

Germfask Mennonite Church Withdrawal

Germfask (formerly Fernland) Mennonite Church, Germfask, MI , is the first of a chain of Mennonite congregations begun in the Upper Peninsula beginning in 1935. C.A. Shank of the Olive congregation and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Mission Board, visited the UP because of his health and believed it was ripe for Mennonite mission. Consequently summer Bible schools were held at Germfask in 1935 and 1936. In 1937 the mission board placed Chester Osborne at Germfask, making him the first Mennonite pastor in the UP. When he left in 1947, Bruce Handrich became pastor and served for many years.

Handrich wrote about ministry in Germfask in the March-April 1960 *Gospel Evangel*:

Germfask is a small community perhaps six square miles in area, sparsely populated, with little industry, and limited means of livelihood. In spite of its limitations, it is a splendid place to live and call home. It is one of the few places in the United States where one can still drive thirty miles without finding the beauties of nature cluttered with houses; where deer, bears, and coyotes can be found fresh in nature's own glorious wonderland. We are glad and count it a privilege to be able to serve our God in His vineyard here at Germfask.

J.D. Livermore became the pastor in 1998 and continues to serve there faithfully. Their gym has been a primary way they have reached out to the community. Many in the community look to J.D. as their pastor even if they do not attend.

In a letter dated June 3, 2015, the conference received this message signed by 28 participants in the congregation:

Germfask Mennonite Church has withdrawn from IN-MI Conference. We will no longer have any connection with IN-MI Conference because of their disregard of scripture and their own confession of faith.

We have patiently endured as the conference has self destructed over the issue of Homosexuality. It is now evident to us that the conference has a very different view of scripture than we do.

Therefore, for the sake of our spiritual health we will seek fellowship elsewhere.

The Ministry Credentialing Team will acknowledge their withdrawal at our next meeting, planned for June 20, 2015. While we are saddened by their decision, we also want to bless in seeking fellowship elsewhere.

Submitted by Doug Kaufman, conference pastor for leadership transitions