

## Sunnyside Mennonite Church Cochranton, PA

Sun. April 2, 2006

Beep! Beep! Beep! Could it be the alarm clock already? Turning time forward one hour and getting on the bus to leave at 6:00 a.m. makes an early, sleepy start to the day. And there are 3 full programs ahead and we travel home after the third. A morning like this is a reminder that the value of this work is not monetary but eternal.

Everyone quickly settled down to get as much sleep as possible before our rest stop at 8:45 a.m.

Somehow Brock and Brooke waken before everyone else to eat the cinnamon roll that Mom brought for their breakfast. Of course, Mom tries valiantly to keep them quiet so no one else is disturbed. A big job for two six year olds (and Mom.)

We arrived at the church at 9:40 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. program.

Loren (our sound man) and Monica were on a first anniversary trip, so Marty and Mike shared the job of setting sound. Menno directed this morning.

A little girl wanted the song, "*Put a Smile on Your Face.*" A gentleman requested "*How Great Thou Art*" and "*Hallelujah Square.*" Still another asked for "*The Cross in the Middle.*"

The church provided a great lunch for us afterward.

## Mt. Hope United Methodist Church New Vernon, PA

**AFTERNOON**

This church was small, but people had a warm spirit. Menno and Mike split the directing time. A request came again for "*The Cross in the Middle.*"

During Mike's half, he asked the audience to help sing "*Put on the Garment of Praise.*" During that song a little dog came bounding in the front door of the church, running in and out among the pews. It finally headed for the back door. Did you ever see a pastor on his knees in the aisle, scrambling after a dog? What a laughable sight!! Who knows, maybe someone needed that dog to lift their spirits.

We were served cookies and punch before leaving for the next church.

## Pleasant View Conservative Church Cochranton, PA

**EVENING**

Big bowls of potato and macaroni salad, extraordinary Sloppy Joes and a spread of desserts were the supper fare. The cooks set the food out afterward, and many of us took plates along on the bus.

The church was packed, with chairs in the aisles. Mike directed the entire program, and shared that he has a need in his life to want more of God. We sang quite a few songs about our relationship with God and how we can come to Him.

One more time there was a request for "*The Cross in the Middle.*" Kenton said when he heard that, he began to pray furiously for Menno that the message would become fresh for him on this third time. Wouldn't you know, while singing the first verse, Menno wept with the gripping thought of what Jesus endured for him. Many, many people in the audience were crying as well. You never know what God might do if we only ask!

The program is over. The bus is running. Marty is cleaning the windshield for the drive home. We've all gathered the food we want from supper and we leave at 8:15 p.m. When we pull into our building at 11:30 p.m., most of us are in the same position we were after we started this morning--SLEEPING!  
--by Loretta Tice

## Bittering Mennonite Church Bittering, MD

**GOOD FRIDAY EVENING**

Imagine living in O.T. times and having to do over 1,000 required animal sacrifices a year. These are just for the entire nation of Israel daily, monthly, and on special feast days. It does not include any required sacrifices for sanctifying new priests that year, sacrifices for newborn children, and so on. Also, it does not include any individual sacrifices for sin and or for first fruits and harvest. Finally it doesn't include any individual/family-based sacrifices such as the Passover lamb (one per household, but could be shared among 2 or 3 houses). This could easily result in several million sacrifices in the course of the year. Imagine the constant smoke around the tabernacle. The stench of burning flesh.

What a relief when Jesus came onto the scene. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the World!" was John's cry. This was Kenton's challenging message to us as we prepared our hearts for the service.

The rainy, chilly weather did not help those struggling with sickness. Mike suffered from a bad cold. He said he would be able to swing his hands directing even though he couldn't sing tonight.

We had missed doing "*O Lord, Our Lord*" (a request) at Maple Glen so we did it this evening. Mike chose not to do the traditional Good Friday songs this time but rather a variety of selections for encouragement in the Christian life.

The audience was very attentive. During the service a thunder storm blew in. The wind tossed Mike's papers about and flapped the stage curtains.

Sanford Bender was asked to dismiss us. He said he hopes the angels learn, "*I Found the Lily in My Valley.*" He wants to sing that in glory.

## Fairview Mennonite Church Reading, PA

**SAT. APRIL 15, 2006**

David Weaver didn't think we'd find this red brick mission church in Reading but Marty drove right to it, arriving at 5 p.m.

The sun was casting long shadows in front of the tall brick and slate row houses as we climbed the steep hill to the church. From the parking lot you could see houses down in the valley marching up the other side into the forested mountain. At the top against the skyline perched a Chinese pagoda. The children told us inside were telescopes for use by the public for their enjoyment.

Outside the church, before the service, soft breezes brought the chipper of bird chatter. Trees were covered in clouds of pink and white blooms. Forsythias brightened a hedge row. Other trees were sprouting tiny green leaves. Rock music thumped away behind the church.

What an enjoyable service! Everyone seemed attentive, drinking in the message of the songs. The twins sang "*I am Redeemed*" with chorus back-up.

**WHEN THE SERVICE WAS NEARLY ENDED, MIKE ASKED THE PREACHER TO DISMISS US. HE ASKED US TO**

**SING, "LIFT YOUR GLAD VOICES." HE WAS REACHING FOR MIKE'S PITCH PIPE WHEN SOMEONE REMINDED HIM THAT MIKE HAS BEEN SICK, SO HE HELD THE PITCH PIPE ABOUT 2" FROM HIS MOUTH, BLEW THE PITCH AND STARTED THE SONG. AND HOW THEY SANG!**

Sandy really enjoyed the service. About 10 years ago she became a Christian. She had been attending the *Church of God* and wanted to find a *Brethren* or *Mennonite Church* whose members wear the covering. At a Farmer's Market she met someone from this church and has been attending quite regularly ever since. This mission church is about 40 years old.

As we were driving away from the church, our host asked us if Marty, our bus driver, is pretty protective of the bus. I said I think so. He said we shouldn't be surprised if it is vandalized tonight. It happens all the time in this neighborhood. About once a week or so, one of the church member's cars get spray painted. And lately someone took a BB gun and shot out a bus window.

The single guys rode the big yellow school bus over to the Fairview Christian School for the night. They had changed there before the service so had a chance to explore before dark. They brought sleeping bags, soap, towels, and other necessities. Generous hosts had provided ice cream, chips, and salsa so Johnny's picnic hamper of snacks was not really needed. In the morning there were 2 showers for a dozen guys. Being mature, responsible young men, they made sure they rose at a reasonable time for morning ablutions and breakfast. There were no reports of strange night happenings, sleep-walking, or otherwise.

Nothing happened to the bus. There it was, big, blue and white, and shining, ready to roll! Praise the Lord! Our prayers for it were answered.

## Landis Mennonite Homes Lititz, PA

**EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 16, 2006**

We arrived at Landis West Chapel after 9:30, thinking we were late. Marty was, at first, unable to locate 3 of our girls at their arranged pick-up site. We scrambled, then were told the service doesn't start till 10:00 a.m.

Menno had Marty do “*He Giveth More Grace.*” Loretta sang “*I Found the Lily in My Valley*” and “*There is a Haven.*”

One lady said she had planned to go to her own church this morning then everyone encouraged her to stay. She took in the service and she’s glad she did.

## Midway Reception Center Lititz, PA

### AFTERNOON

How far would you walk to a Mt. Anthems service? Jay Fry (friend of the chorus) walked 9 miles and found 19 pennies along the way. He plans to give them to charity. He brought Menno a surprise birthday gift, a lovely 2-ring hanging binder holding 100 songs on a little wooden stand.

Mike led the service. The twins did a new song called, “*Orderliness.*” Requested was “*Wish You Were Here,*” by Loretta.

## Hinkletown Mennonite Church Hinkletown, PA

### EVENING

We arrived at this sprawling, pink brick church at 5:40 p.m. The huge auditorium was nearly filled by 7:30.

Marty’s solo says it all:

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed, ere the day (night)  
is half done,*

*When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Ah! but our Father’s full giving has only begun!*

This was our 5th program in 48 hours. We filed to the front exhausted . . . droopy . . . in need of showers. We wondered, *what do we have left to give to these people??*

Menno did “*Hallelujah Square.*” Brock and Brooke sang “*I am Redeemed*” with the chorus. Other requests were “*Gone,*” “*Triumphantly the Church Will Rise,*” and 3 people asked for “*The Cross in the Middle,*” by Menno.

Part way into the second half, Mike asked us, “Are you tired?”

“Yes,” we said.

“I am too,” he whispered. “Can we lighten it up?”

*His love has no limit, his grace has no  
measure,*

*His power has no boundary known unto men,  
For out of his infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!*

By God’s grace we made it through that service. *Praise the Lord we had this opportunity to pour out our lives for Him.*

## Bunker Hill Brethren in Christ Church Inwood, WV

SUN. APRIL 30, 2006

The church this morning is a long, white ranch style. Across from it’s corner is a red brick parsonage with another restroom we were told could be used. This house is used for Sunday School rooms.

Raymond Martin, the pastor, came on to the bus. “There’s coffee and donuts up in the fellowship hall,” he said after a warm welcome. .

Delicious jelly and cream filled donuts, cinnamon rolls and other breakfast items awaited us. Our early 6:50 start hadn’t left much time for eating. What a rare treat!

Before we filed in, Pastor Martin told the church they would be hearing music from heaven this morning.

Smiling, expectant expressions greeted us. Menno led in “*I’ll Fly Away.*” with the congregation. They applauded every song. Requested was “*Early in the Morning.*”

A few black folks were in the audience. When Menno introduced “*Stand by Me,*” written by a black man, he apologized to them for what the white men did to blacks during the time of slavery. Later one of the men came up and put his arm around Menno. He said he forgave that 9 years ago. What Menno said wasn’t necessary. You didn’t do it but we appreciate the gesture.

A man gave his testimony. He is the civil engineer of a company and for 3 months the Lord woke him at 3 a.m. each morning. There was hardly a day during that time that he didn’t play Mountain Anthem CD’s over and over, and especially the song, “*I Found the Lily in My Valley,*” until he surrendered his life to the Lord.

Pastor Martin said, “You have no idea how many people are impacted by your message.”

At 11:30 the Spirit was still moving. Tears flowed. Mike said we couldn’t quit right then. He felt

led to do a few more songs. After that he opened it for more testimonies. Several people shared. Wow! What a service! What a God!

Then a man asked if we can come back tonight? Mike said only if the church at Martinsburg cancels.

After lunch, Raymond Martin's son, Kevin, piano player from another church we visit, did a rousing rendition with his 6 year old son playing the high notes.

## **Martinsburg Brethren in Christ Martinsburg, PA**

### **EVENING**

For devotions Junior talked about the life story each of us are writing. The chapters in it. Sometimes God gives us the pen and we write with direction from him. Other times He writes and we are asked to go by faith. When we are asked to do some far out thing like walk on water, how do we respond? Very challenging thoughts.

As we finished the pastor came into the room and prayed a unique prayer of blessing on us.

We did "*Praise Medley*." Also "*Though Your Sins Be as Scarlet*." Requested tonight were "*How Big is God*" by Marty and "*The Cross in the Middle*" by Menno.

Menno told the church about the alumni recording we are planning to do on June 17

Thank you to those who prayed for us this month. We appreciate it. The Lord bless you and make you a blessing wherever you go.

-- Lena Eicher