

SHARON NEWSLETTER

May - June
2025

Phillippians 3:10 That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to his death.

Easter is over, **Now What!** Knowing Christ is not a one-time moment it is a lifelong journey filled with great Joy! We should seek the depth of understanding the resurrection power of Jesus. You never have to walk the journey alone for He is with you always.

Worship Team Update:

Several Months ago, over the weekend of January 17th to 19th, Rachel Whitmer, Gabby Pollom, and Dennis & Babs Graber attended a Music & Worship Leaders Retreat held at the Laurelville Retreat Center in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania. This beautiful camp, nestled in the hills just Southeast of Pittsburgh PA, was a marvelous place for this event to occur. Everyone in attendance received much inspiration from the worship services and seminars that were held there. We also learned quite a few new songs from the "Voices Together" hymnal that was published several years ago. With the help of several anonymous donations, Sharon was able to purchase the projectable version of this new hymnal and will begin using this material as an additional worship resource during our services.

The Laurelville Retreat Center offers cozy lodging, delicious meals, and a tranquil place to relax and unwind with family and friends. Founded in 1943 by a small group of Mennonites affiliated with the nearby Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, PA, the founders' intent was to create a place for Mennonite youth to gather and spend valuable time together. This year round, 600-acre retreat center is nestled in the tranquil beauty of woods and mountains of the Laurel Highlands. Some of you might want to consider the Laurelville Retreat Center as a destination for you next gathering.

Dennis Graber

MONTHLY EVENTS

Heritage Service
1st Sunday @1:30pm

Quilting and Crafting
Tuesdays @9:30am
Thursdays @5:30pm

Women's Prayer Breakfast
2nd Saturday @8:00am

Men's Prayer Breakfast
4th Saturday @7:00am

Bible Study
Wednesday @6:00pm

Food Pantry Delivery
3rd Saturday @9:00am



Upcoming Mission's Month

Missions Month this year will be from July 13 to August 3. Speakers this year will include July 13 Gene Miller from Agape Church in Marysville. He will be bringing information of the Hope Center ministry in Marysville. July 20 will be Andy Stoner. Andy and his wife Anita have been volunteering recently in their retirement in SOOP, Service Opportunities with Our Partners, and MDS, Mennonite Disaster Service. July 27 will be Dion and Naty Beachey. Dion Beachey and his wife, Naty, serve as Apostolic Spiritual Community Sowers with Frontier Ventures. They focus on deepening spiritual formation and sparking missiological innovation alongside Latin American Christ-followers who are sending and going to least reached peoples. On August 3, Eric Kurtz with MCC, Mennonite Central Committee, will be here to share about the worldwide ministry they provide. Plan now to be here all these Mission focused Sundays.

Walter Attending a Conference

- ▲ Walter will be attending a Basics Conference by Alistair Begg on May 5-7. This conference is for men who serve as pastors and Christian workers. The time spent is a mix of Bible teaching, breakout sessions, and meals. The conference aims to encourage and equip pastors to do the basics of Christian ministry well. Given the unique responsibilities and challenges of life in ministry, the hope is that God might use the conference to refresh pastors and send them back to their home churches renewed for further Gospel work. The conference is at Parkside Church, where Alistair ministers, in Chagrin Falls Ohio. Speakers will include Alistair Begg, William Philip, and Richard Pratt. Nancy will be going along too, but not to attend the conference.

Walter and Nancy will be going to Alabama for the wedding of Walter's grandson Skyler Hursh, on Thursday May 22 and returning on Monday May 26. If you have need of anything during this time, please contact one of our Elders, Carol Schumacher, Mark Whitmer, Cliff Troyer and Ivan Wagler.

Bangladesh Chili and Soup Cook Off!

A big thank you to all who helped with and/or attended the March 15 fundraiser for the Bangladesh arsenic project! We had a good turnout, great friends, great music, and delicious food. (A friend commented to us later that it was better than what they had at a Downs

Syndrome fundraiser, which was catered by one of the Cameron Mitchell restaurants.) Congratulations to Vickie Yoder, who won the chili cookoff; and to Missy Snyder & Loretta Wagler, who were tied for the soup cookoff! We deeply appreciate everyone's support.

Bill and Carole Schumacher

The Cost of Following Jesus: Reflecting on 500 Years of Anabaptist Witness

What does it truly mean to follow Jesus? For centuries, Christians have wrestled with the cost and implications of discipleship. As we continue to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement through 2025, it's an important moment to reflect on the paths we take as followers of Christ.

Throughout the history of the church, two distinct understandings of salvation have emerged. One emphasizes belief: accepting Jesus as the Son of God, born of a virgin, and trusting in His forgiveness to secure eternal life. The other focuses on a lived response: believing the Good News and then embodying Jesus' teachings and example through daily obedience, even when it's costly.

These two paths might seem similar, but they diverge profoundly in practice. Choosing to follow Jesus' way—a way marked by love, humility, and nonviolence—demands more than intellectual assent. It calls us to a radical, life-altering discipleship that shapes every part of who we are and how we live.

The Turning Point in Christian History

For nearly three centuries, early Christians lived and often died for their faith. Persecuted for refusing to conform to the powers of the Roman Empire, their faith communities embodied a way of life deeply countercultural and rooted in Jesus' teachings. However, this began to shift in the fourth century when Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity across the empire.

At first glance, Constantine's embrace of Christianity seemed like a divine blessing. No longer persecuted, Christians gained legitimacy and status. But with this newfound power came a compromise. The church began to align itself with empire, trading the radical way of Jesus for a more convenient, state-sanctioned version of Christianity. Over time, this shift became the dominant model for much of Western Christianity.

Centuries later, during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, reformers like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin sought to reclaim the gospel from what they saw as the excesses and errors of the Roman Catholic Church. While their movements challenged ecclesiastical corruption and theological distortions, some reformers desired an even deeper transformation.

The Birth of the Anabaptist Movement

On January 21, 1525, in Zurich, Switzerland, a small group of reform-minded Christians took a bold step. At a Bible study gathering, George Blaurock, Conrad Grebel, and Felix Manz baptized one another as adults, rejecting the practice of infant baptism and committing themselves to a life of radical discipleship. This act marked the birth of the Anabaptist movement, a tradition that sought to recover the practices of the early church.

These early Anabaptists believed that following Jesus meant more than belief—it required action. Inspired by the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), they committed to loving their enemies, living simply, and rejecting violence. They understood that following Jesus would come at great personal cost. Many faced persecution,

imprisonment, and even death for their faith, yet they found strength in the presence of the Holy Spirit and the support of their faith communities.

A Legacy of Radical Discipleship

Today, Anabaptists around the world, including Mennonites, celebrate this legacy of costly discipleship. The early Anabaptists' vision—of a church that lives out Jesus' teachings in tangible, countercultural ways—continues to inspire us 500 years later.

As we approach this anniversary, we are invited to reflect on the kind of discipleship we choose. Will we follow the path of comfort and compromise, or will we embrace the radical way of Jesus, trusting in His love to transform our lives and our world?

In 2025 and beyond, let us remember and celebrate the movement that calls us back to the faith and practices of the early church—a faith rooted in Jesus' sacrificial love and a community committed to embodying His way.