

Menno Bulletin Weekly

Bulletin Announcements for December 20, 2015

Witmer Heights Church Life Activities Calendar

Dec. 25 - Bring joy to others on Christmas with your family and friends

Jan. 6 - Community Night - meal begins at 6:15

Jan. 10 - WH Sunday Game Night - 5:30-8:30 pm at Warwick Room - Landis Homes. (Directions below)

Jan. 13- Elder Team - 5:45 pm

Jan. 13 - Worship Team - 7:00 - 8:00 pm.

	<u>Sunday, December 20</u>	<u>Sunday, December 27</u>
Message	Randy Keener	Randy Keener
Greeters	Mary Zehr and Becky Nolt	John H. Landis and Kathryn Landis

~**Next Community Night – January 6.** Theme: God of Wonders. Meal at 6:15.
Children’s activity – Fun Science Projects with Neil Reinford
Adults – Food and Knotting quilts – c/o Eileen Ranck

~**Witmer Heights women** wishing to participate in a Sister Care Circle in 2016 should sign up on the sheet on the table behind the sanctuary. New groups of four women will be formed in late December so that quarterly visits can begin in early 2016. Don't know what a Sister Care Circle is??... see Lorrie, Rose, or Jan for details.

~**At the December 6 FDMC Inc. business meeting** David Swartley went over the budget figures (papers in mailboxes) after which the budget was approved. It was announced that the Safe Church Policy was approved by the Board. The Property Committee is working on renovations to the church fellowship hall.

~**Witmer Heights Sunday Night Game Night and Finger Foods.** All are welcome to join in a game night on **Sunday eve, January 10 from 5:30 – 8:30** in the Warwick Room at Landis Homes. Please bring a finger food to share. Go in the Healthcare entrance at Landis Homes and take the elevator to the ground floor. The Warwick Room is to the left.

~**During the Winter Quarter there will be two adult Sunday school classes.** One adult class will meet in **Room 12** to study the Uniform Sunday school lessons with teacher volunteers from within the class. The other adult class will meet in **Room 5** of the fellowship hall (where there are couches) for a time of sharing and fellowship. You are free to choose either class on any given Sunday. (i.e. you may want to choose Room 12 one Sunday and Room 5 another Sunday.)

~**The Sunday school offering project for the fall and winter months** is in full swing. North Star Initiative is a nonprofit organization working to help women in Lancaster who have been or are in the sex-trafficking industry. The nonprofit is raising money for a group home called "The Harbor" where women who have been in the trafficking world can receive healing, therapy, and a safe place to live. Mark your check or envelope. Total given to this project thus far is **\$501.47.**

~**Next Connections - Tuesday, Jan. 5** Topic: “Walking the Jesus Trail.” - Pastor Joe Miller (Mellinger pastor) will share his experiences while on the four-day hike from Jesus’ childhood home in Nazareth to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. Walking the hills and valleys of the Holy Land gives the Scripture a fresh perspective.

A Thought to Ponder

GIVE THE FOLLOWING GIFTS THIS CHRISTMAS:

To your enemy . . .forgiveness,
To your opponent . . .tolerance.
To a friend . . . your heart.
To a customer . . . service.
To all people . . .charity.
To every child . . . a good example
To yourself . . .respect

-Author Unknown

~**On the following pages** is an article about Nancy Marshall’s work in Belize that appeared in the Dec. 2015 issue of Mennonite World Review (www.mennoworld.org). It is also posted on the Bulletin Bd. at church.

ORANGE WALK, Belize — More than 40 adults and children participated in the 10th anniversary celebration of Jesus' Deaf Church Oct. 11.



Nancy Marshall teaches the congregation of Jesus' Deaf Church in Orange Walk, Belize. — Sylvia Rhodes/EMM

Nancy Marshall, a worker with Virginia Mennonite Missions and Eastern Mennonite Missions, started the church and continues to pastor the group.

Marshall had been living and working in Lancaster, Pa., in 2004 when a friend invited her to teach sign language to deaf children in Belize for the summer. During her last three days in Belize, she heard God's voice in her head: "I want you to come back to Belize to start a deaf church."

Marshall had never heard God's voice so directly. She replied: "How can I pastor a church? I'm a woman. It won't work here. There are pretty conservative gender roles in Belize."

Then Marshall visited San Felipe Mennonite Church, about an hour from Orange Walk. On a wall she saw a picture of a white woman with a head covering. When she asked who the woman was, a friend told her it was Dora Taylor, an EMM missionary nurse who had started the church in the mid-1960s.

Marshall wondered how the men had responded to a female pastor. Her friend said, "We loved her! That's why her picture is on the wall."

'We got the same memo'

Back in Orange Walk, Marshall prepared to return to the U.S. The pastor she had worked with said she should come back to Belize and start a deaf church.

Marshall recalled: "My jaw hit the floor, and I said, 'I think we got the same memo.' "

Marshall returned to the U.S., finished some teaching commitments, sold her car and many of her belongings, quit her job and moved back to Belize.

When she arrived in August 2005, she began to teach 11 deaf children, ages 6 to 15.

Marshall knew God wanted her to start a church, but she was busy in the classroom and "not really sure how to go about starting a church," she said. "So it felt good to put that off and focus on the children."

She began each day by teaching one of the Ten Commandments and reviewing the ones she had taught before. On the fourth day she came to keeping the Sabbath holy.

Some of the students asked how they could do that, since there was no church for the deaf in Orange Walk. Marshall just kept the lesson moving along.

The next day, they reviewed the first, second and third commandments.

“When I got to the fourth one,” she said, “they signed, almost in unison, ‘How do we do that? There’s no church for deaf.’ I said, ‘OK! . . . Anyone who wants to go to a deaf church, we will start one this Sunday, in my house. Everyone’s invited. Be there by 9.’ ”

That was the start of what became Jesus’ Deaf Church, now celebrating 10 years. They met in Marshall’s home for four years and now share space with another congregation.

No longer isolated

Marshall has always felt supported and encouraged by the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church board of ministers and by her EMM connections.

For 10 years, Marshall’s life has been immersed in the deaf community in Orange Walk, said Phyllis Groff, EMM regional representative to Central America.

“These deaf youth and young adults are often considered to be at the bottom rung of society and have few options in life,” Groff said.

“Nancy and Jesus’ Deaf Church have given them a safe place where they are valued as individuals and given the opportunity in Christ to be the persons God created them to be.”

The church has had a significant impact on the deaf community.

“Before God formed our church many of the deaf older people were isolated,” Marshall said. “They lived in villages far away or here in Orange Walk, but they did not really know each other well, or did not meet to socialize. Many did not know more than a few signs.

“As a result of forming a church, we have also created Christian community. Now most have learned to sign well just by communicating with other people in the church.

“From isolation they have found many who love and accept them. It’s heartwarming to see this transition.” Minelia Carballo, a member of the church, said: “Without the deaf church there would be nowhere for me to worship.”

Manuel Tosh, who attends the deaf church, agrees: “I’m thankful for the deaf church because I have developed a strong faith.”

How does a deaf congregation sing?

We sign without music or tune. We sign the words of the song, and the leader chooses the rhythm. We have two binders with songs in them. Anyone who wants to “sing” a song during worship will select one of the songs, take it out of the binder, take it up to the front when it is his or her turn and sign the words. The rest of the church copies the signs. Occasionally someone will sign words that they made up or will feel inspired to share, and we watch or copy them. — Nancy Marshall