

Connecting with David & Rachel Martin

David and Rachel share a love of adventure and travel. They have traveled the fifty states of the USA with daughters Elizabeth, Rebecca, and Anna. Their memories are recorded on shelves in photo albums and journals. Traveling expanded their lives while bonding them as a family.

This memorable travel began innocently enough. David grew up camping and wanted his family to experience the same satisfaction that he enjoys. When the girls were three, five and seven, Rachel and David packed them into their van, along with camping gear. They traveled the blue highways, stopping to explore and set up camp each day early in the afternoon, tuned in to the attention span of little girls.

On this first adventure they went to the west coast and back, taking the entire summer. In the end they talked about how much fun it was and how much they had learned. Filling in the states on a map helped them get a geographic picture. The teacher in Rachel was a plus as she provided additional activities en route.

Somewhere the idea was born that it would be fun to take trips to other states, to see how many they could visit. From that time, they made a point of planning itineraries to cover additional states.

The summer before Elizabeth's senior year the Mennonite Church convention was in San Jose, California. MYF advisor David, along with Elizabeth and Becca, planned to attend. Rachel and Anna decided to travel along and from there they all took a leap across the Pacific to Hawaii.

Perhaps the most memorable excursion was taking the Christmas Train to New Orleans, leaving on Christmas Eve. Oddly enough, their very last state to visit as a family was Delaware!

David brings his love of camping from his childhood in Virginia. Born December 1, 1952 in Bergton, he grew up in Park View with three sisters in a neighborhood of close-knit friends. Everyone was his parent; the children biked all around, in and out of each other's lives. This was the prelude to David biking across the US in 1980.

Rachel Witmer has warm memories of growing up in a family of six sisters and two brothers. Born December 6, 1960 in Salem, Ohio, she remembers the hospitality of



her parents Ralph and Doris. They opened their home to international students as well as to refugee families. Extended family stayed with them when they came home to visit.

Rachel went to public school through high school, graduating in 1979. EMC was her choice of college where she majored in elementary education in 1983.

Rachel spent a term abroad where she experienced life in the Middle East. She appreciates the shift in perspective that came with living in the land of the Bible.

During high school and college, Rachel worked in a day camp in Stouffville, north of Toronto, Canada.

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Worship Schedule

- *Jan. 3 ~ Hymn Sing; Moment in Mission w/ Justin Shenk & Valerie Showalter*
- *Jan. 10 ~ Moment in Mission w/ David Wiegner & Sarah Rich*
- *Jan. 17 ~ To be determined*
- *Jan. 24 ~ World Fellowship Sunday*
- *Jan. 31 ~ Communion*

(Continued on pg 8)

Pray For One Another

James 5:16

The purpose of “Pray For One Another” is to help us be aware of and pray for members of AMC who, for whatever reason, are unable to participate in Sunday morning worship services on a regular basis. Scripture admonishes us to pray. It is one of the joys of the Christian life and part of what makes us community. The names of people listed may change from time to time. If you know of someone you would like to be included with those named here, please be in touch with the church office.



Charlotte Biris Al & Gladys Claassen Honey (Marilyn) Hernley
 Carolyn & John Horst Paul & Dorothy Martin Phillip Rutt
 Amela & Randy Puljek-Shank Hannah Yoder Madeleine Yoder

Diamond Street Early Childhood Center

2015 was a very busy year for Diamond Street ECC! We are currently serving over 130 children from very di-



verse backgrounds. Our mission is to provide high quality childcare. We speak of high quality care often, but what does high quality look like every day at Diamond Street?

High quality care means each child gets what he or she needs to be successful. Sometimes that means extra work on the part of the teacher.

This year, it meant helping a single mom get access to mental health services for her child who is struggling with challenging behaviors.

It meant extra hugs and attention to a child who just needs it.

It meant providing individualized instruction for every child in our school.

It meant extra meetings and planning so a child with severe food allergies could attend school and eat meals with her friends.

It meant our curriculum coordinator stepping in to teach a pre-K class for a few months while we found the best new teacher for that classroom. Her placement ensured high quality in that classroom everyday instead of rotating subs.

It meant staying open late when 222 shut down and all roads to Akron were jammed.

Every day the teachers and staff here at Diamond Street go the extra mile to help the families we serve. None of this mission would be possible without the support of AMC. Thank you for creating, nurturing and supporting DSECC for the past 46 years. We are so excited to see what 2016 brings!

Opportunities for Meaningful Connections with Women Attending AMC

❖ Service Projects

- Quarterly evening work nights at New Holland ReUzit Shop: Facilitated by Sue Blessing. A winter & spring evening for women from AMC to spend visiting and preparing items for sale. Dates to be announced.
- Opportunities for service with CVCCS Conestoga Valley Christian Community Services: Facilitated by Deb Sprunger. Details to come.

❖ Half-Day Retreat:

Planning for a Spring half-day retreat for women. We are exploring the topic of being authentic. More details to come. Women of all are encouraged to join us.

❖ Stories that Heal, Sister Care at AMC

We will again plan for a June and July Christian Education Series based on stories from our sisters at AMC.

❖ Third Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch / 11:00 – 1:00

Bring your lunch to the host’s home so you can eat and chat with your old and new friends from AMC. Come for the complete time or stop in for just a half hour. No agenda, just fellowship around your meal. The host will supply a glass of cold water and if they desire, coffee and/or tea. If you are willing to host one of the upcoming lunches, please contact Jean Buchen.

- December 15 Jean Buchen
- January 19 *Contact Jean Buchen if you are interested in hosting*
- February 16 Ruth Detweiler
- March 15 Mary Jane Crockett
- April 19 Joyce Longenecker
- May 17 Helen Peifer



A Belated Christmas Blessing Prayer

Dear Friends,

May the light of the Christmas Star
illuminate your path,
May the warmth of home and hearth
settle deep in your bones,
May the cheer and good will of friends
bring a smile to your face,
May the hope of a childlike heart
find you at peace,
May the joy of a thousand angels sing to you,
May the love of God surround you.

Blessings from the Mennonite Women USA Staff,
Marlene Bogard, Executive Director
Claire DeBerg, Communications Manager
Berni Kaufman, Executive Assistant
Rhoda Keener, Sister Care Director

News from the MYF

December has been a great and busy month for the MYF!

On Saturday December 5th, the MYF gave back to AMC families by hosting a Christmas-babysitting night. This event provides an opportunity for parents of young children to do some Christmas shopping, or spend some much-needed social time with other adults! Eleven children under the age of 12 attended the event. The children enjoyed a number of activities including basketball, "Sharks & Minnows", Hide-n'-Seek, and crafts. The children were also treated to home-cooked lasagna, and ended the night with a holiday favorite, "Polar Express".

On Saturday, December 19th, the MYF held Supper Club at the home of Christopher Hershberger. Supper Club is a time where all MYF students are invited to the home of one of the students or advisors for supper and fellowship. Christopher and his mother, Susan King, served chili, baked potatoes, chocolates, cookies, peanut-butter whoopie pies and hot tea. The MYF students who attended had a very meaningful time of sharing. Our thanks to Susan King and Christopher Hershberger for opening their home to us! In 2016, the MYF may invite others from the congregation to host Supper Club in their homes. If you are interested in hosting, contact Marcia Hartzler-Banks at marciahartzler@gmail.com.



We also held our MYF Christmas party during the AMC Christmas Tea, on Sunday December 20th. Marcia Hartzler-Banks worked hard to provide a fantastic buffet of holiday treats and savory snacks. Chocolate and Cheese fondue were served, along with an assortment of fruit and homemade Christmas cookies. We also held our annual "Goofy Gift Exchange". Dave Wise (MYF Adviser Emeritus) secretly contributed his traditional "unusual" food gift. This year it was "Pickled Pig's Feet"! Marcia Hartzler-Banks was the surprised recipient. Chelsea Brubaker won the "Most Creative Gift" award, by wrapping and giving away live goldfish!

The MYF is looking ahead to 2016 with hope and optimism. Our exciting annual MYF Spaghetti Supper will be held on Saturday January 23rd. This is a fun and important fundraiser for the MYF. Themes for past years have been quite creative. Alice in Wonderland (2015) and Jazz Coffee House (2014) were recent themes. What will the theme be this year? The best way to find out is to come out and eat some spaghetti! Please mark your calendars....We hope you can come out and join us!

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December 2015

Valerie Showalter and Justin Shenk *Working in London*

Photo Captions:

Above, right: Gathering with other European Mennonite workers in Bammental, Germany (photo in Heidelberg)

Second page photos:

Top, right: A Bible study led by the oldest youth in our group – a first!!

Middle, left: Valerie and a friend enjoy a view of the ‘Shard’ sky-scraper from the ‘Walkie Talkie’

Bottom, middle: One of the farewell gatherings with church friends.



It does seem strange that this is our final newsletter to you, the last in a three-year commitment to keep you informed of our work in London. Our commitment mirrored each of yours – you committed to support us first, and we are still so thankful for that! Our church in London, Clapton Park United Reformed Church, also wanted us to pass on their deep gratitude for your generosity.

We left London at the end of October, feeling very much that our leaving was done well. We planned many aspects of our leaving: from the meals with small groups from the church for intimate final conversations, to long discussions with church leaders about our work processes, to having moments to check the last of our boxes of ‘things to see or do’ while calling London home. The last months went very quickly, it seemed, and we are glad that we proactively devolved from our work. In many ways, we hope that this has left the church in a more sustainable place as well, with fewer loose ends to worry about.

We thought we would share a few highlights of our final months in London. The first was seeing several of the older youth in the youth group step up to take responsibility for Bible studies. Another was to spend several days with other Mennonite service workers in Europe. Of the five ‘farewell’ meals we hosted with families from the church,

Valerie and Justin, Working in London

December 2015

nearly every single regularly attending member was able to come, and we had anywhere from eight people around the table at a meal to fifteen! Finally, we were able to take a few last days of vacation in Ireland to help us start to transition out of our roles. From Justin's return from the States in late August to our plane taking off from Heathrow in October, the days were full with love, laughter, tears, and even the occasional surprise.

Now, we are transitioning back to life in the U.S. We spoke at three churches in November, looking at some comparisons between the North American church and the church in the UK, and we look forward to sharing with Akron Mennonite Church on January 3 on the same topic. If you were unable to be at any of our speaking engagements, and have interest in hearing our thoughts, do not hesitate to be in touch!



What's next for us? We're not entirely sure! Valerie has applied to Eastern Mennonite Seminary in the MDiv program for the spring; Justin is looking into a local Master Gardener program. We are both looking for meaningful work to complement our sense of long-term vocations. Meanwhile, we are excited to be settling on the farm where Valerie grew up in Linville in the farm house where she spent the first few years of her life, and we hope to find ways to be a space for hospitality and sanctuary there. If nothing else, we would love to welcome each and

every one of you into our home (once we're settled!) for a cuppa, a walk through the gardens, or even overnight! You'll want to note our updated contact information on the first page. We hope you sense the presence of God-With-Us throughout this Advent season and into the new year. Peace and love to each of you in your journeys.

Lots of Love -- Justin and Valerie



January at AMC

- Jan. 3 Men’s Choir rehearsal in sanctuary @ 8:00 am; sing for 9:00 am worship service
- Jan. 5 Lunch Bunch @ 11:30 am at Oregon Dairy
- Jan. 7 Men’s Breakfast @ 7:00 am at Udder Choice; presenter Dave Frey
- Jan. 9 F.L.I.P. event—Potluck dinner and movie @ AMC on big screen
- Jan. 10 Sunday Soup & MYF dessert fundraiser immediately following Discipleship Hour
- Jan. 14 Council meeting @ 7:00 pm at AMC, room 133
- Jan. 23 MYF Spaghetti Supper @ 5:30 pm
- Jan. 20 F.L.I.P. event—Tie-dye craft night from 6:00 – 8:00 pm
- Feb. 5-7 MYF winter retreat weekend with Pilgrims MYF @ King’s cabin

On World Fellowship Sunday, celebrate the global Church with an international hymn sing!

Mennonite World Conference invites you to a hymn sing of international songs featuring local musicians from the MWC Assembly (July 2015). This event will take place on January 24, 2016 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Forest Hills Mennonite Church (100 Quarry Rd., Leola,

PA). All are invited, regardless of participation in PA 2015. Those who have Assembly songbooks are requested to bring them. Some songbooks will be provided. **See Patricia Martin for a copy of the songbook, if you are planning to attend.** An offering to support the ongoing programs of Mennonite World Conference will be taken.

On Friday, Dec. 18, 2016 a federal budget bill was signed into law that included provisions related to **Qualified Charitable Distributions** from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Here are a few details about what this law means for donors:

- The law makes the Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA (“IRA rollover”) permanent. Permanency is important because now donors can enjoy certainty and will be able to better manage their income as well as their charitable giving.
- The law also makes the IRA rollover retroactive to December 31, 2014. Gifts transferred directly from a donor’s IRA to your organization at any point during 2015 will qualify as a rollover gift. These gifts (up to the \$100,000 limit) are both tax-exempt and the amount of a rollover gift can be used to meet the donor’s required minimum distribution.

IRA rollover details

The basic rules for an IRA rollover remain the same. Donors age 70½ or older can transfer up to \$100,000 from their IRA to charity each year. An IRA rollover is a tax-exempt distribution from the IRA. The amount transferred can be used to meet the donor’s required minimum distribution.

If you would like to use your IRA to satisfy your offering to AMC, you will need to contact the administrator or your IRA and tell them that you would like to initiate a “Qualified Charitable Distribution” from your IRA. They will provide you the forms to fill out to have a distribution sent to AMC.

Connecting w/the Martins... (cont.)

After college, Rachel moved to Lancaster County to teach at Hinkletown Mennonite School. She had interviewed with Jon Bender, principal, and was attracted to the open classroom format and the freedom to create her own curriculum.

The physical education teacher at that time was also attracted to Hinkletown to create his own structure with the students. David and Rachel began secretly dating in 1985. However, one student seemed to read the energy between them, and he suggested to his teacher Rachel that she should date his PE teacher. The surprise was on everyone when they came to the end of the year school picnic together.

David's route to Hinkletown took a broad and scenic trajectory, beginning in Park View, Virginia. He attended public school through eighth grade and then enrolled at Eastern Mennonite High School, graduating in 1971.

The next year when David was at Hesston College in Kansas, Uncle Sam knocked at his door. He served a year of voluntary service in Cleveland, Ohio. When the VS program closed, David completed his two-year obligation, staying one more year with the 1-W program.

David went back home to study at EMC 1974-78 with double majors in health and physical education and in biblical studies. His student teaching was at Lancaster Mennonite High where he was hired to teach Bible and PE.

David resigned teaching in 1980 to follow his passions of biking and then driving tractor-trailer. This continued for five years when he unexpectedly received a call from his former sixth grade teacher, Jon Scott Bender, inviting him to come to teach at Hinkletown.

Rachel and David came to AMC through different routes. David knew Truman Brunk as his student pastor at EMC. He had taught with John Weber at LMH and later purchased John and Janet's house in Rothsville.

When Rachel came to the county she rented an apartment in Esther Miller's basement. Esther nudged her to come along to church with her. Rachel liked the people and the pastor and has stayed.

David and Rachel were married in 1986 by David's father at the Landisville Camp Meeting grounds. The afternoon was spent visiting with family and close friends, listening to music performances and sharing a meal together. The wedding ceremony and reception were then opened to a broader community including staff and students from Hinkletown.

Rachel continued teaching at Hinkletown until Elizabeth was born. She stayed home with the girls for ten years. These were some of the best years of motherhood.

David left Hinkletown to teach at Pequea Valley High School for six years. When he completed his master's degree in school counseling at Temple, he went to Conestoga Valley school district as a middle school guidance counselor, where he continues to the present.

David has no plans to retire. He does plan to leave CV when he receives his doctorate. This has been his life dream. Family came first, however; and now he pursues next steps to his goal.

David notes that his dad graduated from seminary at sixty-five, and he plans to work indefinitely, finding fulfillment in next steps and wherever that leads.

He recommends the book, *The Blue Zones Solution, Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People*, to anyone interested in living life beyond our society's expectation of set retirement date. David doesn't plan to sit around getting old. He has many miles to go before he sleeps.

Rachel currently works at Akron Elementary as an intervention specialist. She finds this calling to be challenging and satisfying. She began part-time at Akron when Anna started school and moved through various assignments to her present position.

Rachel finds pleasure in reading, crossword and Sudoku puzzles, as well as learning new things.

David's passions are biking, cooking, and coaching. He is a fabulous cook and enjoys experimenting with new recipes or making his own signature ones. He bikes every time he can to exercise physically and mentally and to avoid driving a car. He recently set a record for 2015 when he reached 3,000 cycling miles by his birthday.

Rachel and David together enjoy dining out, Broadway shows, and travel, especially around the country and world to visit their daughters. They are not surprised that Becca, Anna, and Elizabeth have spread their wings and goals beyond hometown. Adventure and other shores were always a possibility, as they traveled as a family.

~Priscilla Ziegler

January Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Dave Frey Ethel Shank Ruth Weaver	2
3 Phil Zimmerman	4	5 Ken Langehan Ezra Soe	6 Lorene Horst Jean Miller Emily Walker	7 Susan Broaddus Renaë Weaver	8	9 Karen King Rebecca Longenecker
10 Hermon Bontrager Steve Hershberger John Horst	11 Sharon Bowman Jolene Weaver	12	13 Linda Horst	14 Esther Hostetter	15 Sanela Gligorevic Flo Harnish	16 Corin Dundore Barb Erb
17 Nebojsa Gligorevic	18 Joyce Haller Mark Weaver	19	20	21 Bernice Valverde	22 Andrea King Bob Martin Esther Weaver	23 Brigham Martin Barbara Mitchell
24 Cathy Boshart Meghan Nolt	25 John Shearer	26 Meghan Erb Steve Hartzler Jared Horst Joy Millen	27 Lloyd Chapman Dorothy Martin Kenton Martin Sven Sundberg	28 Chris Hostetter	29 Verna Schrock Milo Soe	30
31 Leif Sundberg						

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Contact Updates



AMC Vision Statement

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.

Statement on Human Sexuality

We are a community of believers seeking to respond with God's love to all people. We celebrate the strength of our unity in the midst of our diversity of experiences, perspectives and understanding of Scripture. We seek to be a community of grace and reconciliation and so welcome into membership all who confess faith in Jesus Christ, including those in same-gender covenant relationships. We are committed to engaging in God's mission in a broken world through an Anabaptist-Mennonite faith perspective.