

NEWSLETTER

COURAGE

BY PASTOR DAWN RANCK HOWER

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This newsletter belongs to all of us. Your input is greatly appreciated. Please feel free to submit articles to the editor.

Editor: Judy Nguyen

Mission Statement

As we encounter God's heart of love, our hearts are made new by God's Spirit. We invite people to experience Christ's love, welcoming each one into a caring fellowship, serving Christ with our gifts and resources.



**New Holland
Mennonite Church**

18 Western Avenue
New Holland, PA
17557
717-354-0602
nhmc@frontiernet.net



A friend of mine gave me a Willow Tree figure for my ordination in 2005. Since then I have bought one each year at the beginning of a new year of ministry. I recently bought number 13. Each figure has a title and I choose them carefully, envisioning what I might need to focus on for the next year of ministry. For example, in 2011 I knew that I wanted to focus more on pastoral care for that year, so I bought two friends sitting together, titled "Heart and Soul." Last year, knowing that it would be a year of transition from Plains and hopefully to a new congregation, knowing it would mean selling houses and moving, I choose the figure "Soar." This year, as I looked through the themes, the choice

was clear -- "Courage." Courage is what I need for this year of ministry. Courage to listen carefully. Courage to hear fully. Courage to lead steadily.

God gave the plans for the temple to King David, but God chose David's son Solomon to do the building. After giving all of the detailed instructions to Solomon, David ends with a blessing: "Be strong and of good courage, and act". Or as Eugene Peterson translates in *The Message Bible*, "Take charge! Take heart!" (1 Chronicles 28:20)

We can only imagine what Solomon was feeling. This was a huge task which was given to him, and David, who had led these people for years, knew that Solomon needed to be strong and to have courage in order to act.

And then David continues, "Don't be anxious or get discouraged. God, my God, is with you in this; he won't walk off and leave you in the lurch. He's at your side until every last detail is completed for conducting the worship of God."

Solomon has been called to lead, but not alone. God is with him, by his side -- always. (Cont. Page 4)



WISDOM FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

BY PAUL MARTIN

Psalm 119

vv 169–176

TEACH ME, HELP ME, SEEK ME

I have strayed like a lost sheep.

Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands. (v176)

In the early part of this section the psalmist prays for understanding, and deliverance. Then he breaks out into several verses of praise and singing in appreciation for all that he has been taught.

He then closes his lengthy psalm with verse 176 above. Humbly he admits to straying like a sheep and even becoming lost at times. As he has done many times throughout this psalm he asks his shepherd (Lord) to seek him, track him down and bring him back into his sheepfold. He assures his shepherd that he has not forgotten all the precepts and commands he has been taught, that he is worthy to be sought.

We too may stray from our shepherd at times but we must not

forget his teachings if we wish to be sought and found. Our shepherd is gracious, but we must be willing to accept his requirements to live in his sheepfold.

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that you do never abandon us, even when we forsake you; but your spirit prods us and leads us back if we are willing to be led. AMEN

LT HIGHLIGHTS

BY JENN ESBENSHADE

Cleaning – The Property Commission evaluated the cleaning of the church and suggested using the same cleaning service that is used by the ELC. The LT gave approval for this change.

ELC Budget – The memo of understanding between the ELC and NHMC will need to be clarified in some areas due to budgetary constraints of each organization.

NHMC Budget – The LT reviewed the current budget, including the \$12,000 deficit. A suggestion is to begin the year with the budget, knowing that by June 30 there would be a definite plan in place to revamp the budget for the rest of the year.

Capital Funds – The Property Committee approved using funds for the paving project.

MST – The LT approved the request to move Beryl to being a district-sponsored missionary. The LT also is requesting that Groffdale District have responsibility for the West Africa funds.

Website Update – Dawn will take over the creation of a church website from the initial designer and continue to develop it.

Small Group Update – Dawn made a new small group listing. There are now four groups.

Year in Review – There was a discussion of the LT's dreams and hopes for the coming year as a church including how we can both welcome in new people and support each current attendee. The committee meeting with Spanish Mennonite will also seek to clarify goals for our continued partnership.

Financial – The LT gave approval to hire Judy Nguyen to input financial information in QuickBooks. Elva Martin and Betsy Kennel will train her. This should require 1-2 hours per week.

Commission Meetings – The LT was encouraged to have a meeting with each of their commissions.

EARLY LEARNING CENTER NEWS

BY JEN MORALES

The first sentence in the Early Learning Center handbook says, "The New Holland Mennonite Church opened the New Holland Drop-In Day Care Center in April 1981, because of a desire to serve the New Holland Community in the name of Christ." Over the years the Day Care Center has changed and grown. With the addition of the kindergarten program we became the New Holland Early Learning Center. We now service approximately 90 children weekly and an additional 20 or so in our summer school age program.

Mission is defined in the Meriam Webster Dictionary as "the vocation or calling of a religious organization, especially a Christian one, to go out into the world and spread its faith." Is the Early Learning Center our mission? If so how can we strengthen that mission? Please feel free to stop by the Early Learning Center.

Do you like to read? Would you like to stop by and read to a class? Our children love visitors. Do you have a skill or hobby that you could share with us? Would you like to pray for a certain classroom? Please see me for more information.

Tuesday February 10 we have our annual beach day. On this day the children change into their swimsuits and have the chance to play in the water and sand as well as focus on beach themed projects. Some classes have picnics on their towels. Look for pictures on our facebook page.

These children and their families are a blessing. Thank you for the help you continually give us in offering up your prayers and donations. This enables us to touch the life of others for Christ.



BOOK EXCERPT

BY BERYL FORRESTER

A book, written by Beryl Forrester, is scheduled to be published in this next year. Each month, until the book is printed, we will be excerpting a section of the book *Animist to Anabaptist: Pioneering the Mennonite Mission in Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal* in our newsletter.

From chapter 3

The Establishing of a Christ-like Community of Faith
From my early days in Gambia in 2000, it became obvious to me that without spiritual transformation other arenas of development could not be sustainable. For me, authentic development means following the design of the Creator in relation to any sphere of human endeavor, be it economic, social, educational or agricultural. Life must be ordered according to the will and design of him who made our universe and all of life. We come to know God's will for life and its many relationships thru a covenanted inner spiritual relationship with the One who created this real world we live in. And that relationship needs to be joined with other Christ-followers in the context of the community of faith.

Thus, it is not surprising that within hours after our arrival in Catel, I was inviting people to a Bible study on the veranda of the Peda house. There I told them about Jesus who came to live among us to show us how God wants each of us to live in relation to himself, our Father. That restored relationship informs and transforms how we live with those around us and how we participate in the beautiful creation he has given us to care for.

I didn't cover all that in the first lesson, but that is the basic outline of how we perceive the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Some missionaries begin with Genesis chapter 1, explaining to their hearers how sinful they are because of their rebellion against God; an angry God is portrayed whose holiness has been offended by mankind. That is followed by God intervening, sending Jesus to die in our place and for us on the cross. While all that is true, it is not the Good News transformational itinerary used by Jesus.

We start with a God who loves us so much he gave his Best to bring us back to himself, sending his Son who lived just like any other man, except that Jesus lived his life in total faithfulness to God. He defeated the powers of evil, even death. and is now ready to share

that transforming victory with those who are willing to become disciples of Jesus.

We focus on Jesus who comes to establish the Kingdom of God through disciples who are transformed into the lifestyle of Jesus and who desire to live out God's will on earth as it is in heaven. In Catel, we are inviting people to become the new people of God, to become a community of Christ-like persons through the power of the Holy Spirit. To shepherd animistic people from the darkness and slavery to Satan into becoming faithful disciples of Jesus is a slow process. But once they begin to experience the joy of living life the way God created us to live it, many are eager to be liberated from the satanic slavery that holds sway over much of West Africa.

It took several of years of discipling the first seekers before any of them were ready to renounce the powers of Satan in their lives and publicly become followers in the way of Jesus. But that was a solid beginning for the formation of Christian community in Catel.

COURAGE (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

And, David tells Solomon, there is even more help! You are called to lead, God will be with you, but also "you have all the priests and Levites standing ready to pitch in, and skillful craftsmen and artisans of every kind ready to go to work. Both leaders and people are ready. Just say the word." (1 Chronicles 28:21)

Solomon is given an awesome task in the building of the temple. But, it's not one that he carries alone. Being strong, and of good courage, and willing to act, is possible when one has God by their side and people who work with them as a team.

I thank God for being present with me as I lead. And I thank God for the leadership team at New Holland, and for each of you in the congregation who serve in leadership roles, who help out behind the scenes, and who pray regularly for the life of our congregation.

As pastor, I don't build this congregation alone. Thanks be to God.