors have contributed to Marion's recent growth. Part of what has drawn people to the church is the enthusiasm and friendliness of its members. There is a strong 'come-as-you-are' atmosphere. "People feel comfortable here," says Gary. People are accepted as they are, and good-natured hospitality and home cooking are extended freely.

A big part of what keeps people coming back is that "everybody has a chance to get plugged in," Gary says. "That's crucial." The church has a number of ministry groups for people to get involved in and feel part of the church family.

Another factor in Marion's growth is its youth program. Bible studies, service projects, and mentors have provided a supportive community for young people. Unlike some rural churches who find their youth leaving for college never to return, Marion has seen many former youth members come back after college.



Marion church members gathered in the old sanctuary to help with a service project. On the far left is Mike Mast and on the right are Gary Mast (seated) and his wife Lynnette Mast.

Pastor Char Roth points to the fact that, "When college students come home on breaks they have a place to plug in. They feel a part of the church." They stay in the area, get married, and start families of their own, remaining actively involved in the congregation.

Elder Mike and his wife Judy served for a number of years as youth leaders and now work with the young adult group. Mike says, "Young people invite their friends—many from non-religious backgrounds—and they stick around. It's pretty amazing to see." Although their high school age group is smaller now than in previous years, their young adult group is flourishing—evidence of the fruit of past labor. Soon the crowd of little ones running around the fellowship hall will fill the youth group ranks again.

Many elements contribute to keeping the Marion congregation healthy and strong. For one, the pastors, Ron and Char Roth, provide strong Biblical teaching and humble leadership. The church also offers many ways for people to be involved and find outlets for their gifts.

Pastor Char says, "We have a great mission commission and we do a lot in the community." The whole church regularly participates in fundraisers and service projects, led by commission chair Kim Mast, a young mom and daughter-in-law of Mike. Marion has a talented volunteer coordinator, Kellie Bontrager, who helps organize clean-ups, building projects, and more. "When a need arises, people always respond to meet the need," says Char. In the past, the church has focused mostly on missions abroad. Now they focus a lot on doing missions in their own backyard. Mike says, "There is so much need in our community. We feel a need to take care of our own."

Another area that draws people to get involved is Marion's unique blend of worship. The church sings traditional hymns with four-part harmony and also has a contemporary worship band. Both styles are incorporated into the same Sunday service. Many church members say how

privileged they are to have talented musicians and singers among them, contributing to a rich worship experience. The older members have been accommodating and gracious about the younger generations' desire to add contemporary worship elements. They recognize that the young people are the future of the church.

Marion also provides marriage and family support to its members. Pastor Char leads a program called "Eight Great Dates" based on the DVD curriculum 10 Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage. Couples come to the church one night a week for eight weeks and watch a short video together that covers helpful relationship topics and provides discussion starters. Then each couple goes out on a date of their choosing with the opportunity to talk about the topics raised in the video. Childcare is provided at the church for those with young children, providing a night out with free childcare.

Clearly, there is a lot going on at Marion. The energy and excitement is evident. The new sanctuary isn't the only good thing happening, but it is a large one and it represents a significant milestone in the church's journey. Through all the changes, the congregation has hung together and sought to put the greater good before individual preferences. Gary says, "Ron preaches a lot that 'it's not about me, it's about everybody here.' We are part of a body. God's way is bigger than us individually."



Left: Gary Mast leads a procession from the old sanctuary to the new sanctuary. Below: the first worship service in the new sanctuary was held on Sunday, December 8, 2013. (Photos provided)



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leadership transitions

A Unique Pastoral Transition at Pleasant View

By **Tyler Hartford**, Pleasant View Mennonite

In August 2006, I began serving Pleasant View Mennonite Church as associate pastor. This was my first assignment out of seminary, and the last seven years have flown by. While there have been the usual ministry challenges, the congregation and I have connected well and we share a mutual respect and love.

In the fall of 2013, Pleasant View's long-time lead pastor, Ron Diener, approached the elder team with a proposal for his moving to three-quarter time associate pastor so he could spend more time in volunteer work and pursuing other personal interests. Part of his proposal included processing with the congregation whether I should be moved to lead pastor. This conversation paralleled one that he and I had a year earlier.

In August, the congregation heard from Ron and the elder team, and several weeks were provided for questions and feedback. On September 29, we held a congregational



lation for both positions. During that service, a glass vial of oil was used for anointing us for our continuing ministry. The vial had been given to Ron at the start of his ministry by a former Pleasant View pastor, the late James Detweiler, and then was handed to me as a transition symbol.

There are several unique factors concerning this transition. Pastor Ron has a gift for mentoring other pastors and allowing them space to grow and exercise their gifts. And while the congregational structure on paper appears to be very vertical, the leadership team is more horizontal. Preaching, visitation, visioning and other pastoral roles have been shared, with Ron holding many tasks in an open palm. The congregation also rarely uses formal titles for the leaders, simply calling them Pastors.

Our personalities are very different but our theological framework is very similar. We are a classic introvert/extrovert pairing with complementary strengths regarding administration, pastoral care, artistic expression and more. This allows us to be a form of "spackling" for each other as we serve. This contrast continues to be a place of learning restraint and respect as we sort through the different ways we might handle situations.

I have observed that Mennonite theology and polity, more than some traditions, creates space for these kinds of transitions to occur. My conversations with leaders in Ohio, Indiana and Michigan revealed these transitions are rare, in part because many pastoral transitions happen when there is pastoral/congregational conflict or loss of energy on the part of pastoral leadership. But a transition like ours helps preserve institutional memory and utilize



Kevin Yoder passes a vial of anointing oil from **Ron Diener** to **Tyler Hartford** at the installation service which marked the transition of their leadership roles. (Photo provided)

round table discussion. Individuals were encouraged to provide feedback on half-sheets of paper, allowing elders to hear concerns and address them. An affirmation ballot was presented on October 27 asking the congregation if it was ready for me to assume the lead pastor role and for Ron to move to associate pastor, and the ballot was approved.

On November 10, we had a special service where Pastor Kevin Yoder, IN-MI Conference representative and member of the Ministry Credentialing Team, performed the instal-

financial report

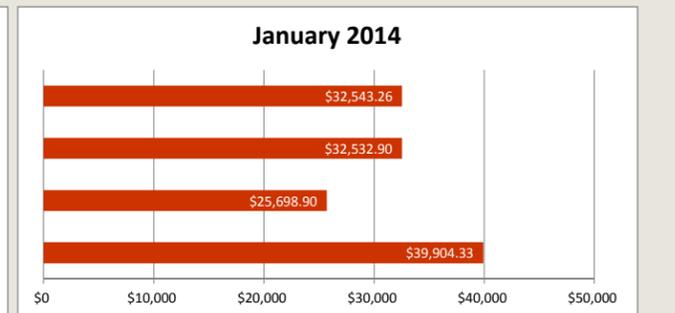
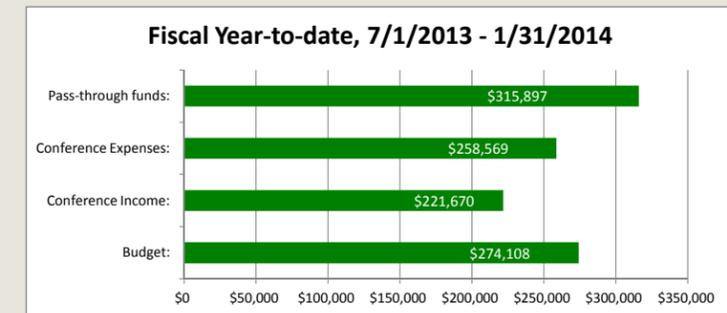
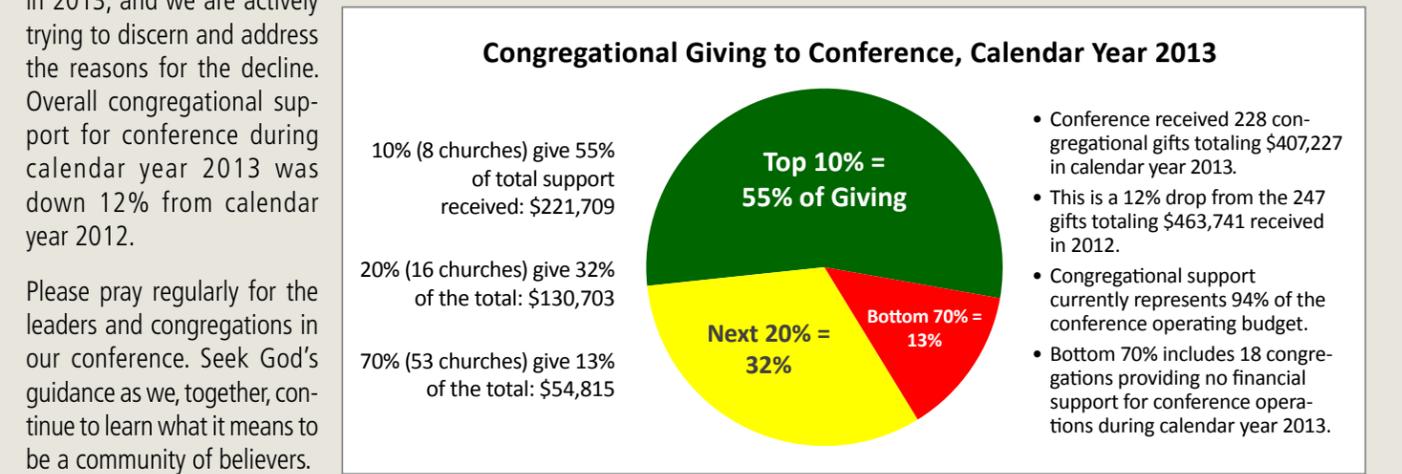
By **Greg Leatherman Sommers**, Conference Administrator

December tends to be one of the months when most support comes in to the office. Contributions from December, 2013 exceeded the 7-year average for the month. Missional Seeds Giving Club members have really stepped up their giving, donating 160% of what we expected so far this fiscal year. Other individual members have more than doubled their expected giving. Thank you for your generous support!

The end of December was the half-way mark in our fiscal year. So far we've spent 48% of our budget. That's a good thing. We've received 41% of the expected support. That is not a good thing.

January numbers were down, with contributions totaling \$25,699. The spending plan projected receiving \$40,976 during the month. The previous 5-year average for support received in January was over \$72,700. On a more positive note, conference spent \$7,000 less than budgeted for the month.

It is gratifying to see some renewed congregational energy for supporting the work of conference. Though churches are not all able to give at the same level, financial support for conference is critical in allowing us to continue serving our conference churches. Some congregations have increased the amount they send, for which we are grateful. A number of congregations provided less financial support



relationship capital. As a leader, I benefit from the transfer of some of Ron's relationship assets and from his support as I learn new rhythms and duties. And Ron is able to experience freedom from some of the ongoing ministry pressures, and is able to continue serving in ways that give life and energy to himself and the church.

During this transition, there had to be a lot of conversation and reassurance on leadership's part that this initiative

came from Ron, not myself. We had to be clear that there weren't any unnamed conflict or power moves being made. In turn, the congregation continues to express concerns for Ron to find meaning in his work and for my young family to be protected in its time with me.

We are still growing into this new arrangement. As we move forward, we are grateful for the positive experience this transition has been for us as leaders and as a congregation.

Winter Youth Retreats

By **Kenzie Intemann**, Amigo Youth Program Director and **Alisha Snyder**, Youth Program Intern

Winter Youth Retreats (WYR) are always a highlight for Junior and Senior High youth and their sponsors, as well as for us here at Amigo. We were able to host around 300 youth and sponsors in the first two weekends.

We started the WYR season off with the energetic T Mountsithiraj as our speaker and Emily Grimes and Friends as our worship team. T shared his story of coming to Christ and how he came to America. He spoke about how everyone is somebody to God, and how we should give 100 percent to God.



For the second WYR weekend, we had speaker Rachel Swartzendruber Miller from Hesston College and worship team leader Kent Miller and Friends. Rachel's theme for the weekend was Decisions, Decisions: Exposing our Core.

Both weekends were filled with lots of energy and sharing of God's work in our lives. The slightly warmer temperatures made for a wet time, but this did not stop the youth from putting their whole selves into all the activities.

We still have two more retreats coming in February. The weekend of February 14-16 we are excited to have Wendell Nofziger from North Clinton Mennonite Church in Ohio with us to share with the youth. The theme for the weekend is "Treasure Galore! Finding Our Joy in Jesus." Kara Mishler and Friends will be joining us to lead the youth in singing.

The weekend of February 21-23 we are thrilled to have Tig Intagliata from Bluffton University. He is bringing along



Bluffton's worship ministry team Shining Through. Tig and Shining Through will be sharing with us about God's Love and how it is beyond all measures. Shining Through will be leading us in singing and sharing their testimonies.

We hope more snow decides to come share the weekends with us and that the youth may learn and grow in their faith of God.

If you would like more information about our Winter Youth Retreats, visit our website at amigocentre.org or call 269-651-2811.

Faithfully Serving the Church for Fifty Years

By **Katie Hurst**, Bethany senior

For Dan Bodiker, 2014 marks his fiftieth year in the Bethany Christian Schools community. However, fifty years is more than just a number. It represents many relationships built, connections made, and lives touched by someone who has been well known in the Bethany community for generations as, simply, Bod.

Bod grew up in Lima, Ohio, and attended Jefferson Street Mennonite, a small mission church planted by Olive Mennonite in Wakarusa. After graduating from Lima Senior High School, Bod attended Goshen College to study physical education and health, with a minor in history. When a position became available at Bethany right as Bod was graduating, he took the opportunity there not yet knowing how long he was planning to stay. Fifty years later Bod still enjoys the environment and continues to find the experience extremely rewarding. Bod says, "It's just a good place to teach. The faculty and administration are super."

Bod's clear passion and willingness to minister to youth through his role as teacher, coach, and mentor has impacted several generations. Jim Buller, a former student athlete of Bod's and now Bethany's guidance counselor and varsity boys basketball coach, describes Bod as "truly one of the most friendly and hospitable people, with a phenomenal recollection of names and connections." This last part rings especially true; students and faculty alike can testify that Bod usually remembers students' names, some of their relative's names, and any connec-

tions he may have with them from the community, long after they have graduated.

These connections are what Bod values and builds through his involvement in all aspects of school life. He continues to drive classes on field trips and sports teams to away contests, and attends almost every Bethany event whether it is athletic, dramas and musicals, or open houses. He has worked to make Bethany a welcoming place for visitors to the school for any event, and is a gracious and welcoming host. Buller says it is Bod's "ever-willingness to talk that really distinguishes him."

Originally hired to teach and start an interscholastic athletic program, Bod greatly influenced not only the program's beginning, but its lasting legacy. He coached three, briefly four, sports for over thirty years and served as athletic director for many of those as well, developing the unique coach-athlete relationships still found at Bethany today. This is one of the reasons that many former athletes who played for Bod have gone on to be coaches themselves, some at Bethany. Bethany graduate Bryan Kehr ('78) remembers having Bod as a coach and how it helped him grow, saying, "My high school coach (baseball, soccer, and basketball) served as a great role model for me and many other young athletes in high school. He was a calm coach who, I believe, helped me develop as a player." Kehr went on to coach girls soccer and serve as athletic director at Bethany, and currently coaches women's soccer at Hesston College.

However, even outside of athletics Bod stays connected within the Bethany community by teaching driver education. His current and former students span across generations, with parents and children alike sharing



Pictured are **Bryan Kehr** and **Dan Bodiker** in recognition of his induction into the Indiana Soccer Coaches Hall of Fame in 2007. (Photo provided)



Dan Bodiker with his family in 2006 when Bethany named its athletic fields in his honor. (Photo provided)

Being Salt and Light (continued from front cover)

During the retreat, Miller kept salt and a lighted candle on the altar. He reminded the group that salt was used as a fertilizer to make the ground productive for receiving the seed. He also reminded us how Mennonites have acted as light in the past, such as bringing attention to the need for humane treatment of those with mental illnesses in the 1940s.

“The last word does not belong to the Roman cross of wrath,” Miller said. “The last word belongs to a God of love.”



Above: Retreat participants pause for a group picture. Back row L to R: JD Livermore, David Miller, Jim Gerber, Virgil Hershberger, Ken Hollinger, Dan Miller, Jim Troyer. Middle row: Debbie Livermore, Mary Miller, Barb Gerber, Margaret Hershberger, Janice Wagner, Anna Troyer. Seated front row: Tim and Kathy Miller, Leighton Miller, Dave and Kathy Cadarette (Photo provided). Pictured at left: A lighted candle and salt served as centerpieces at the retreat (Photo by Dan Miller).

at bethany (continued from p. 7)

memories of being taught to drive by Bod. Bod’s wide scope of influence is recognized by many, including current parent Cindy (Bontrager, ’82) Hawkins, who says, “When my daughter comments that she can’t believe Dan Bodiker was my driver education teacher, I smile at the memories of a wonderful and patient teacher and am thankful that he can have a part in nurturing my children also.”

Bod’s life work may not have included climbing a corporate ladder, but his ministry has extended towards students and faculty in the Bethany community for

generations. He says that people’s life work should be something that they enjoy doing, not only for monetary reasons.

Bod exemplifies someone whose life accomplishments are measured not only by awards and honors, but rather by lives touched. The circle of people influenced by his life continues to grow. He recalls connections with former students and their work today, and says, “I have been very blessed to work at a school that is nurturing students who will be the church of tomorrow.”

ministry transitions

Beginnings



On December 15, **Matthew Yoder** was licensed towards ordination recognition as pastor of community life at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. by Doug Kaufman, conference pastor for leadership transitions.



On January 26, **Moriah Hurst** was ordained at Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. (where she is a member) for her role as a Mennonite Mission Network associate with Praxis in Australia. Lois Kaufmann of Central District Conference and Doug Kaufman of IN-MI Conference were present to officiate.