



The Mt. Anthems Newsletter

March 2008

March 2, 2008

Meyersdale Church of the Brethren

It's a beautiful sunny day, and the first program of a new chorus season is about to begin. Because this church has a smaller parking lot, most of us met at the church and went on the bus. The parking lot at Mountain View Church was a sheet of ice! You could almost have skated on it.

This year's group is going to be a bit smaller than groups in previous years. Several people have decided to take some time off, including the Gerald Tice family. It sort of tugged at my heart strings when Brooke came out onto the steps to wave good-bye to us. It's going to seem strange not to have the Twins on the bus with us. I have a feeling life will be a bit more dull without them.

We have a few new people joining us this year. We'll have plenty of tenor and be a little bit short on bass. Compared to previous years, that's a switch.

Several of us met together for a short time of prayer before the service. I feel our services go better for me after spending time in prayer. While I *can* do this on my own, I think there's something "bonding" about corporate prayer. I feel a bit closer to the other chorus members after hearing them pour out their hearts to God.

Sometimes the first program of the year can be a bit rough. You forget words; what to do and when to do it are not always clearly remembered. However, I thought things went very smoothly today. The mistakes were minor; everyone sang together and followed directions well.

Mike was directing this morning. Our first song, "Under His Wings," was dedicated to Carrie Rodamer. She attended this church and was one of Menno's teachers. She taught him a lot about music. There was a request for "The Cross in the Middle." Mike did it this time since Menno is struggling with a cold and sore throat. Marty sang "I'm the Lamb." Mike asked the question, "How do you know what you believe is the truth?" I liked Kenton's reply, "It

takes faith and the witness of God's Spirit in your heart." "Our God, He is Alive" was the song Mike chose for this particular theme. Our final song was "Marriage Supper of the Lamb." Mike then dismissed all but the Men's Quartet. They sang "Would You Truly Long for Heaven."

Kenton took time to introduce our newest recording project. We combined *Lord Jesus, Come* and *I'm Free* onto one CD. They had been recorded in 1975 and 1977 respectively. The masters for these old recordings were nowhere to be found. Menno had some of the original 12 inch LP albums in their original shrink wrap. He sent these to Alive Studios, and they used them to digitally remaster both recordings for this CD. There are a total of 31 songs with 70 minutes of playing time.

After a sumptuous carry-in lunch, we went to our homes for an afternoon of R&R before the evening service.

Maple Glen Mennonite Church

By 6:15 PM the sound and riser crews were setting up for our evening concert. The rest of us came at 7:00 for our usual half hour devotional and prayer time before the service. Rodney Yoder will be our Spiritual Leader this year. That's the title we give to the person in charge of leading our devotions, finding us a place to meet, etc. He challenged us to see this year as an adventure and allow God to direct us to the special person or persons He wants us to connect with each trip. This could be an audience or chorus member.

After the service, Menno told me he was praying especially hard that the Spirit would move during tonight's concert. I feel his prayer was answered. Mike challenged everyone to spend the evening thinking of ourselves as part of one team with one Coach. We're all working together. Denominational boundaries, etc. dissolve, and only He matters.

There were four requests this evening: "Show a Little Bit of Love and Kindness," "Would You Truly

ly Long for Heaven,” “I’m Not Ashamed,” and...hmmm. I can’t remember the fourth one. How embarrassing! The men also did “Wonderful Story of Love.” There were only 11 men, but “they did a powerful job,” says Lynnette Yoder. At the end of the service, Mike invited the audience to come up and stand with us to sing if they were so inclined. Approximately half the audience came up to join us. We sang three songs together: “Oh, Lord, Within My Soul,” “When We All Get to Heaven,” and “Christ Who Left His Home in Glory.” Someone told Kenton this evening that he thought this year’s service had a better spirit than last year’s, and he really appreciated that.

There are always a lot of familiar faces at local concerts, but I was pleased to see some unfamiliar ones as well. Singing in churches close to home always seems to be more difficult for me than singing in churches farther away. Maybe because “familiarity breeds contempt,” and of course mistakes, etc. become glaringly obvious to those who’ve been a part of the chorus in the past. Tonight I sensed warmth and fellowship without one iota of “contempt.”

March 9, 2008

I wouldn’t normally write about our home church service, but today was special. Sort of a History-in-the-Making kind of day. Today Menno Beachy officially turned over his responsibilities for the Mountain Anthems to Michael Yoder. Menno will continue to travel with us and give advice if asked, but the final decisions will be Mike’s. I’ve excerpted parts of Menno’s speech.

Brother Mike, God could not have entrusted me to lead a ministry that I could have enjoyed any more than that of the Mt. Anthems.

...I believe the day has come when God wants this ministry to be transferred into the hands of new leadership, and I believe that leader is you.

...I am committed to be your servant, to mentor, guide, and direct you in areas where you need help. I am confident that God through the Holy Spirit will lead you in right paths for His glory.

As Elijah ascended into heaven in a whirlwind, his mantle fell to the ground, and Elisha received what he prayed for, a double portion of Elijah’s spirit; so I give to you my baton symbolizing Elijah’s mantle, and pray that a double portion of God’s Spirit rest upon you and give you Holy Spirit Charisma to lead the Mt. Anthems in a God-fearing manner.

...Mike, I love you and pray that a double portion of God’s blessing and power rest upon you in this work. The Lord reward you with much joy, happiness, and contentment in your leadership assignment.

The congregation was invited to come forward to show their support for Mike. We had a time of prayer for Mike and his wife, Lynnette, as well as for Menno and Grace. I would encourage you to continue remembering them in prayer as they cross your mind. I asked them each for a list of things they’d like you to specifically pray for.

For Mike:

- A deeper love, closer relationship, and a passionate heart for God.
- Sensitivity to the needs of each person in the Mountain Anthems.
- An ability to discern God’s direction and effectively communicate His message to the people.

For Lynnette:

- Sensitivity to Mike’s needs. Knowing how best to be a support, encouragement, and “help meet” to Mike.
- Sensitivity to the needs of the Mt. Anthems personnel.

For Menno:

- A need for God’s grace to live up to the transition commitment he’s made.
- The ability to mentor Mike effectively as he grows into the monumental task of leadership.

Thank you for praying!

March 16, 2008

Covenant Baptist Church

It's 8:45 AM on a cold, gray morning, and once again the Mt. Anthems have gathered at Mt. View Church. We troop onto a nice warm bus, which means Marty was up early to look after things and see to our comfort.

We're heading for new territory today. We've never sung in this church. Menno says the pastor heard us sing at a church in Cumberland, MD, and invited us to his church as well. Our route had lots of hills and curves. A group in the middle of the bus discussed today's economy and related problems. A lot of theories were shared, but I'm not sure if a solution was found. It would be interesting to know if these theories would actually solve the problems of today. Eventually we reached our destination and speculations ceased. We were greeted by the unusual sight of a large number of white crosses placed on the hillside. A large sign was behind them which said, "147 babies die every hour by choice." Of course it's through someone else's choice and not their own.

While the fellows set up sound, risers and recordings, the girls do a last-minute "pucker and primp" as Menno calls it. I'm not sure where he picked up that expression, but we use it frequently.

Joel, Justin, and Jared Sommers drove down to join us for the service this morning. Since we're a little bit short on bass, we were glad to have Joel's help. It's also good to have Doug Yoder with us again following his relief work in Bangladesh. "I've never been stared at by so many people before," was his comment on the trip.

About ten minutes before the service, we gathered for a time of prayer. Those last five or ten minutes are an important part of preparation for the service! God promises that where two or three are gathered in His name He will be present. If He's not present then what we do is of no value!

Mike began the service with "The Wonder of it All." The people seemed very receptive and sat quietly drinking in the message of our songs. Since there were quite a few people there who'd never heard us before, Mike took time to explain a little bit about who we are and where we're from. Before

the service one gentleman asked Mike about the Yoder's in our area. Mike had all of those "proud to be Yoder's" raise their hands. He also had us raise our hands to identify which of the States we live in. Lorraine still feels like she belongs in PA, but alas, she has gotten married and moved to MD. Sometimes she raises her hand for both States. ☺

The service continued with such songs as "For Those Tears I Died" and Marty's solo "He Giveth More Grace." We then focused on our future hope with songs like "Gone" and "The Lights of Home." We did a song for the children, "I'm No Kin to the Monkey," and finished up with Menno's testimony, "Ready to Go."

At the end of the service, Menno was telling the audience about the new double CD. "It has 31 songs on it for \$31. I mean 31 songs for \$13." It must have been a good sales pitch because they "went like hot cakes." ☺

A gentleman by the name of Gary Shanholtz was in the audience this morning. Menno was very pleased to see him there. He's bought thousands of bushels of apples at Mr. Shanholtz's orchard, and Willis continues to buy from him as well.

After the service Geneva Yoder was talking to a three year old girl who told her excitedly about her "baby brother." Geneva, misunderstanding, said "A bunny? Is it white?" This caused great mirth among those who overheard.

The Pastor's name is Quentin Simpson, affectionately known as "Pastor Q." The bulletin had a section entitled Q-tips from Pastor Q. Today's tip was "Sorry, but the fruit of the Spirit doesn't include sour grapes."

Mercersburg Mennonite Church

While we've been in the Mercersburg area many times, we've never sung in this church. We saw a lot of familiar faces. Marty was even able to spend time with Chester Horst. He met him when he was driving the feed truck for Elmer Beachy many years ago.

Sometimes it seems all you do on chorus trips is sleep, eat, and sing. You sing, eat lunch, take a nap, eat again, and then sing some more. Supper

was at 5:00 PM, and devotions were at 6:30. Angela Yoder wrote the following part about the devotional and the service.

“Tonight in our devotional time, Rodney was talking about how serious our sin is and that God does not tolerate any sin. He shared several Bible stories about sins that were punished to show us how serious it is. I was challenged again how serious sin is. Then during the service, we sang quite a few songs about God’s blood covering our sin and forgiving us. Some of the songs that really blessed me were “I Forgive You,” “Born to Die for Me,” and “When Peace like a River.” I was encouraged and felt that God touched me tonight.”

Some other songs we shared this evening were, “Though Your Sins be as Scarlet,” “Don’t Give Up,” and Menno’s solo, “Where No One Stands Alone.”

To make a point, Mike was describing how your muscle tone decreases and you “get pudgy around the middle” when you don’t play basketball regularly. Menno piped up and said, “You don’t know the half of it!” A wave of laughter swept over the audience.

Topics of conversation heard on the way home:

- Spankings remembered from misspent youth. ☺
- Where would you live if money were no object?
- Stories from a trip out West.

March 21, 2008

Bittinger Mennonite Church

We met on the bus at 7:00 PM for devotions. Rodney challenged us with thoughts about “performing” in the fear of the Lord as He gives us grace and power. We have power through our resurrected Lord. We had a short time of sharing about Easter and then prayer. How would we feel if our closest friends rejected us and said they never knew us? How would we feel if we were ridiculed and spat upon?

One of our first songs we sang this evening was “Because He Lives.” I was impressed by the last

phrase, “Life is worth the living just because He lives.” We followed that song with “I’m Not Ashamed.” Marty sang “Sin will take you farther than you want to go....” But there is hope of redemption—“He Takes a Beggar and Makes Him a King.”

Mike gave opportunity for people to share about what Easter means to them. “I am redeemed, praise the Lord!” Jay Maust had requested two songs and shared that he likes the sequence of thoughts: We can bring the sacrifice of praise because He is alive, and because He is alive, that makes us a peculiar people. Because of that, we don’t need to be ashamed. Lyndon shared that yes, Christ died for all of us, but each one of us is special to God. And as the song says, “If I had been the only one, He still would have come.” We wrapped up the service with “What a Meeting in the Air” and “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” Menno sang “Hallelujah Square” as the last number and dedicated it to Luke Bender. Luke is a dear, faithful supporter of the Mt. Anthems and some day in Hallelujah Square he won’t need to be confined to his wheelchair.

--by Lynnette Yoder

March 23, 2008

Mountain View Mennonite Church

Mike says there are 16 requests for this evening for a total of 12 songs. Some of the requests were duplicates. We’re singing in our home church this evening. During our devotions Jon mentioned that he heard several people talking about how nervous they were about this evening, and he reminded us that God is not the author of our fear. We had a powerful time of prayer and confessed our fears to God. We asked God to show Himself strong, and once again He proved Himself faithful. It was interesting to hear a comment that was made after the service, “*It is one thing to be blessed by people you don't know, but it is another thing to be blessed by people that you know, and you know that they aren't perfect.*”

I had a brilliant idea for this evening (at least I thought it was)! Since we’re at our home church, there are a lot of former Mt. Anthem’s personnel in

the audience. Wouldn't it be fun to get their perspective of the evening? I talked with Mike and he agreed to see what could be done. We got two volunteers from former personnel and one unexpected (but welcome) volunteer from the audience.

I offered to share just a few thoughts on my perspective of the service. Are most of the chorus members as young as it seems to me? I mentioned this to my wife and she said, "Yes. But, Hon, how old were you when you were with the chorus?" Uh, yeah, I guess you're right. God can use young people, can He not? Stay pure, sincere, for real, and love God with all your heart.

A few of the "smorgasbord of blessings" that I received:

- *An invitation for God to be present. I need that presence every day and everywhere.*
- *Thoughts about our position in Christ and the power that is ours in the resurrection. The "empty tomb" in the front corner of the church certainly validated the song that the Quartet sang, which states that graves are "Resurrection Ground."*
- *That guy that had the children's meeting did pretty well too with the kids and the story of the talents. Good job, Son!*
- *The thoughts about the celebration in heaven were tremendous!! Let us be sure we don't miss this ultimate experience for all eternity. "I CAN ONLY IMAGINE"*

--by Millard Schrock

The Sunday evening service at Mt View with the Anthems ministering was a time of inspiration for me. I was impressed with the responsive relationship between the chorus and the director. There also seems to be more animation and positive facial expression from the chorus. The highlight song for me continues to be "I'm Not Ashamed." Keep up your spirits and the good work.

--by Paul Petersheim

My mother went to be with the Lord on Dec. 22, 2008. The songs they sang really ministered hope to me! I've learned instead of a grave (which I knew already) it now has a different perspective and meaning for me – "Resurrection Ground." I have the promise I will see my Mom and Dad again.

--by Virginia Brewer

We did a special song dedication this evening. Mike and Delores Yoder asked that we dedicate the song "Because He Lives" to Olen and Miriam Schrock in memory of their daughter, Geneva. She was killed in an accident 32 years ago. God bless you, Olen and Miriam!

As was mentioned earlier, we had children's meeting this evening. Brent Schrock is in charge of that this year and he did a great job! He used an illustration that I really liked. If you had never seen a Frisbee before and someone gave one to you, what would you use it for? Could it be a plate, a hat, or maybe a scoop for digging? It works best when used for the thing it was designed to do—fly! In the same way we do our best when we do what we were designed for. We were made to give praise to God and to fellowship with Him.

Monica Yoder was able to sing with us for the first time this year. She's been having some health problems. It was a blessing to have her back!

Mike was asking the gentleman in charge how he should close the meeting. They didn't have a preference, so Mike said, "I'm gonna close myself." Wonder what he looks like all closed up?

March 30, 2008

Cabin Run Wesleyan Methodist Church

It seems that 8:45 AM has been a popular leaving time so far. We have a really small group today. According to Loren, there were only about 23 people on the bus. There were nine empty sets of seats! It's a good thing that God doesn't depend on large numbers to get the job done. Two of the altos are struggling with cold symptoms, and the bass are few in number as well. Some of the Oakland people drove down to Keyser, WV, to join us. Since we're

singing in Oakland this evening, that gives them the option of spending the afternoon at home with their families. There were several folks who went to a wedding this weekend and will be coming back in time to join us for the evening service. Conversation this morning centered on Dave Ramsey's financial seminar, which led to a discussion about the best way for a young married couple to buy a house.

Although we've sung in this church several times, their new Pastor had never heard of us. He and his family gave us a very warm welcome! Mike directed most of the first half, with Menno directing three songs about heaven at the end. One of those was "Ready to Go." Menno says this is his testimony. He also shared with us something his wife said to him, "**He who seldom thinks of heaven will hardly get there.**" During the second half, we sang "Grace Enough" and "Tears Are a Language (God Understands)," followed by "Rise, Ye Children of Salvation." God understands our anger, fears, tears, and frustration when we're down. Eventually we realize that we need to get on with life, and He's there to support us then as well.

The church doesn't have a place large enough to serve us lunch. They take us to the Fountain Ruritan hall, where they set up an enormous spread of food. There's always lots of variety, and I can testify that it's all delicious! We generally sing a "Thank You" song after we eat. We've been using the same one for more years than I care to remember. This year we're learning a new one. We've only gone over it about four times in practice, but Mike surprised us and told the people we'd do it for them today. It went amazingly well all things considered. One lady thought it had to be a woman that wrote it (probably because it mentions cooking, stirring, mixing, etc.), but she's wrong. The credit goes to Doug Yoder. Kudos, Doug! They also asked us to do introductions, so Mike introduced us by family groups.

Gloria Kinsinger told me about a young lady she met this morning, so I asked her to write about it. *After the morning service, a young girl walked up to Mike and asked, "Who has the highest voice?" Mike pointed out the ladies who sang high parts. She hung around, seeming intrigued with what we do. Later I got to talk to her. Bridget is ten years old, in fifth grade, and likes music. She used to play*

clarinet. She wanted to meet each of the Mt. Anthems, so all those close by told her their names. Then I took her to the bus to look around. She said, "Mom gave me a CD of Christian music, and I really liked it." It's been a long time since I've seen a young person so interested in the Mt. Anthems. May the seed we planted, grow. Later she asked for a ride on the bus, so we took her a short way, and then her Mom picked her up.

Most people spent the drive to the next stop, napping. There was one interesting conversation I heard. Several people were discussing "her" reaction to "his" request for a date, and then how he proposed, and what her reaction to that was. Was it a surprise or did they guess what was coming?

Saint Marks Lutheran Church

This evening we sang in Oakland as I mentioned earlier. It's about a 45 minute drive from our home church, and several people from the area attend our church. This group includes some chorus members, so we saw quite a few familiar faces in the audience.

For devotions this evening, Lyndon shared some thoughts from Max Lucado's book, *A Heart like Jesus*. The bits and pieces that stood out to me seem a bit disjointed, but I'm sure they'll make perfect sense if you read the book. ☺ If Jesus lived your life for a day, what differences would people notice? God wants us to have a heart like Jesus'. Your actions, good or bad, don't change God's love for you. His love is a constant that never changes. Jesus lives in our hearts and changes them to hearts like His, if we're willing to let Him work. Lyndon shared the illustration of a lady who had her house wired for electricity. However, she only turned the lights on long enough to see to light her candles, and then she'd turn them off again. There's no sense in being connected to a power source if you don't make use of it.

Mike asked Menno to direct the first half of tonight's service. He opened by having the congregation help us on "I'll Fly Away." He said it was his way of turning their thoughts heavenward. We also sang "The Cross in the Middle" and "Bring My Children Home."

The Men's Quartet sang two songs at break time. We had been waiting "in the wings," and when they were finished singing, we started to go in. Suddenly to my surprise, I saw the fellows were reversing back through the door. It looked so funny, but was probably one of those you-had-to-be-there moments. Menno had apparently requested that the Quartet sing "Resurrection Ground" as well.

During the second half, Mike opened it up for requests. We got several we couldn't do, including "I Found the Lily in My Valley." Menno was asked to sing "Where Will You Be?" and "Hallelujah Square." Marty sang "God on the Mountain," and Mike did "I'm Not Ashamed." There was also a request for "The Lighthouse," which we hadn't done in quite some time. When we were finished, Mike informed the congregation that he's "proud of his boys and girls. That song was recorded back in 1973!" Then he asked those in the chorus who weren't born at that time to raise their hands. Probably

$\frac{3}{4}$ of the group raised their hands.

Mike gave special recognition to some former Mt. Anthems members by having them come up front: Ed, Paul, and Naomi Petersheim, and Chad and Polly Yoder. We ended the service by singing our new "Thank You" song. Ed Petersheim especially enjoyed it because he knew the old one so well! ☺

On the way home, we sang "Happy Birthday" for Arlin Yoder "back-of-the-bus" style. Several of the chorus members were anxious to get home quickly. They wanted to get in on the tail-end of a birthday celebration for a 75 year old relative. The celebration was being held in our church basement, so when we arrived, we decided to sing "Happy Birthday" for her as well (back-of-the-bus style of course)!

So ends the month of March for us. I know this has been an exceptionally long newsletter. I hope you enjoyed hearing about "life on the road."