

Connecting with John & Vel Shearer

John and Vel look back with satisfaction through their full rich life of serving and giving to others. They have related to all ages, as MYF advisors, private school administrator, teacher, counselor and companion peers in their current church involvements.



Most recently they responded to John Stoner's call to relate to non-peace churches in their community. Vel attends the Episcopal Church and John the Pentecostal.

They define their mission as bridge building. Their intent is to build acceptance between their faith traditions, but also to plant awareness of the early church peace positions that others could model.

It was a costly decision as they realize how much they miss regular attendance at AMC. Having come here in 1991, they were drawn to the Anabaptist peace emphasis, the MCC influence of worldwide service and the freedom to ask the important questions. They appreciate the caring community that welcomed them. It feels like home.

John and Vel continue to attend AMC twice a month and are active participants in the Koinonia class.

Velorous Gingrich reveals her across-the-border roots with her lilting Canadian accent. Born in Elmira, Ontario, Vel was sixth of seven children. She was very close to her dad, a miller, holding his hand and walking beside him. Vel remembers laughter and stories around the table with family. She went to public school with the same friends through grade thirteen.

Though the Mennonite faith was central to all of her family, it didn't keep them from finding other churches as they went off to school and married.

Rather than divide the family, the rich diversion bonded them and impacted their acceptance and tolerance of other faiths. Vel sees this as a rich heritage.

After finishing secondary school, Vel enrolled at a teacher's college to prepare for her life of service. She taught in local schools before going on to Goshen College for her degree.

John came from a family where service was practiced, not preached. Born in 1937, the youngest of four children, John calls Elizabethtown his home. Life turned upside down when his mother died when he was three and a half years old.

John's sisters were the primary persons in his life, as well as Dad who was central to family life.

The family lived on deceased grandfather Gish's truck farm and continued his legacy of supplying vegetables and fruit to neighbors and wider community.

The kitchen at John's home was like Grand Central Station with neighbors coming for produce, and then sitting to visit. There was also time for stories and village gossip to entertain. *(Continued on pg 6)*

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Worship Schedule

- Feb. 7 ~ *World Fellowship Sunday*
- Feb. 10 ~ *Ash Wednesday Service @ 6:30 pm*
- Feb. 14 ~ *Mark Wenger*
- Feb. 21 ~ *2nd Sunday of Advent*
- Feb. 28 ~ *A. Richard Weaver*

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

Even the blizzard of 2016 can't stop the learning here at DSECC! The Bluebirds, our young toddlers, got to play with snow in their sensory table. This activity was one of their first experiences with snow, and they learned that snow is cold! Sensory activities like this one are an important piece to developing their young minds and their language skills.



Our school age program was open when local schools were closed providing a valuable service to working families. The kids stayed busy inside by creating wooden sculptures with donated scrap wood. A special thank you to Edger Stoesz for the materials. The kids loved the activity! It was a new medium for creativity that many had not experienced before. Our Lead School Age teacher, Leah Amstutz, does many creative art projects with the students after school.



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:

Hold the date of Saturday, April 9 from 9:00 until 1:00. The event will be on the topic of “Authentic Relationships”. We are excited to inform you that Janet Stauffer, Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy at Evangelical Seminary in Myerstown and Ginny Hartman, Chaplain/Pastor at Pleasant View Retirement Community in Manheim will be our resource persons. For now, save the date and we will be providing more detailed information in the March newsletter. This event is for women of all ages.

❖ 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.

- February 16 Ruth Detweiler
- March 15 Mary Jane Crockett
- April 19 Joyce Longenecker
- May 17 Helen Peifer



February at AMC & In the Community

Feb 02	Lunch Bunch @ 11:30 am at Oregon Dairy	Feb 10	Ash Wednesday service @ 6:30 pm in Assembly Room
Feb 04	Men’s breakfast @ 7:00am at Udder Choice; presenter Herman Bontrager	Feb 11	Council Meeting @ 7:00 pm in Rm. 133
Feb 05-07	MYF winter retreat weekend with Plains MYF @ King’s cabin	Feb 18	Ephrata Community Meal @ First United Methodist Church
Feb 06	F.L.I.P. - 2:00-4:00pm free indoor swim @ Lititz Rec Center – Family host contact person is Amy Seifarh (733-6086)	Feb 19	Newsletter submissions due
Feb 07	Council Open Hours with Amy Burkholder & Jerry Shank in Sabbath room	Feb 21	55+ meeting at noon
Feb 07	Fellowship Meal immediately following Discipleship Hour	Feb 27	MYF Spaghetti Supper @ 5:30 pm

February at AMC & In the Community

MYF Spaghetti Supper



The rescheduled date for our epic MYF Spaghetti Supper is **Saturday, February 27 at 5:30pm!** Our youth are working hard on their entertainment for the evening! They encourage you to dress up as your favorite DC Comic/Marvel Super Hero or reporter to show your support! There is still room on the sign-up sheet for pie donations. We will also be delivering "take-out orders" to Landis Homes, and taking call-ahead orders for "drive-thru pick up". Contact Karyn Nancarvis 717-381-6092.

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College Student Care Packages

Donations for the College Student Care Packages are being accepted! We plan to ship 18 this year. Popular items include popcorn, ramen noodles, hot chocolate, and baked goods. Please store baked goods in small zip lock baggies with a few cookies/bars in each and place on the table in the foyer. The MYF will fill the care packages during Discipleship Hour on February 14th. Thank you for your generous support of our young adults in this way! -Kenton Martin



Ephrata Community Meal

Your help is needed for the **Ephrata Community Meal** held on **Thursday, February 18**. Ephrata area churches serve a meal for low-income residents in the Akron/Ephrata area every Thursday evening. Our congregation is responsible for the meal on the 18th. We need people to donate pies. If you are not a pie baker, Helena Dueck bakes and sells wonderful homemade pies. You can reach Helena at 733-2185 if you want her to bake one for you to donate. Also needed are volunteers for meal prep, serving and clean up. The meal will be at the First United Methodist Church at the corner of Church and Locust Streets in Ephrata. Please contact Jean Buchen if you are interested in helping. Pies can be dropped at the First Methodist Church between 4:00 and 5:30 or at AMC before 2:00 on the 18th. You can reach Jean at jbuchen@kthighland.com or 396-0025.

Emulate Chamber Ensemble

An intimate vocal group of twelve students from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) will present a concert at Akron Mennonite Church, Saturday, March 5, 2016 at 7:00 pm. The ensemble was founded and is directed by Assistant Music Professor, Dr. Ryan Keebaugh. The concert is composed of music in the jazz genre; using modern, and contemporary concert literature, both secular and sacred.

Pizza & a Movie

Everyone is welcome to the next ADNet lunch meeting at noon in the AMC assembly room on Sunday, March 6, following the discipleship hour. Bring your lunch or sign up for pizza and join us to watch a movie. This documentary about Glen Campbell takes us on a trip and teaches us something about dementia.



In 2011, music legend Glen Campbell set out on an unprecedented tour across America. They thought it would last five weeks; instead, it went for 151 spectacular sold-out shows over a triumphant year and a half across America.

What made this tour extraordinary was that Glen had recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He was told to hang up his guitar and prepare for the inevitable. Instead, Glen and his wife went public with his diagnosis and announced that he and his family would set out on a "Goodbye Tour".

IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO ADD TO THE NEWSLETTER, PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY VIA EMAIL TO AMC@AKRONMENCH.ORG NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19. THANK YOU!

February at AMC & In the Community



Circles of Love is the title of a book published on behalf of Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet) a nonprofit organization. For the past five years I have been privileged to serve on the ADNet Board. ADNet's mission is to support Anabaptist congregations, families and persons touched by disabilities to nurture inclusive communities. *Circles of Love* includes stories of how congregations care for people with disabilities and their families.

The church is called to support and include each person as part of the body of Christ, including individuals with disabilities and their families. The church as the body of believers steps in and says in word and deed, that everyone is truly welcome and that we belong to one another. The book includes stories of congregations that have found ways to live out the biblical call to respond to one another's needs by using each other's gifts.

Akron Mennonite Church is one of the churches featured in the book. A ministry team was formed to support Philip Rutt and his family. Nelson and Esther Hostettler took steps to form a supportive care group for their son, who lives independently, as they prepared to move to a retirement community. These are just two examples of how individuals have reached out to support and include people with disabilities and their families in congregational life. When congregations value and include every individual in the church, we all are blessed.

Circles of Love, written by Dean Preheim-Bartel, Timothy J. Burkholder, Linda A. Christophel and Christine J. Guth and published by Herald Press can be found in the AMC library. I encourage you to learn how people's lives have been transformed by acts of compassionate care from congregations who have supported people with disabilities and those who love them.

~ Gerald Meck

ADNET (Anabaptist Disabilities Network) has a vision that faith communities are transformed when individuals with disabilities and their God-given gifts and experiences enjoy full inclusion in the Body of Christ. If you have a suggestion of other stories to be shared or you would be willing to write your own, please contact Marilyn Langeman, phone 859-3840.

Beyond Ourselves

A benefit concert for MCC Global Family Program



You are invited to attend the annual concert that will be held Sunday, **February 28, 2016, at 3:00 pm** at James Street Mennonite Church, 323 West James Street, Lancaster. Musicians Rosemary

Blessing, Doris Hall-Gulati, Christy Kauffman & Ryan Kauffman will join with guest artists LMS Campus Chorale and Sopa Sol (Francis Miller & Daryl Snider). There will also be a premiering of commissioned works by Dr. Neal Harnly and Jonathan Ragonese.

The free-will offering from this concert will help bring vocational training opportunities to eastern Nepal and support education and teacher training in rural Nepal.

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society

Multigenerational Anabaptist Businesses—Hear from Ken Kauffman, of Kauffman's fruit farm, and John Smucker, of Bird-in-Hand Corporation, talk about sustaining their families businesses at 7 p.m. on Monday, February 1, at Stumptown Mennonite Church.

Annual Music Night—Listen to music from across the diversity of the Mennonite world during Annual Music Night, featuring the talented Kravets family from the Ukraine, an acapella mixed ensemble from the Mennonite Heritage Chorale, the young local Weybright duo, and more! The concert is at 7 p.m. on Saturday, February 6, at Neffsville Mennonite Church. Tickets are \$20 for individuals, \$15 for students, \$15 per person for families of three or more. Register at lmhs.org or by calling (717) 393-9745. Tickets available at door while they last.

Fraktur II: The Illuminated Letter—Learn how to write in the distinctive style of fraktur in this class taught by Emily Smucker-Beidler from 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, February 13. The class costs \$70 for members and \$80 for non-members. Materials are included in the tuition. Register by February 6 at lmhs.org or by calling (717) 393-9745.

Winter Bookfest—Find quality used books from the most popular categories of the annual Bookworm Frolic. This midwinter sale runs from 3 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, February 18, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, February 19 and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 20.

February at AMC & In the Community



EPHRATARE-UZIT STORES, INC.
CLOTHING HOUSEWARES FURNITURE BOOKS & MORE
20 East Main Street, Ephrata, PA 17522 717-733-4982
1054 S State Street, Ephrata, PA 17522 717-733-4934

Part Time Paid Position Open
The **Ephrata Re-Uzit Store Inc.** is receiving applications for a part time
Donation Room/Processor

Ephrata Re-Uzit is a non-profit retail thrift shop business dedicated to reselling donated items to raise funds to support the world wide work of the Mennonite Central Committee. This position is at the Ephrata Re-Uzit shop located at 20 East Main Street in downtown Ephrata.

This position requires someone who would be available at least half-time with some flexibility on working hours. The job description requires a person who will assist in receiving donations with a good spirit of relating to donors, as well as the physical ability to spend considerable time on his/her feet and lift a minimum of 35 pounds. This person will be crucial to the initial sorting of items into the processing system and in organizing the donations room.

Job descriptions and applications are available from Joyce Horning, Thrift Store manager at 20 E. Main Street, or Lowell Detweiler at lowelldetweiler@reuzit.org.

Applications are welcomed immediately with selection by mid-February and a preferred starting date of March 1, 2016.

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

Liz shared the Purple Heart that her husband earned in the war. Etta brought homemade grape juice. Harry dropped in just to play his mandolin to an eager audience. Who needed TV with live entertainment!

Beyond the entertainment was the gentle care and companionship from these neighbors who also grieved the absence of Mother, former center of these gatherings.

It was at the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale where church service began in 1954. John had been trained in printing at Hershey Vocational High School. He worked at preparing the Gospel Herald for press and during that time, he learned of an opening for PAX service.

John became part of the PAX venture, going to Germany, France and Algeria. In Germany, the team constructed homes for Mennonite refugees.

To work in Algeria, John needed residence from France, so spent time in a children's home to get a visa.

Homebuilding in Algeria gave relief after a major earthquake. PAX men lived in the middle of the Arab rebellion against the French government. The rebellion included tactics like current ISIS uses to create terror.

John enrolled at EMC after PAX, taking summers off to work at MPH again. These were soul-searching years

for him with academic and romance crises. By his third year, John joined the campus spiritual leadership.

John and Vel's next decisions to be of service brought them together. They joined the Life Team, spawned as a Voluntary Service unit, to visit, encourage and inspire the youth of the Mennonite Church.

This was a vision of Gene Herr, executive director of MYF church wide. The intention was to promote discipleship training with youth and help them find ways to witness to friends in a casual non-threatening way.

There were three teams covering the entire United States, coast to coast. John was the leader of their team, which visited fifteen churches. The thirty-day experiment began when they spent a week with a group, gave ideas and assignment.

Coming back after thirty days, they stayed in homes of MYF kids and met as a group each evening to share their experiences.

The entire Life Team experience impacted Vel and John in formable ways. The most important outcome was their decision to marry, a long story! They were married in Ontario in December 1963.

After John finished his degree at EMC and with their first son, they continued to serve in various ways. They began at Laurel- *(Continued on pg 7)*

Connecting w/the Shearers...

ville as program directors, and then moved on to Cleveland as VS unit leaders.

Their eyes were opened to poverty in a life changing way. This was in the mid sixties, with racial riots and visits by Martin Luther King. John has vivid memories of this time, especially meeting MLK and his team.

Seminary at Earlham School of Religion was John's next opportunity to prepare for service. While he studied at AMBS and Notre Dame, John was privileged to spend time with Morton Kelsey, John Dunne and the Sisters of Mercy.

Vel, young mother, wrote summer Bible school curriculum. MPH was pleased with her skills and some years later, she was invited to write curriculum for the Foundation series and later to edit *The Voice*, a WMSC publication. Vel also offered her gifts of service to lead women's groups.

John continued to work on his graduate degree as he pastored in Ontario and Beatrice, Nebraska. He earned his M.Div. from AMBS in 1976.

The next call to service was an invitation to move to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania as church planters. With their three young sons, Vel and John packed up and moved to this industrial blue-collar area. From 1976-1991, they were deeply involved in leadership roles of three house churches.

The Church of the Savior's training, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount and following Jesus in daily practice, influenced their mission. Those who were part of the collective church family learned the practices of discipleship and leadership.

For several years, Vel and John withheld the portion of income tax that would have paid for war. Their house churches developed a significant sensitivity to the U.S. war machine, enough to push them to join demonstrations in Washington DC.

While living in Wilkes Barre, John earned his MA in counseling. He began a private practice in individual and marriage counseling. John was now ordained to the gospel ministry.

Vel, also with MA in counseling, worked in a women's program with Luzerne County Community College. This was a job that, after a time, emptied her bucket, and she began looking for another opportunity.

She saw in the Gospel Herald that a school in Lebanon was looking for an administrator. Not sure her theology

would match their criteria, she applied. No questions asked; she was hired!

John was confident that he could continue his practice in Lebanon, so they moved in 1991 when Vel became administrator of New Covenant Christian School. She found this to be most fulfilling.

Vel left to work at HACC as counselor when New Covenant added high school. Later she became Director of Student Services, and after her retirement in 2003, she joined IU13 as a part-time paraprofessional.

John is drawn to the contemplative life and has found various ways to experience that and nurture his inner search in the Christian Desert tradition. He learned at the feet of Henri Nouwen and his friend Parker Palmer, and then the Jesuit George Schemel, all who helped John on his walk in the wilderness.

John earlier experienced the practice of Transcendental Meditation and wanted to find his center in God through TM. His plans to study this discipline fell through, and in the end, he found the parallel in Christian history. He practices centering prayer and teaches his clients this way to finding God.

John has been retired one year and is finding his way in this season of life for which we are given no training. He breathes deeply and embraces each new day to live fully.

Vel is an avid reader, appreciating a wide genre of books. She feels best when she has a couple of books by her side, to choose according to mood. Vel has found pleasure in knitting and quilting. She has made a quilt for each of their three boys. She made an anniversary quilt for her and John. Vel swims several times a week, finding water forgiving to her tired body that no longer walks well.

Together John and Vel have enjoyed train trips with Amtrack. They traveled across Canada and back. An anniversary trip took them from middle USA to California. Later another train trip was around the perimeter of the country. Currently they often enjoy a Friday night out at the movies.

Retirement has given Vel and John opportunity to stay in touch with friends and their four grandsons. They enjoy the freedom of open space and time, and maintain "trust with One in whom we live and move and have our being".

~Priscilla Ziegler

February Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Diane Gehman Janet Weber	2 Al Claassen Barb Weaver	3	4 Dale Stoltzfus	5 Lorri Hardin	6
7	8 Melanie Baer Drescher	9	10	11 Ginny Ebersole	12	13 Helena Dueck Desirae Stauffer Elexa Stauffer
14	15 Elaine Brubaker Alverta Martin	16	17	18 Delmar Zimmerman	19 Anna Clemens Lynette Meck Anne Wise	20
21 John Gingerich Ruth Hertzler	22 Viola Weber	23	24 Josh Gingerich	25 Phillip Rutt	26 Paul Longacre JB Shenk	27 Chris Martin Makena Zimmerman
28 Mataya Chap Anna Mae Weaver	29					

Akron Mennonite Church

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1311 Diamond Street
Akron, PA 17501
P: (717) 859-1488
E: amc@akronmench.org

www.akronmench.org

- ◇ *Worship @ 9:00 am*
- ◇ *Coffee/Tea Fellowship from 10:15-10:40 am*
- ◇ *Christian Education & Discipleship Hour from 10:40-11:30 am*



Contact Updates

Staff

Karyn Nancarvis
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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.