

gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

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Photo by Sandy Slabaugh

Flight 93 National Memorial Visitor Center



North Main Mennonite youth group members (left) Emily Fisher, Cherakie Thomas, Hannah Bradley, Bruce Slabaugh, Kristen Hoshstedler, Asia Marsh and Dawson Rupp.

Following God's lead

Holy Spirit surprises North Main Street youth group

By Laurie Oswald Robinson, editor

Without warning, they began showing up. About two dozen unchurched teenagers in fall 2015 began coming to Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) at North Main Street Mennonite Church in Nappanee, Ind.

The influx of neighborhood kids more than tripled the Wednesday evening youth group. Typically, no more than a half dozen other churched teenagers usually attended the MYF, which served youth from First Mennonite Church, as well.

"All of a sudden, we had 33 kids in our church basement, and they were bouncing off the walls," said Ruben Chupp, pastor of North Main Street Mennonite.

"We didn't know for sure what was happening, but we

did agree on one thing: This was the Holy Spirit's doing, and we didn't want to do anything to screw it up."

Evidently, they have cooperated with the Holy Spirit, as the exodus from trailer park and city neighborhoods has continued to flow into MYF. The Holy Spirit had some help from Asia Marsh, a youth from First Mennonite, and Donna Weaver, a 72-year-old grandmother and a former MYF sponsor.

Marsh invited some kids from her trailer park to the gatherings. Weaver, lives near an apartment building downtown, where she hangs out with some of the kids at a coffee shop.

"Both Asia and Donna established relationships with these kids, and we

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following God's lead



North Main Street youth group members (left) Cherakie Thomas, Hannah Bradley, Sandy Slabaugh, Emily Fisher, Kristen Hochstedler, Bruce Slabaugh, Dawon Rupp and Asia Marsh. Photo by Asia Marsh

(continued from page one)

traced what has happened to those friendships," Chupp said. "They threw a stone in the lake and created all these concentric circles."

The concentric circles have stirred the waters with new life, and new challenges, said Sandy Slabaugh, youth sponsor with her husband, Bruce. They served as sponsors in the 1990s and had to adjust to the challenges of today's unchurched youth when they returned as sponsors last fall.

They minister to the teenagers with youth pastor Corben Boshart, an intern from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and Slabaugh's daughter, Mariah, and her boyfriend, Ryan Menzie.

"They bring a lot of issues, you name it, sex, drugs, physical, mental and emotional abuse," Sandy Slabaugh said. "We provide a safe place where we listen to them and feed them a good meal." "You can't learn if you are hungry,

and we try to fill them up both physically and spiritually before they go home. Some of these kids come to church directly from school, so they were waiting for us when we came at 6 p.m.

"We didn't know for sure what was happening. But we did agree on one thing: This was the Holy Spirit's doing." —Ruben Chupp

When the doors open, the kids find a peaceful and prayerful alternative to their oft-drama-filled homes, and a new hope for their future.

"We want to try to help them envision a different life for themselves — graduating from high school, going to college," Sandy Slabaugh said. "We don't really have a blue print for this but are simply trying to go where God takes us."



North Main Street Mennonite youth group members (left) Cherakie Thomas, Emily Fisher, Hannah Bradley, Asia March, Kristen Hochstedler and Dawson Rupp. Photo by Sandy Slabaugh

This issue is available online:

im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel



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Providing shelter in the storm

Grand Marais prepares to serve rural neighbors

By Laurie Oswald Robinson, editor

Grand Marais (Mich.) Mennonite Church decided the most missional thing it could do where winters are cold and emergency resources are few was to provide physical – as well as spiritual – shelter.

So six years ago, the congregation of 20 members – located on the upper peninsula of Michigan and the southern shore of Lake Superior – built a new fellowship hall to double as a community emergency shelter.

The town of 250 has not had to use the shelter yet. But the time is sure to come, said Nancy Hughes, a longtime church member, an emergency medical technician and coordinator for the Burt Township Medical Reserve Corp.

“We are so far away from anything that we are considered the rural frontier,” Hughes said. “If a ice storm happens that creates a power outage, people have nowhere to go. Thanks to the congregation, now they do.”

The nearest hospital is 50 miles away, and there is no link to healthcare other than the local ambulance and the shelter for 80 people, she said. In a disaster, volunteers in the Medical Reserve Corp would work with first responders – the local ambulance and fire department – until further assistance was possible within an hour and a half.



Grand Marais (Mich.) Mennonite Church. Photo provided

Those sheltered would receive heat, food, light first aid, and the attention of emergency medical technicians who could confer by phone with a doctor or nurse miles away.

The fellowship hall-emergency shelter also serves as a certified training center for Red Cross. It has a large generator, and it’s all handicapped accessible. The local Community Urgency Response Team, works with the Medical Reserve Corp, to prepare the community for disaster.

“In winter it gets very cold, sometimes 10 below, and we can have up to 300 inches of snow,” Hughes said. “The main road is the only access to the town, and sometimes it is not accessible. ... This is an important outreach for our community in which we are servants to our neighbors.”

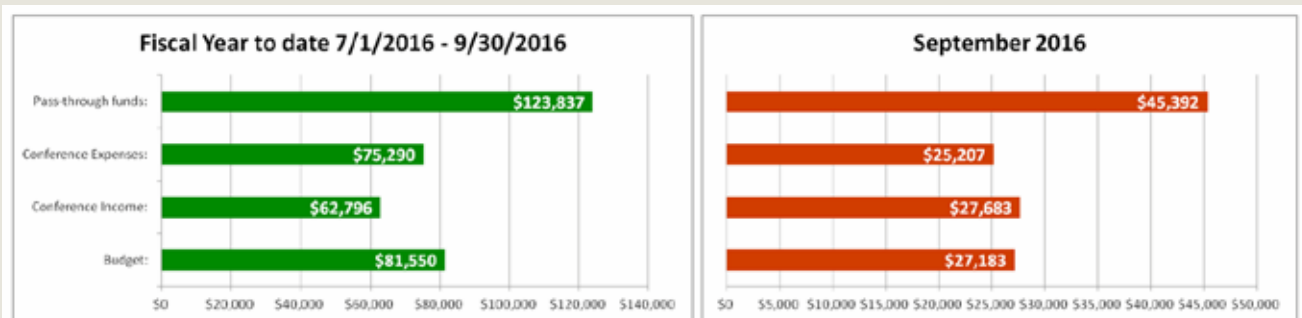
Phil Bontrager, interim pastor of Grand Marais Mennonite, agrees. “Providing this shelter is how we express God’s love to the community. ... This is our way of following him.”

financial report

By Jim Norton, IN-MI conference bookkeeper

September 2016 financial report

Our income for September was \$500 above budget for the month but \$18,754 below budget for the year. In relation to our expenses our income for September was \$2,476 above expenses but for the year is \$12,494 behind expenses. Our expenses were actually \$6,260 below budget expenses. Thank you for your contributions for September.



journeying with our pastors



Dan Miller, IN-MI conference pastor, reflects on what it means to follow Jesus amidst multiple causes and loyalties.

There are so many things we can center around: children, parents, church, political activism, sports, safety, vengeance, etc. But Jesus' invitation to the first disciples in Mark 1:17 was, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." In the midst of multiple loyalties and myriad causes, Jesus invites us to follow. As a community of churches we say we want to center our life together around this Jesus. Our churches will be involved in many good works. But we are Christians because we "follow Jesus." Jesus is a person, the fullest expression of the Creator and of God's original intent for the world's salvation. Jesus is not a theology or a belief construct.

I was recently in Zurich, Switzerland, in the *Grossmunster*, the church where Ulrich Zwingli pastored during the Reformation. Zwingli and Anabaptist leaders in Zurich had differences of opinion and did not bless one another. The city council decreed those who rebaptized another would be executed. Anabaptist leaders were pretty good at labeling others as against Christ. I sat for some time in the chancel, asking in prayer how God held this all together. I don't know. What I do know is that in spite of us, Jesus continues inviting us to follow. And so we want to continue following, being disciples on the way. May it be so. Amen.

As we resize *Gospel Evangel*, we will continue to share stories of congregations following Jesus and being changed in the process. We hope you are encouraged by the stories about Grand Marais and North Main Street Mennonite churches.

The Missional Leadership Team (conference board) has presented a vision to move us forward: Centering conference life around Jesus; Shared spiritual practices; Discernment process; Covenant. Details about the vision can be found by clicking the "Vision" button at im.mennonite.net.

ministry transitions

Beginnings



Naomi Yoder, left, was licensed and installed as pastoral team leader at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church by Doug Kaufman on Aug. 14.



Conrad Mast, left, was installed as pastor at North Leo (Ind.) Mennonite Church by Dan Miller on July 17.



Velma Swartz, left, was ordained by Doug Kaufman on July 24 as pastor of senior ministries at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.



Katie Johnson Misz, left, was installed by Doug Kaufman Sept. 25 as pastor of family life at Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Endings



W. Mike Brudney, left, was ordained by Doug Kaufman on July 10 at Lake Bethel Mennonite Church, LaGrange, Ind.



Derrick Ramer, left, ended as associate pastor at First Mennonite Church in Middlebury, Ind., on July 31.



Russel Jensen completed his time as pastor at Belmont Neighborhood Fellowship in Elkhart, Ind. on Aug. 14.



Sherm Kauffman, above, completed his time as interim pastor at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church on July 24.



Dawn Yoder-Harms, left, ended as pastor of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Sept. 11.



Mario Bustos, right, retired as pastor of Valparaiso (Ind.) Mennonite Church on Aug. 21.