

Morgantown Church of the Brethren History of the Congregation

General Church of the Brethren background

The first Church of the Brethren in the Morgantown area was built in 1883, on the Point Marion Road, (Route 119) directly across from the Mount Union Cemetery. In September, 1901, it was reorganized under the name of Mount Union. At that time, the church was in the District of Western Pennsylvania.



Mount Union Church, built in 1883 in Mount Union, PA where the Morgantown COB was first conceived by some members of the congregation. The building is now a United Methodist church.

The Mount Union Congregation was the result of the home mission activities by the Brethren near the middle of the nineteenth century. The dates and names of the first workers are not known. Ministers from the Sandy Creek congregation came across Cheat Mountain and held services in "Cheat Neck." Workers from the Second District of West Virginia came down into the Monongahela River Valley. Emigrants from Pennsylvania settled on the newer lands of West Virginia, and their ministers visited them occasionally and held services.

Some of the ministers laboring in the field were J. C. Johnson, Solomon Bucklew, Alpheus DeBolt, Jeremiah Thomas, James Quinter, John A. Gluck, Obed Hamstead, and Jasper Barnhouse. Virgil Finnell and Walter J. Hamilton were elected to the ministry. Miles Hamilton and Silas Pugh were elected as deacons. Elder Jasper Barnhouse was the Moderator and presided over the congregation for a number of years.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren –People and members active in organizing the first church:

There is a lack of recorded information prior to 1940. Some information has been obtained from the Henry Fike and Robert Sterner families. We believe we have the names of almost all of the pioneers of the Morgantown church, but do not have many dates to go along with periods of service. We list below the names of those who were active in organizing the first church.

J. C. Johnson
Solomon Bucklew
Alpheus DeBolt
Jeremiah Thomas
James Quinter
John A. Gluck
Obed Hamstead
Jasper Barnhouse
Walter J. Hamilton
Miles Hamilton
Silas Pugh
Virgil Finnell

Morgantown Church of the Brethren – beginnings

During the summer of 1901, Reverend John A. Gluck of Uniontown, Pa., preached in the Methodist Church on Walnut Street in Morgantown, and a number of young members from the Mount Union congregation were present. One of them, Walter J. Hamilton, got a vision of a Brethren church in Morgantown. At a council meeting in January, 1902, he proposed the opening of a mission in Morgantown. He persuaded his father, Miles Hamilton, and his uncle, Francil Hamilton, to buy a lot upon which they erected a building. This building on Virginia Avenue stands two and a half blocks from our present church. This mission was opened in July 1902. Two of the ministers were Reverend Thomas H. Miller and Reverend Sylvania Annon.



First church home of Morgantown COB at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Overhill Street.

At this time, all new converts were baptized in West Run Creek. Later a baptistery was built on the corner lot of Isaac Hamilton's home at Overhill Street and Virginia Avenue. This was used until the brick church was built on Highland Avenue. After the church on Highland Avenue was built, the lot and building at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Overhill Street were purchased by Ezra A. Wolfe and converted into a dwelling.

On September, 1909, Arthur Bailey and Ezra A. Wolfe, two of the new converts, were elected as deacons. It was then decided to build a new brick church on the corner of Highland Avenue and Melrose Street. The church was dedicated August 14, 1910, by Elder H. C. Earley. In 1915, Elder Solomon Bucklew from Markleysburg, Pennsylvania, joined the congregation and became both elder in charge and pastor.



*The church on Highland Avenue built by
Morgantown COB in 1910.*

After the death of Reverend Bucklew, Reverend Marshall Wolfe succeeded him as minister. Reverend Obed Hamstead, who was well known in the community for his many revival meetings and Bible term teachings, followed Reverend Wolfe as full time minister for fourteen years. While serving the church here as the elder and minister, he also preached monthly at the Bakers Ridge Sunday School and church.

On page 185 of the Church Minutes (October 1, 1940-August 2, 1948), Brother Foster Bittering is listed as Elder and Pastor and Brother Hamstead as Assistant. Since no other available records show Brother Foster to be minister of the Morgantown Church, it is believed that as Elder he did officiate at certain meetings, but he was not a church minister.

It was about this time in the life of the church (The early 1940's) that a full-time ministry was desired. There were two major problems with full-time ministry: one, financial support, and two,

availability of full-time pastors. An agreement was made with Brother Raymond Martin for weekend services. Brother Martin lived in Augusta where he taught school. He commuted to Morgantown by train or bus, usually arriving on Friday night and staying to Sunday night.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren – first full time pastor

By the time of Brother Martin's departure in 1944, the dream of a full-time pastorate became a reality. Reverend Glenn Bowlby (with his wife Helen) became the church's first full-time paid pastor. Since the church did not have a parsonage, it was necessary for the church to rent housing for its pastor family. This situation existed throughout Reverend Bowlby's service and for the most part of Reverend Flora's. During Reverend Flora's service a continued effort was made to accumulate sufficient funds to build a parsonage.

With local funds and a loan of \$2,000.00 from the General Brotherhood Board, a parsonage at 501 Center Street became a reality with completion in 1951 and dedication May 25, 1952. Reverend Flora and wife Lily were the first family to occupy the parsonage. This parsonage remained unchanged until 1979 when it was decided the facility was too small and inadequate for the average pastor family. A decision was made to add on a 14 by 28 foot addition, which increased the living area by about 50%. Most of the work was performed by members of the local congregation. It was estimated that the building would cost about \$20,000.00. About \$5,000 had already been donated or pledged, so a loan of \$15,000 was completed with the Suncrest Bank. The building project began in 1978 and was finished in 1979. Some of the loan was unused and returned to the bank. Although the loan had been negotiated for a ten-year period, it was completely repaid by 1980.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren – 50th Anniversary

On August 7, 1960, the church held its **50th anniversary program**. The church building had been dedicated on August 14, 1910. All of the former pastors and many early leaders who were still living were invited. Some of the Hamilton family, whose parents and relatives had been the pioneers, were present. Wendell Bohrer was pastor at this time. Reverend Jesse W. Whitacre gave the anniversary message.

Near the end of the 1950's interest became high for a new church facility. Some preliminary work had already been done, and three possible sites had been selected. One was the Bailey property, next door to the church, another about one block south on Highland Avenue, and the third at Center Street and Virginia Avenue.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren – Location as of December 2, 1962



Building lot prior to construction of current church building



Current church building

A Council Meeting was held on March 8, 1960, and a vote was taken in favor of a new facility. The building committee was instructed to contact the general Brotherhood Board's building consultant, Brother Arthur L. Dean. Arrangements were made with Brother Dean for him to come to Morgantown on July 17, 1960, and meet with the building committee. After this meeting, a Special Council was held, and it was decided the lots at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Center Street would be the best building site. A decision was made to purchase the lots, which were owned by Henry Fike, a member of the

congregation. Members of the building committee were Wade Beckman, Chairman, Henry Fike, Otis Fike, Dale Smith, and the Pastor Wendell Bohrer.

Building plans proceeded with the ordering of "preliminary plans" from Brother Dean. These plans were accepted by Council on January 17, 1961. At the April 18, 1961, Council meeting, it was decided to ask the General Brotherhood for a loan of \$50,000 and a gift grant of \$5,000. A fee of \$2,800 was paid to the Brotherhood for plans and specifications for the new church, 3 1/2 % of the estimated building cost of \$80,000. Building plans were given to six general contractors for bidding purposes. The report of the bidding was made at the March 13, 1962 special Council meeting. With some alterations, substitutions, and work to be done by church members, the low bid of \$91,892 was submitted by Cross Construction Company. Additional funds would be needed for pews, pulpits, and ceiling tile. It was proposed that the church be authorized to sell promissory notes at a 4% interest rate to make up necessary funds.

The contract for building was awarded to the Cross Construction Company ground breaking ceremonies took place on Sunday, April 1, 1962, and construction began soon thereafter. The church offered the following figures of cost and payments for the new facility

Contract price	\$91,892
Extra furnishings	\$5,000
Brotherhood Loan	\$50,000
Brotherhood Gift Grant	\$4,000
District Grant (\$1,000 per year for 5 years)	\$1,000
Sale of current building	\$8,000
Present building fund	\$4,000
Promissory notes	\$25,892
Anticipated 1962 B. Fund	\$4,000
Total	\$96,892

The construction company moved well on the building. However, there was much work to be done by the congregation. The building was ready for occupancy and first services were held on December 2, 1962. Dedication services took place on May 5, 1963 with Dr. Roy E. McAuley, (President of Elizabethtown College) giving the message. At this time the church was known as "The Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren" until September 13, 1970 when at a church council meeting it was decided to change the name to "Morgantown Church of the Brethren".

In retrospect, we can say that the problems which arose throughout contemplation and building did not add to the unification and oneness in spirit of the congregation. The congregation found it difficult to support a full-time pastoral program and meet its indebtedness. The General Brotherhood Board was very supportive during this period by contributing to our pastoral program, as well as making \$15,000 of the loan interest free for five years. The total indebtedness was paid off in about fifteen years, which was close to the original repayment schedule.

Since 1944 the church has been able to secure and maintain a full-time pastoral program. The program has been supported substantially at times with pastoral aid from the General Brotherhood. The

church lies on the western end of the West Marva District and is somewhat isolated by terrain, which prevents any yoked services with other Brethren churches.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren –Affiliation with the Allegheny Mennonite Conference

The informal discussion of becoming affiliated with a Mennonite group first developed during conversations between Lester Boleyn and Pamela Beverage. On September 19, 1982 at a church board meeting Lester spoke of a conversation of future cooperation and possible affiliation with a Mennonite group with our congregation, thus becoming the Anabaptist emphasis in Morgantown.

During the November 7, 1982 church board meeting mention was made by the Witness Commission hoping we can have an informational meeting to inquire more about a relationship with the Mennonites. At the June 12, 1983 church board meeting the Witness Commission called attention to the letter which had been mailed to the congregation concerning affiliation with the Mennonites. Action by the board moved that our Church go forward by informing officials of the two groups to continue negotiations. A liaison committee of Dennis Overman, Anna Lee Reid, Del & Linda Yoder and Lester Boleyn was appointed to work with denomination.

The formal discussion of Morgantown Church of the Brethren (MCOB) joining the Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC) seems to have begun in May of 1983. The pastor at that time (Lester Boleyn) brought the proposal to the Church Board, with questions about how to receive members of the Mennonite Church, how outreach funds would be allocated, how pastors would be selected, how services could reflect both backgrounds and even how to find a name for the church that would apply to all members. Initially the main question was whether members of the congregation would choose to belong to one denomination or all members would belong to both. Sylvus Flora, (the District Executive Minister for the Brethren West Marva District) was called upon to prepare a paper comparing Mennonite and Brethren doctrine and practices. A necessary step in the process was the writing of a church constitution (So work was begun on the first constitution. It appears that the church had no written constitution for the first eighty-two (82) years of its existence.)

Letters were sent by Sylvus Flora to Church of the Brethren (COB) churches that were also affiliated with another denomination. The letter included a request for documents such as a plan of organization, a financial report, how they handle membership and any problems or issues arising from working out dual affiliation. These churches were Koinonia Church in Grand Junction, CO; Community United in Erie, PA; Lacey Community Church in Olympia, WA; Queen's Avenue Community Church in Yuba City, CA; and Oakland Mills Uniting Church in Columbia, MD. Most of these congregations sent a copy of their constitution and these were used as models for MCOB, along with constitutions from Elkins (WV) COM, Mennonite Church of Scottdale, PA; and Kingview Mennonite Church of Scottdale, PA.

After all this information had been gathered, a committee called the Committee on Affiliation with AMC was formed. This committee presented the affiliation concept to the congregation on October 9, 1983. In the October 23, 1983 Church Council meeting, a motion was made by the committee to proceed with plans for affiliation. This motion passed and then the committee began work on a draft of the constitution. After the constitution was completed and approved by the Church Council on October

1, 1984, a petition was sent to AMC asking for membership. On October 21, 1984 the necessary changes to the constitution and By-Laws with two minor changes was presented at a special Church Council meeting. When the vote was counted it was approved 30 to 4 with one abstention.

Our affiliation with the Allegheny Conference became official on January 6, 1985 at a special Sunday morning service with representative of West Marva district and Allegheny Conference present. Several Mennonite families and individuals transferred their membership into our church shortly after that. (Of that original group, only Del and Linda Yoder still live in Morgantown).

After the affiliation began, it was pretty much business as usual for a number of years. We were a Church of the Brethren and our Mennonite contacts were limited.

Lester Boleyn- resigns pastor position to become a bible translator.

Lester's last sermon at Morgantown was on June 12, 1988 ("*A Love Letter to You,*" based on Romans 12:9-18). Then there was a commissioning service on July 24 at which Kenneth Holderread (World Ministries Commission Chr., Elgin) preached and Sylvus Flora (West Marva DE) conducted the commissioning service. Lester left the USA on January 6, 1989 after awaiting a Kenya visa for 6 months. Esther (his wife) remained in Morgantown until Alan (their youngest son) graduated from Morgantown High School and began college at Elizabethtown, PA, and then she joined him at the end of August, 1989. They lived in Nairobi, Kenya for 8.5 years.

Lester was called to facilitate the translation of the Old Testament into the Nuer language of southern Sudan. The project had begun earlier under the leadership of a Presbyterian missionary who subsequently retired. The Presbyterian Church of Sudan then sought a replacement to carry on the work through their partner churches, one of which is the Church of the Brethren. That's how Lester and Esther got into the picture.

Because of the civil war in Sudan, which began in 1983 and is still going on, the translation project had been moved to Kenya by the Bible Society of Sudan and was supervised directly by the United Bible Societies, whose Africa Regional headquarters was in Nairobi, Kenya. This all happened before they went.

Once they got to Nairobi, they divided the work responsibilities between Esther and Lester. Lester's was "Coordinator/Exegete for Sudanese Bible Translation Teams," and Esther's title became "Editor, Nuer Bible Translation Project." Lester's role as coordinator was basically administrative: He supervised goal-setting and monitoring; cared for financial and budgetary matters; was the liaison between the translation team and the two Bible societies and the Presbyterian Church of Sudan who had sent translators; was the computer technician who made sure they had what they needed and kept it working; and was pastor to those who worked on the project. As Biblical Exegete he worked directly with the translation team on a daily basis to be sure they had a working knowledge and understanding of the particular scriptures they were translating. Esther's role as Editor was to be sure the translation was consistent throughout. She also keyboarded the handwritten translated texts.

When the Old Testament translation was near completion (1996), the United Bible Societies requested we also revise the New Testament (which was nearly 30 years old) so that it would be consistent with the Old Testament. We did this during the last year (1996-1997) while putting finishing touches on the Old Testament.

Lester and Esther completed the translation work in June, 1997 and returned to the USA June 30, 1997 in time for Annual Conference in Long Beach, CA. They spent the next 6 months doing mission interpretation work for the Church of the Brethren General Board and getting some needed R&R and family time. In January, 1998 they moved to Citronelle, AL where Lester became pastor of the Cedar Creek congregation. On April 1, 2000 Lester joined the Area 3 Congregational Life Team, and they moved to the Cumberland, MD area. Lester retired on Dec. 31, 2002 and they are now living (since June 14) in Hagerstown, MD.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren –Affiliation with the Allegheny Mennonite Conference *continues*

When Mike Fike took over as pastor, our Mennonite connections strengthened a little, because Mike had already been pastor of a dual congregation. During the time Bryan Harness was the pastor there still was not very much Mennonite involvement, although Bryan regularly attended Allegheny Conference meetings and session for pastors.

In 1997 with the arrival of Cameron Kaufman-Frey as our pastor, our Mennonite connections became much stronger because Cameron is a Mennonite pastor with Brethren connections (field work in a Church of the Brethren during seminary) rather than the other way around. We have been kept informed of Mennonite events very regularly since his arrival.

Parents Place

This from the minutes of the December 1, 1998 Church Board meeting.

“Moving on to new business, Kim Kreider had a proposal to bring before the board. Parents Place, a preschool with which she has been involved for the last 8 years, is in the preliminary stages of looking for a new place to meet for 2 hours in the morning three days a week during the school year. Since we have rooms sitting idle during those times, why not think about using them for this purpose? Parents Place is different from most preschools in that each child has a parent in the building during the entire time of the sessions. Kim is a teacher at Parents Place in their present location and serves on their board. Usually 25-30 kids are involved. The potential benefits to our church from hosting Parent Place include financial income amounting to \$100 for 9 months a year; teachers decorate and clean the rooms they use; we would be helping provide a valuable service to young families; and parents of these 25-30 kids will all become familiar with our church and what it has to offer. There was a question about storage requirements, and Kim replied that they are very flexible in their requirements, and presently they just use a couple of cabinets. In response to another question, she again pointed out that a parent of each child would be here in the building at all times. Kim will try to arrange to have other dignitaries from the Parents Place board attend our next board meeting.”

This is from minutes of the February 2, 1999 Church Board meeting

“Since we had a number of visitors associated with Parents Place, we took care of that item of business first. Guest Kathy Molnar gave a brief description of the organization, which started many years ago and was located at First Presbyterian Church. Parents Place is a pre-school with an unusual arrangement in that a parent (usually a mom) stays at school with the child. Parents Place operates three mornings a week from 9:30 until 11:30. While the children are in their age-based classes, the mothers are together as sort of a support group, and they have various types of programs of general interest and of particular interest to parents. An intercom system connects the room full of mothers with various classrooms, and when a child needs to use the bathroom hi/her mother is pages. Kids never roam around unaccompanied. After some years at the Presbyterian Church, Parents Place moved to Drummond Chapel Methodist Church, and then to their present location at the Church of Christ. At their present location they have a fine working relation with the church, but space is inadequate. They are looking for a new location as of September, 1999. They need 5 classrooms plus a place for the mothers to meet. After examining our facilities, the group of teachers and mothers felt that we have adequate space in the church to meet their needs. After listening to their description, we began a question and answer discussion period with our visitors. Of course we wanted to know many people are involved, and we were informed that on any given day there would be between 20 and 27 mothers, most with one child, some with more than one, plus teachers. It happens that our treasurer, Cindy Scott, is one of the Parents Place moms, and Cindy turned out to be an unscheduled advertisement for the success of Parents Place, pointing out that the organization attracts a lot of new families, and there is always a waiting list to get in. She has been very favorably impressed with the organization of the program, pointing out that it is very efficiently run. Jane Fleisher has also been involved with Parents Place, and noted she has been very impressed with the program and very glad for the exposure to many nationalities that the children get. Some other information gained during the question and answer session: they operate along with the public school schedule, although they don’t start until after Labor Day. When Mon. County schools are closed due to weather, so are they. Parents Place carries its own liability insurance, and in regard to this we were reminded again that the mothers do not leave their kids at the pre-school, but are in the building with them at all times. In their present location they pay \$600 a year rent. This figure is subject to negotiation. Fees paid by the parents go to pay the teachers. The organization has fund raising activities to pay for the rent, and if they had to pay more rent they’d have to have moiré fund raisers. Kim Kreider noted that she is excited about the possibility of the church being used throughout the week. Cindy Scott mentioned the positive recognition the church would receive from a large cross section of the Morgantown population. We discussed how much we presently pay for utilities, but could not quite pinpoint it. Stewardship chairman Del Yoder suggested sending a delegation from the board to visit Parents Place, after which we can talk more about the implications for the future. He noted that after tonight’s presentation he sees that the organization is quite different from his original concept, and that this sort of community service seems to be what a church is supposed to be about, so therefore we should go the second mile and explore this. The group seems to be the type we could talk to and work things out with. Of course where there are a lot of kids using the building there are potential problems, but as Cindy Scott pointed out, wouldn’t it be better to have a problem of too many kids than too few?”

This is from minutes of the September 7, 1999 Church Board meeting

“Cindy Lewellen reported.... The Sunday School classes are meeting in their newly-redecorated room, thanks to the efforts of Parents Place.”

“Del Yoder reported....Parent’s Place has done a lot of work around the building in preparation of the beginning of their school year next week. They have painted, put down new floors, and installed (with help of Harold martin and others) numerous ceiling fans. Concerning the Sunday School class that doesn’t want to sit in their little bitty chairs, it is our understanding that Parents Place is willing to re-set rooms to accommodate our Sunday School classes on weekend, so someone will be talking to them.”

Parents Place officially began using our church building September 13, 1999.

Morgantown Church of the Brethren –100th Anniversary

On May 26, 2002, the church held its **100th anniversary** of meetings in Morgantown. Pastor Cameron Kaufman-Frey gave his sermon in the role and attire of Walter Hamilton, one of the founding pastors. Former pastors also took part, with Samuel Flora leading a prayer for the congregation, Lester Boleyn introducing and leading a hymn and Mike Fike reading scripture. Greetings and good wishes were brought by Steven Abe, District Executive Minister for West Marva District and Steve Sauder, overseer from Allegheny Mennonite Conference. Two people received special honor: Grace Niner as the oldest member at age 94, and Ruby Stone as the longest continual member.

Following the service there was a meal in the fellowship hall. Grace Niner cut the anniversary cake. A Chinese dogwood was planted as our Centennial tree on the lawn between the church and Center Street. Artist Kenny Kreider created a Centennial poster with a pen and ink drawing of the church and some other Morgantown landmarks. A permanent Church Historical display case was installed in the fellowship hall by Harold Martin. A pictorial poster compiled by William Martin showing the genealogical relationship of five former pastors was placed within the Church Historical display case. Marge Lewellen prepared and placed within the Church Historical display case numerous photos and materials associated with the history of the church. The day concluded with a walk to the two previous sites of meeting places, including a tour of the first church building that was built in 1910.

Cameron Kaufman-Frey goes on a sabbatical

On June 8, 2003 Cameron gave his last message during Sunday morning services until his return from his summer long sabbatical to various parts of the United States, Canada and Africa. In his absence the pulpit is being filled by a gentleman (John Khechane) from South Africa.

In the Church Board meeting of May 2002, Cameron informed the Church Board of his desire to plan a sabbatical for the summer of 2003. He had heard from another pastor that the Lilly Endowment had a program that would fund a pastor's sabbatical. As they would have to apply by the middle of July, discussions and planning for this were begun immediately.

Cameron's initial ideas for the sabbatical were enhanced through discussion with the congregation. At first, Cameron's plan was for him and Dawn to visit his sister in Benin for two weeks and then go to Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe for a week. As their children would be staying in the U.S. with Dawn's parents, Cameron and Dawn thought three weeks was long enough to be gone. However, several people in the congregation said that three weeks was too short a time. Encouraged and accepting this advice, the plan was revised to lengthen the time they spent in Benin and to add a three week stay for Cameron with the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.

Cameron and Steve Lewellen, the Church Board chair, completed the application and sent it in. In December 2002 the Lilly Endowment agreed to fully fund Cameron's sabbatical.

The money from the Lilly Endowment included funds to pay a pastor for three months of the four-month sabbatical. The hope was to hire someone from West Africa to serve the church. Three seminaries, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Associated Biblical Seminary and Bethany Seminary, were contacted but no students expressed interest. However, Lois Harder, who was head of the Pastoral Care department at WVU Hospitals, was contacted by John Khechane, who was from South Africa. John was

a former chaplain in her department and was returning to the U.S. to continue his studies. He was happy to work at the church for the summer. John's successful arrival was an answer to prayer.

The Kaufman-Frey family was given a send-off meal prepared by the WVU African Student Association on June 8. They then traveled to Texas for their nieces wedding. Following that, Cameron spent five days at a Roman Catholic retreat center in Amarillo. Then the family went to Vail and Colorado Springs for two Kaufman family (Dawn's family) reunions. The next two weeks were spent visiting Cameron's family and friends in Ontario. Dawn and Cameron then left Adam and Annika in Indiana with Dawn's parents and flew to Benin. Here they visited Cameron's sister and her family, whose mission activities were well supported by Morgantown COB. Cameron also met with church leaders to discuss how the gospel may sound different in an African context. The trip to Zimbabwe included a two-day visit to Victoria Falls. Zimbabwe was in an economic depression after years of drought, so it was a miracle that Mennonite World Conference was able to happen at all. About seven thousand people attended the conference and every populated continent was represented. Each day of the conference there was a different region of the world leading worship. On the way to Nigeria, Cameron stayed overnight in Johannesburg with a friend of John Khechane. In Nigeria, Cameron stayed at the Ekklesiyar Yanu'wa a'Nigeria (EYN) guesthouse in Jos. He went to a remote village to preach at evangelistic services and help with some baptisms. He also visited the EYN headquarters in Mubi. He learned a little about why the church is growing so rapidly there and met some people working to reconcile Muslims and Christians.

After returning to the U.S., Cameron and his family spent a week at Canaan Valley Resort State Park in West Virginia. The family then returned to Morgantown and Cameron's first Sunday conducting services was on September 28, 2003.

John Khechane, Our Summer Pastor (2003)

While Cameron was in Africa on sabbatical during the summer of 2003, John Khechane served as the pastor of our church.

A native of Johannesburg, South Africa, John had his early education in Lesotho, where schools were conducted in his native language, Sotho. Today, Sotho is one of eleven official languages in South Africa, but in the days of apartheid, Afrikaans and English were the only official languages.

John explained that only those families which could afford it would send their children to Lesotho, which was an independent African country. He said that during his time in Lesotho, he knew about apartheid only through books.

However, his father died while he was still in school and he needed to return to South Africa and find a job. He worked in a South African gold mine as a clerk while attending high school, and later he became a human resources officer. He began a mechanical engineering program, but did not complete it.

As a young man, he had a conversion experience at a meeting conducted by a German evangelist and began attending the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, which he considered a more Bible-centered church than the Methodist church his family attended. He said he had not known much about the teaching of the Bible before, especially that one should make a personal commitment to Christ and be born again.

After John had worked in the mines for eight years, he attended a Bible seminary in England. On returning to South Africa, he became chair of the counseling department in his congregation. He said this was “a decisive factor in coming to the United States.” He realized he was not adequately trained to do counseling, and that there were not enough trained counselors for the many people in South Africa who needed counseling.

John said he wanted a school which offered psychology from a Christian perspective. He attended a church-related school in Oregon in 1994, but was disappointed to find the program did not connect psychology with theology. As a result, he completed a degree in theology and enrolled in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown where he became friends with members of our congregation (Lois Harder, Dennis & Sue Overman).

After a year and a half back in South Africa, he enrolled in the advanced CPE program at the University of Texas in 2001 and worked in the Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, which treats patients from all over the world. After another ten months in South Africa he returned to the United States and served as our pastor. Upon leaving Morgantown he moved to the Pittsburgh area where he is attending Duquesne University. While working on the doctoral program in health care ethics he is also working as a Chaplain at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centers.

John said the program will take three years, and that he plans to go back to South Africa to start his own practice and consultation. He plans to write his dissertation on the topic of medical futility. He said that when the family of a dying patient demands aggressive treatment, such as an organ transplant, which uses scarce resources, doctors should not offer futile treatment. He said scarcity of resources is a greater problem in South Africa than in the U.S., but that it is a problem here, too.

While serving as interim pastor during the summer of 2003, John began a weekly study of A.W. Tozer’s *The Knowledge of the Holy*, which examines attributes such as grace, love, wisdom, and immutability, which define who God is.

John said he had learned about various denominations in seminary but had never known about the Church of the Brethren or the Mennonite Church before. He said he was glad to have the chance to be “exposed to all shapes and shades of Christianity.”

He said he enjoyed being a part of our church. He encourages us to welcome strangers and not to become discouraged. John encourages our church to grow because “you may not be here in fifteen years.” “The friendship and warmth extended to me made me feel at home. I will forever value that warmth and spirit,” he said.

In a note to the congregation after leaving for Pittsburgh, he wrote: “I was a stranger and a foreigner in your midst, but you did accept and treat me as one of your very own, for indeed we all belong to one big family called the Church.

“You have all, in different ways, allowed yourselves to be the hands, the mouth, and the heart of Jesus Christ to me. Thank you for the hospitality you extended to me while I was there. Thank you for contributing to my growth in the Lord!

“Galatians 6:9: And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.”

Cameron Kaufman-Frey - resigns pastor position

Effective August 13, 2006 Cameron has resigned his position here with us. He and his family have moved to Canada in order to allow them to be closer to family members.

Cameron began his ministry here with us on October 1, 1997 and at the time of this update to the history file (12/26/2006) his length of time with us as the official pastor is recorded as the third longest.

Interim Co-Pastors – Lois Harder, Mike Fike

Pastor's duties and worship leadership have been provided by a dual team of Lois and Mike while the church pastor search committee is conducting the search for a new full time pastor. They officially started on October 15, 2006 and finished on May 8, 2007

Co-Pastors – Carrie, Torin Eikler resign pastor positions as of August 24, 2014

Carrie and Torin are the first wife and husband co-pastors to service this congregation. They were ordained as pastors during a ceremony conducted in North Manchester, Indiana on May 6, 2007. Carrie and Torin both graduated from Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Indiana with Master of Divinity degrees, each of them graduating with distinction.

They moved into the parsonage on the first day of Spring in 2007 and began their time with us officially on May 8, 2007. They were installed as new pastors and transferred their membership to our congregation during a morning worship service on June 3, 2007. The installation ceremony was conducted by Steve Abe (representing the Brethren faith, West Marva District, District Executive) and Steve Sauder (representing the Mennonite faith, Allegheny Mennonite Conference, pastor for the Gortner Union Church).

During their time with the congregation there were many exciting events and also many changes. When the Eikler's came to Morgantown they had a seven-month-old son, Sebastian, who had just tagged along with his parents' delayed honeymoon trip to Paris. In January of 2009, another son, Alistair, joined the family. And in September of 2012, a third boy, Patrick, came along. During all these transitions the congregation was very supportive and embraced the three boys with joy.

Meanwhile, pastors Carrie and Torin continued their travels – both in the United States and internationally. In 2008, they applied for and received a grant from Ely Lilly to support a Vital Pastors group made up pastoral couples. The group included 6 pastors: the Eiklers, Russ and Erin Matteson (of Modesto, CA), and Bill and Sarah Haldeman-Scarr (also of California). The group chose to study interfaith issues around communication, understanding, and hospitality,

and after a year of reading and conversation, the group spent 10 days on the Island of Shikoku in Japan where they followed a Buddhist pilgrimage route and met with religious leaders of several different faiths to learn how they live together in harmony. During the two years of this study, the church welcomed speakers from several other faiths during worship of Sunday School and connected with other faith communities in other ways.

After the Christmas of 2012, Carrie and Torin left their two boys with parents and returned to France to celebrate their 10th anniversary and to visit with friends there. During the three weeks of their trip they visited the cathedral of Chartres outside of Paris. The cathedral is renowned for the intricate labyrinth inlaid on the floor of the sanctuary and has survived 3 major wars without being hit by so much as a single bullet. They also spent some time in the French countryside, to relax and recharge for their ministry.

In the summer of 2014, the Eiklers made a trip to Seattle, WA where they visited with the Cockrofts who had moved there from Waynesburg, PA in 2012 and with Alistair's God-Parents. They then joined Torin's family in boarding a ship and traveling the inland passage up to Alaska. The cruise brought both Torin and Carrie's list of states visited up to 49 and got the lists for their sons off to a good start. The ship also docked in Canada for one evening, and both Sebastian and Alistair were excited to visit a new country. Both returned proudly waving small souvenir Canadian flags.

In between these travels, the Eiklers were involved in many new ventures as a part of their ministries within the congregation and both denominations. Torin served on the committee that redesigned the structure, constitution, and bylaws of Allegheny Conference, the Church of the Brethren Committee on Interchurch Relations, helped lead a West Marva District Bible Study on Human Sexuality during the denomination's most recent struggle with that issue, and served on the support committee for Shalom: A Peace Church of Brother Francis and Sister Claire (a new Mennonite congregation started in Pittsburgh). Carrie served on the Allegheny Conference Leadership Council for five years. And both served on the West Marva District Peace committee.

In the congregation, Carrie wrote and adapted curriculum and organized the church's first Kids as Peacemakers week in 2009, a unique outreach in Morgantown that attests to the power of Anabaptist beliefs about peace. The following year, she also worked closely with others in the congregation to develop a long weekend of learning to Care for God's Creation at Owl Creek Farm (owned by Del and Linda Yoder). Since then, these two experiences have alternated year by year in the place of more traditional Vacation Bible School for the congregation and continue to draw in children and families from outside of the congregation.

Carrie also organized a series of caregiving seminars during the season of Lent in 2014. The meetings drew a total of 14 people from the larger Morgantown community as well as the congregation. The participants found the experience to be powerful, and together with Carrie they have formed a Caregiving Group to serve many of the functions traditionally carried out by deacons and to move beyond that model in other ways.

Torin also worked with Linda Yoder and Sue Overman to restructure the congregation's form of governance, leading to a Leadership Team model that was approved by Church Council in 2012 after a trial period was completed satisfactorily. In 2013, the constitution and bylaws were updated by Torin and Corey Anderson and was presented to the Church Council by the Leadership Team where it was approved.

The Eiklers also picked up the Longest Night service that Cameron Frey led just before his departure and made it into an annual practice of the congregation. While it is typically a small service, it has been a powerful ministry for members and others who come to honor feelings of grief and loss or loneliness and despair in the midst of society's manic celebration of the holidays. In addition, the Eiklers regularly invited the congregation and many others to join them in their home following the service for an evening of fellowshiping around crepes and coffee.

During the seven years of the Eiklers' service, there were also many changes in the congregation. Many of the older members of the congregation passed on into God's care, including: Anna Baker, Lee and Deane Beckman, George Calvert, Bob & Madge Fike, June Kennedy, Doug Porter, Margaret Prince, Paul Shay, John Shope, Ruby Stone, and Alice Willis. Others have moved on into new jobs or retirement in different cities. And many new people have found the congregation's open and welcoming spirit a welcome place to call home. As a result, attendance at worship services is about the same as at the start of the Eiklers' time here, but the congregation has extended itself, stretching from Washington and California across the plains into New England and across to Virginia. Truly the ministry of this community of faith reaches across time and space to bring the love of God to all those who will accept it.

Effective August 24, 2014 Carrie and Torin have resigned their positions here with us. They have spent a little over seven years three and one half months with us and have now accepted positions with the Church of the Brethren in Nappanee and Richmond, Indiana in order to allow them to be closer to family members.

Wes and Deb Bergen

Wes Bergen started as our pastor in May, 2016. Wes and his wife Deb moved to Morgantown after completing their assignment with Mennonite Mission Network, working in Accra, Ghana.

Wes and Deb come out of the Mennonite church, continuing our unofficial tradition of having alternating pastors from our two denominations. They both grew up in Mennonite churches in various parts of Saskatchewan, Canada (although Deb also had 5 years in India, and was born in Elkhart, IN).

Wes has been active in the church both as pastor and a scholar. He has a Ph.D. in biblical studies from the Toronto School of Theology, and taught for many years at Wichita State University. He has written numerous books and articles, and still considers himself the world's

foremost expert on the intersection between Leviticus and pop culture. He has also pastored churches in Saskatoon, SK and Newton, KS.

Deb works as a child psychiatrist in the Morgantown area. Deb and Wes have two adult children.

Wes and Deb spent 2014-2015 in Ghana, working through Mennonite Mission Network. While in Ghana, Wes taught classes at Good News Theological Seminary and Deb provided mental health services for missionaries across West Africa with Mobile Member Care Team.

Wes is MCOB's first half-time pastor. Fortunately the congregation is filled with willing, thoughtful and talented people, so the work of the church is being taken up by many hands. After almost two years without a pastor, having someone half time feels like a step forward rather than a step backward from a full-time person.

Ministers, Elders, and Pastors with term of service when known:

<u>Elders and/or Minister</u>				
Name	Date Started	Date Finished	Years of Service	Duration of Service Ranking
Virgil Finnell				
Walter J. Hamilton				
Thomas H. Miller				
Sylvanus Annon				
Solomon Bucklew	1915	1926	11	2(tie)
Marshall Wolfe				
Obed Hamstead	1928	1942	14	1
Raymond Martin	1942	1944	2	9(tie)

<u>Pastors</u>				
Name	Date Started	Date Finished	Years of Service	Duration of Service Ranking
Glenn Bowlby	1944	1947	3	8(tie)
Samuel Flora	11/16/1948	9/1/1951	3	8(tie)
Mark Kenney	9/18/1952	8/28/1953	1	10(tie)
Everett Beckman	1953	1955	2	9(tie)
Wilmer Hurst	1955	1959	4	7
Wendell Bohrer	3/4/1960	1967	7	4(tie)
Wilmer Crummett	1967	1973	6	5
Charles Taylor	1973	1974	1	10(tie)
Leon Swigart	1974	10/30/1977	3	8(tie)
Lester Boleyn	9/25/1977	6/30/1988	11	2(tie)
J. Michael Fike	9/1/1988	5/31/1991	3	8(tie)
Bryan Harness	1/1/1992	7/31/1997	5	6
John Khechane	6/15/2003	9/21/2003	3 months	12
Cameron Kaufman-Frey	10/1/1997	8/13/2006	9	3
J. Michael Fike; Lois Harder	10/15/2006	5/8/2007	7 months	11
Carrie & Torin Eikler	5/8/2007	8/24/2014	7 years 3.5 months	4(tie)
Wes Bergen	5/1/2016			

Miscellaneous items and things remembered.

- 1901 Church first opened at Mt. Union with baptisms taking place outside in the local Falling Run creek.
- 1910 The local younger families in the Wiles Hill area wanted a local church building. The brick church was then constructed on Highland Avenue.
- 1930 Obed Hamstead and Henry Fike organized oyster stew suppers and Sunday afternoon croquette playing.
- 1942-1944 Raymond Martin was the pastor; he only worked for the church during the weekends. During World War II, he wished to serve in the Army as a Chaplin. The members didn't like this; many of them were against the war.
- 1940's Wilmer Crummett held several evangelistic services.
- 1950 Started having salaried pastors and the annual Buckwheat suppers started around this time. Samuel Flora was the 1st person to live in the church parsonage.
- 1960 Current church building on Virginia Avenue was dedicated in 1963 as the "Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren"
- 1960's Wendell Bohrer led a march for civil rights; some members thought he should not.
- 1970's The church sponsored 2 refugee men from Ethiopia, children church started, Boy and Girl Scouts began using the church building.
- 1977-1988 The parsonage had several additions added.
- 1980's The college program and the after school program began. The Middle East gulf war saw Pastor Mike Fike distributing anti-war material with the peace stance of the Church of the Brethren along with counseling for C.O. status of the youth. This caused a controversy among members.
- 1985 Saw our church join with the Allegheny Mennonite Conference.
- 1992 Bryan Harness, first pastor with a lawyer and Quaker faith background.
- 1990-2000's Youth group, Parents Place, and children's moments during Sunday morning worship all began.
- 1997 Cameron Kaufman-Frey was the first pastor with a Mennonite background.

May 8, 2007 Carrie and Torin Eikler are the first co-pastor wife and husband team to serve our church.

May 1, 2016 Wes Bergen is our first half-time pastor