

August 2025, Volume 48, Number 9

## STRENGTHENING THE STRUCTURE

Every organization can benefit from taking time to review what it is doing well and what it could be doing better. In 2005 our church put in the governing structure that we are currently using.

Bright spots in the organization include that more people have become active in the work of the church. This, in turn, has helped to breed new ideas on how to do ministry.

But no structure is perfect. When the new structure was adopted, it was with the intent that it would be reviewed every couple of years in order to remove any problems that might surface.

For this reason the church has formed a committee to determine how the organization is functioning. This committee will just be looking at structure and not doctrine. The plan is to undertake this project in a methodical manner and not rush to any conclusions.

This work is not being done because there are any major flaws in the system, but rather to sand out some of the rough edges that have emerged over the last 20 years.

If anyone has additional questions, feel free to contact any of the members of the committee. Committee members include: Steve Lehman, Kent Lehman, Milly Fox, John Stauffer, Jeff Linthicum, and Tom Fox. †

## FALL PROGRAMMING

The kids have headed back to school and it is time to think about the fall programming for our church on Sunday and Wednesday nights. Things get underway with the fall kick-off on August 27.

Special classes on Wednesday nights in the fall will include Jamie and Marcia Cressman leading an eight-week class on grief recovery. Band of Brothers and She Shares will continue to meet through the fall.

In the chapel Jim Schwartz will share on Genesis 29, 30, 31, and 32 on September 3, 10, 17, and 24. The focus will then shift to Hebrews with Dave Keim speaking on Hebrews 9 on October 1, October 8 TBD will speak on Hebrews 10, October 15 Tom Fox will speak on Hebrews 11, October 22 will have no service due to fall vacation. Joe Meyer will speak on October 29 on Hebrews 12.

Sunday evenings will include Josie Shoaf sharing briefly on September 7 followed by Kent Lehman talking on Revelation 4. Bob Reusser will talk on September 14, and we will

# update

return to Revelation on September 21 and 28 with Kent Lehman speaking on Revelation 5 and 6.

Dust off your chili pots and warm up your arms for the evening of October 5 with the chili cook-off and corn hole contest.

Jim Schwartz will speak in the chapel on October 12 and 19 on Revelation 7 and 8. October will conclude with the Triumphant Quartet on October 26.

It is not too soon to mark your calendars for these fall offerings. †

## ALL WELCOME

Do you enjoy laughter, fellowship, and interacting with other believers, all while under the leadership of an energetic and knowledgeable leader? If so then plan to be a part of the Chancel Choir. The choir starts up again on September 3 and meets in the choir loft on Wednesday nights following the evening chapel service.

If you enjoy singing but up till now have felt you were too busy, we would love to have you. If you enjoy singing but have never experienced singing in a choir setting, we would love to have you. If you do not know if you can sing but would like to try a new experience, we would love to have you. If you are Jeff Linthicum, we would love to have you give us feedback from the pews. Join us for choir on September 3. †

## NOTES OF APPRECIATION

We're a little late to say "Thank you". Pat and I have arrived back, eating hot spicy curries (which have settled my stomach) and enjoying lots of rain and cool weather (upper 70's). We would like to express our gratitude to Barb Dawson for hosting us. A number of you welcomed us so warmly. Thanks to Tad and Barb for hosting many friends to chat with over a Sunday lunch. Our MST has been so supportive over the years. A big thanks to Darin and Kim Ringger, Dave Knuth, and Bill Beachey. We are so grateful for our family at First Mennonite.

—Loren and Patricia C.

We would like to thank the church for all the prayers, visits, and cards during Mom's illness and passing. Thank you also to the kitchen committee for the delicious funeral meal. She truly loved her church and will be greatly missed.

—Family of Betty Sprunger †

## FOX TALES

When I was in junior high, my Uncle Max Lehman and his family went on vacation for a short time, and I was tasked with taking care of the livestock on his farm. This sounds like more work than it actually was. He only had heifers (both myself and the cows were glad no milking was involved) and they were on pasture.

My sole responsibility was to ride my bike out to the farm in the morning and in the late afternoon to make sure the animals had water.

My job was to take a six-foot piece of pipe, hook it up to a pump, feed the pipe through a round hole in the side of the barn, and fill a trough with water. And for the first two days this went along without a problem. On the evening of the third day, I went to put the pipe in the hole and I encountered something blocking the hole. I peeked into the hole and saw the familiar black and white hide of a Holstein cow.

No problem. I would just shove the pipe a bit harder and the cow would move on. I pushed the pipe in again with more force and was met with a bellow and no movement of the pipe.

Sensing that there might be a bigger problem, I went around the wall and entered the barnyard. I was greeted by a cow stuck in the water trough. She gave me a look of, "Okay you dumb boy, get me out of here." The cow had somehow sat on a support piece in the tank, causing it to sag and trap the cow in the water tank. Try as I might I could not get the cow out.

My only solution was to hop on my bike and head down to see my Grandfather Harry Lehman. I told him there was a cow stuck in the tank. He gave me a look of, "Oh you dumb city boy, just lead the cow out of the tank." I convinced him that I had tried and it had not worked.

He drove over and assessed the situation and, being the master dairyman that he was, freed the cow. And all was restored in the bovine world.

The point of this story is that we are more like cows than a city boy or a farmer. We get tangled up with sin and the more we struggle with it the more trapped we get. We are left sitting in a mess of our own making, looking around to see who we can blame for our poor choices.

Thankfully we do not have to wait for someone to ride to our rescue. We have the opportunity to turn to the one true God and seek forgiveness from our sins. And then we only need to trust in God, and He can pull us out of the mire we are in.

That does not mean there will not be consequences for our actions. The cow in this story had a few bumps and abrasions, but was able to be freed from the trap she was in. And we may also suffer from a variety of reminders about the path we chose. But in the end God will free us from our sin, and we can be wonderfully and thankfully freed from the mess that we have encountered. -tef †

## AMONG OUR PEOPLE

**Naomi Lehman** is recovering from a broken foot.

**Orlyn Lehman** is at home recovering from shoulder replacement surgery.

**Dick Smitley** is recovering at home after his recent surgery.

**Lori Sprunger** is recovering from her ankle surgery.

**Roger Von Gunten** is at home following recent back surgery.

**Alvin Lehman** had heart catheterization on August 19.

**Lora Sprunger** is continuing her radiation treatments.

**Twila Sprunger** is recovering from a broken arm.

**Ted Biberstine** has been able to return home following an extended stay at Swiss Village.

**Fred Wulliman** is scheduled to have outpatient surgery at Adams Memorial on August 21.

**Kenyon Sprunger** is at home following his recent hospitalization due to blood issues.

**Jim Neuenschwander** had surgery at Lutheran Hospital on August 19.

**Suanne Sprunger** had a procedure to remove a kidney stone on August 18. Continue to pray for her ongoing cancer treatments.

**Carol Neuenschwander** was hospitalized due to a fall.

**Jean Lehman** had an outpatient procedure.

**Brayden Gilbert** had surgery due to complication from his hip surgery.

**Ryan Sprunger** is serving with MDS in Conroe, Texas, during the month of August. †

## HOMEGOING

**Brenda J. Sommer**, 84, passed away on Friday, July 18, 2025, at Swiss Village. She was born on January 23, 1941, in Adams County, Indiana to the late Rufus P. and Martha (Zimmerman) Sommer.

Brenda graduated from Adams Central High School and attended the First Mennonite Church in Berne. Brenda was honorably discharged from the United States Navy, where she served from 1960-1961. She worked at Shultz Company in St. Louis for 12 years as a production worker.

Her hobbies include reading and watching the St. Louis Cardinals. She created many meaningful friendships driving for her Amish friends. Brenda greatly enjoyed her nieces and nephews.

Survivors include her sister, Janice K. (Ernest) Steiner of Berne, Indiana; sister-in-law, Pam Sommer of Yorktown, Indiana; nephew, Adam Steiner of Glasgow, Kentucky; two nieces, Julie (Jeff) Chrisman of Berne, Indiana and Sada Sommer of Yorktown, Indiana; and several great nieces and nephews.

Brenda was preceded in death by her brother, Michael E. Sommer. In honoring Brenda's wishes, there were no services.

**Frederick Dale Stauffer** (known as “Fred” or “Fritz”), 94, passed away Sunday, July 27, 2025, at Swiss Village. Born July 31, 1930, in Berne, he was the son of the late Menno E. and Hulda (Gilliom) Stauffer. He was united in marriage to Claudette Nagel on September 1, 1951, at our church and she preceded him in death on June 18, 2022.

Fred graduated from Berne High School in 1948 and completed training at DeVry Technical Institute in Chicago for TV and radio repair. Places of employment included Schindler Electric, General Electric Factory Service in Fort Wayne (nearly 13 years), and Habegger Furniture (50 years), where he serviced TVs and appliances, delivered furniture, and worked on the sales floor.

He was baptized and joined our church on June 4, 1944. His love of music led to his involvement in the Mennonite Men’s Chorus, Chancel Choir, Praise Ensemble, and the Mennonite Choral Society, in which he sang the *Messiah* for 74 years. He also served as a song leader, participated on the Worship Commission and in the Radio Ministry, sang in several quartets, and for more than 40 years sang duets with Byron Fox. He often sang baritone solos, including for the oratorios Handel’s *Messiah*, Dubois’ *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, and the trio in Haydn’s *The Creation* in Fort Wayne and Berne. Additionally, he sang in the Edelweiss Singers and was still singing with the Swiss Village Singers and preparing for a solo when he passed.

Fred loved being with family and was a dedicated husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He was very devoted to his wife of 70 years, Claudette, especially as a caregiver, the last 12 years of her life.

**Julia G. Beitler-Liechty**, 101, peacefully went home to be with her Lord and Savior Tuesday evening, August 5, 2025, surrounded by her family at Swiss Village.

She was born on January 20, 1924, to the late Wilber E. and Della (Neuenschwander) Lehman at their country home in Berne, Indiana. She never lived more than two miles from the home she was born in. Julia was united in marriage to Chester Leroy Beitler on August 26, 1945, at First Mennonite Church, and he preceded her in death on February 12, 1982. Julia later married Adam J. Liechty on January 7, 1989, at First Mennonite Church, and he preceded her in death on January 14, 2009.

She was baptized and joined our church on May 23, 1937. Chester and Julia served as team teachers for Kindergarten for 19 years. Julia also taught Sunday School and Wednesday nights at the church and was active in the Women’s Missionary Society.

Julia was a gifted contralto singer and shared her gift with many people. She actively sang for 70 years in the Mennonite Choral Society, Chancel Choir, and the Ladies Sextet for many years. Julia also sang solos in many weddings and funeral services.

Julia walked to and attended Munsterberg #9 School through 8th grade, and she graduated from Monroe High School in 1941. Following high school, Julia began working for Berne Overall Factory. As Chester and Julia began their

family, she stayed home to raise their family. As their children grew up, Julia returned to work at Economy Printing, now EP Graphics, and continued there for 21 years.

Julia had an exceptional talent for quilting and sewing. She hand-quilted numerous quilts over the years, and was actively quilting until a week before her passing. During the summer months she loved spending time tending to her flowers and gardening. She cherished the time spent with family.

Above all, Julia was a true example of a woman of God, and encouraged so many people with prayers, handwritten cards, and kind words.

Survivors include her son, John (Brenda) Beitler of Kennett Square, Pennsylvania; daughter, Christine (Larry) Nofziger of Beaverlodge, Alberta; son, Stanley Beitler of Fort Wayne, Indiana; step-daughter, Anita (Dan) Wenger of Berne, Indiana; step-son, Stanley (Shirley) Liechty of Port Huron, Michigan; step-son, John (Peggy) Liechty of Ypsilanti, Michigan; step-son, Dallas (Jacki) Liechty of Osceola, Indiana; step-daughter, Audrey (Gary) Kah of Noblesville, Indiana; daughter-in-law, Sharon Beitler of Forest, Ohio; sister-in-law, Naomi Lehman of Berne, Indiana; 28 grandchildren; 57 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-granddaughter.

Julia was preceded in death by her son, Robert Beitler; great-grandson, Wesley Beitler; four siblings, Celeste Liechty, Warren Lehman, Lavon Wulliman and Eugene Lehman.

A funeral service was held August 10, 2025, at our church with Pastors Jim Schwartz and Jeff Linthicum officiating. Burial followed at the M.R.E. Cemetery. †

## MENNONITE MOMENTS

About 1875 John A. Sprunger (founder of the Missionary church) was our choir director. His directing was considered satisfactory, but his singing was considered shallow. Thus he was replaced by David C. Neuenschwander, age 18.

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In 1903, our church gave consideration to starting a German parochial school because they had concerns about finding a minister who could also preach in English. The idea was dropped when Rev. J. W. Kiewer, a Russian immigrant, met the qualifications.

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In the early days you were expected to send word ahead if you could not attend church since services would not begin until everyone had arrived. †

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Update is the publication of the First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana. It is published once a month to keep our people informed about the news and events in the church.

Senior Pastor..... Jeff Linthicum

Editor du jour.....Tom Fox

Among Our People.....Jim Schwartz

Address Service Requested

| Sunday  | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday  | Friday    | Saturday  |
|---|--|---|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>SEPTEMBER 2025</b>   |  |   |   |           |           |           |
|   | <b>1</b><br><br><b>LABOR DAY</b><br><b>CHURCH OFFICE</b><br><b>CLOSED</b> | <b>2</b><br><b>6:30PM:</b><br><b>Sunshine Hour</b>  | <b>3</b><br><b>7PM:</b><br><b>Pastor Jim Schwartz</b><br><b>Genesis 29</b>                            | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>7</b><br><b>10AM: "Evangelism" - Pastor Jeff Linthicum</b><br><b>6:30PM: Josie Shoaf sharing, then Revelation 4 - Dr. Kent Lehman</b><br><b>Offering</b>   | <b>8</b>   | <b>9</b><br><b>6:30PM:</b><br><b>Sunshine Hour</b>  | <b>10</b><br><b>7PM:</b><br><b>Pastor Jim Schwartz</b><br><b>Genesis 30</b>                           | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> |
| <b>14</b><br><b>10AM: "Power of the Word" - Pastor Jeff Linthicum (Nehemiah 8:13))</b><br><b>6:30PM: Bob Reusser</b><br><b>Offering</b>   | <b>15</b>  | <b>16</b><br><b>6:30PM:</b><br><b>Sunshine Hour</b> | <b>17</b><br><b>7PM:</b><br><b>Pastor Jim Schwartz</b><br><b>Genesis 31</b>                           | <b>18</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>20</b> |
| <b>21</b><br><b>10AM: "Get Right with God" - Pastor Jeff Linthicum (Nehemiah 9:1-3)</b><br><b>6:30PM: Revelation 5 - Dr. Kent Lehman</b><br><b>Offering for LMC</b>  | <b>22</b>  | <b>23</b><br><b>6:30PM:</b><br><b>Sunshine Hour</b> | <b>24</b><br><b>7PM:</b><br><b>Dave Kelm</b><br><b>Genesis 32</b>                                     | <b>25</b> | <b>26</b> | <b>27</b> |
| <b>28</b><br><b>10AM: "Life of Distinction" - Darren Kloepper (Nehemiah 10:28-31)</b><br><b>6:30PM: Revelation 6 - Dr. Kent Lehman</b><br><b>Offering</b>   | <b>29</b>  | <b>30</b><br><b>6:30PM:</b><br><b>Sunshine Hour</b> |  <b>SEPTEMBER</b> |           |           |           |