

**The  
Bean Blossom  
Mennonite/Community  
Church**

**1945 – 2020**

**75 years of history**

(and a little more)

Matthew 18:20 (NKJV)

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Bean Blossom Mennonite Church began on the first Sunday in May, 1945. To be specific, it was 6 May 1945. That morning, in the Old Georgetown Presbyterian Church building, Charles Haarer delivered the first sermon for the new, or mission, Mennonite Church.

Over the years since that day, there has been many events & changes that provide a lot of history for that new congregation. One thing that stands out is the history of changes to the building that, in some ways, helped define the congregation, as well as to continue the long history of the building.

Our story will begin with the Old Georgetown Presbyterian Church building and how it come to be a part of the history for these 75 years.

Our story of the Mennonite congregation years will include a series of events including some story about each where possible. Many names of individuals and families will be mentioned, but they are only a part of the history that includes many that are not mentioned.

The history of the congregation will be followed by profiles of those men of God who served in the pulpit ministry over those 75 years.

It has been a blessing to me to have had the opportunity to research and assemble this history. Thanks to all of you that I have asked for information & help.

Larry Fisher  
May 2020

## **The Georgetown Presbyterian Church building**

The story of the Georgetown Presbyterian Church building begins with John Prosser, his wife Sarah, his brothers Abraham and William, and a few of their neighbors.

Historical note: the village of Georgetown was named in 1833 for a local grist mill owner, George Grove. When the village applied for a post office in 1842, it was discovered that there was already a Georgetown with a post office in Indiana- so they named the new post office Bean Blossom after the nearby creek. The name for the village of Georgetown remained for several years, gradually changing to become Bean Blossom.

The John Prosser family had moved from Ohio to Brown County, Indiana in 1836, settling near the village of Georgetown. At that time, the area was quite a wilderness and, for the most part, unchurched and without religion. From time to time, a traveling minister would pass thru the area, preaching to gatherings in private homes or in an old cabin located along the west side of the Morgantown Road at the junction with Cemetery Road (ie. the parking area of the current Bean Blossom Community Church).

The Prosser family were Presbyterians prior to their move to Indiana and some of their neighbors had been Methodists or Baptists. John organized an effort to bring a Presbyterian minister to the community and organize a recognized Presbyterian congregation. After multiple attempts, the efforts were successful in gaining a minister and recognition by the Indianapolis Presbytery in 1845.

It was soon decided that they should erect a permanent church building for the new and growing congregation. Logs were donated by members of the congregation and others. These logs were then shaped into boards and posts by the Waltman saw mill located on Bean Blossom Creek east of Georgetown. The Waltman family donated land for the new church building. John Prosser, a skilled carpenter, with the members of the congregation built what may have been the first church building in Brown County. It is not certain when the building was complete, but it is thought to have been in use by 1847. The building probably occupied the same plot of land that is now occupied by Bean Blossom Community Church.

In 1887, the original church building was torn down. A new building was built using some of the timbers from the old building. It is not certain what changes may have been made, but most likely it became a larger structure in order to accommodate the growing congregation. The location of the new structure was at the site of the current Bean Blossom Community Church, though nearer to the road. At a later date, a storage shed was added immediately to the west of the church building.

By 1921, because many members of growing families and their descendants had moved from the area, the congregation started having annual homecomings at the church. These homecomings continued for a total of 23 years, generally on the second weekend of the month of October.

After some years of declining attendance, the Presbyterian congregation was disbanded in 1937. During that same year, the Methodists, with help from the church in Bloomington, Indiana, attempted to organize a congregation that would meet in the Old Georgetown Presbyterian Church building. This effort also failed. The Methodists became owners of the old church building through a swap of buildings with the Presbyterians.

During the period of time from 1937 through 1943, the Presbyterian homecomings continued. A local man was given charge of the building and was responsible for maintenance and grounds. A collection for this maintenance was collected at each homecoming. The facility was used from time to time during these years for weddings, funerals, and family gatherings.

As time went by, the attendance at the homecomings became less and less. In 1943, the last homecoming was held. It must be noted that this was during the WW II and rationing of gasoline, automobile tires, food, and many other items was in full swing. Those attending most likely did not travel very far.

By this time, and for much of the 1900's, the building was known as the Old Bean Blossom Church.

## THE OLD BEAN BLOSSOM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



1928 PHOTO OF THE OLD BEAN BLOSSOM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Frank M. Hohenberger Photograph Collection:  
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5500 or at <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/>

# **THE BEAN BLOSSOM MENNONITE CHURCH**

## **CONGREGATION AND BUILDING**

### **The 1940's**

The Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference surveyed the area in the general area of Bean Blossom during 1943 and 1944 to determine the possibility of locating a Mennonite congregation in the vicinity.

Among the information gathered, they found that a local woman had tried to keep a Bible School going for the neighborhood children in the old church building or the old log cabin next door, with mixed results. As when the Methodists surveyed the same area in 1937, the Mennonite group noted that there seemed to be a fairly large number of children in a good sized and unchurched area.

As a result, and with the cooperation of the Shore Mennonite Church from Goshen, they conducted two Vacation Bible Schools that were each two weeks long for the children in the Bean Blossom area. These events were well attended and encouraged the Mennonite Conference.

It should be noted that the years of 1944 and 1945 were at the height of WW II. Many things were rationed and scarce, many young men were serving in the military, and other men and women were employed in various ways supporting the war effort, traveling to other areas to work. These times were hard on families.

In 1945, the Indiana Michigan Conference arranged the purchase of the Old Presbyterian Church building, the adjoining storage shed, and the grounds on which they sat, for \$400.00.

In April of 1945, the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference arranged for Charles Haarer, who had been an associate pastor for some years in a Mennonite Church in southern Michigan, to go to Bean Blossom to become the pastor of the mission church to be located there.

When Charles arrived in Bean Blossom with his wife and three young sons, he found a one room church building with a few straight back chairs scattered around and an old potbellied stove setting in a corner. In the front of the sanctuary, there was a low, rectangular platform with a small lectern. An outhouse and storage shed were the only other facilities.

On the first Sunday of May, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of that month, 1945, Charles Haarer stood in front of an audience of 35 adults and children and delivered the first Sunday morning message for the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church.

The audience sat on the old straight back chairs that came with the building. Most of them originally had the pressed fiber board seats. Many of those chairs were missing the fiber board seat section, leaving a large hole – uncomfortable seating! Charles obtained a sheet of Masonite and tasked a group of the boys in the congregation to cut up the Masonite and tack the pieces over the holes to make the seating a bit more comfortable.

These first years were not easy, but Charles was able to keep the congregation going and added Sunday school with the Sunday morning services.

During the late 1940's, the Mennonite Church at large was encouraging families associated with larger congregations to move to locations near small and struggling congregations. As a result, families would, following God's direction, pick up and move where needed.

At least four families left the congregation of the Berea Mennonite Church in Cannalburg, Daviess County, Indiana. One family went to Kentucky and three ended up in Brown County, Indiana and became involved with the congregation of the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church.

### **The 1950's**

In March of 1950, the Henry Wagler family, Henry, Frances, and their two young children, Lorene and Howard, were able to sell their land in Daviess County, and with the help of Charles Haarer locating some property in Brown County, make their move to join the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church.

Also in March, Silas Kemp, his wife Rosa, with sons Samuel and Franklin, and daughters Catherine and Rosanna, made their move to Brown County, from Daviess County, to join the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church. The family returned to Daviess County in 1955. Silas (born in 1909) passed in 1980. Rosa (born in 1914) passed in 2005. Rosanna (born in 1940) married Kenneth H. Smelser and passed in 2015.

Around 1953, a number of pews, a curved platform, two deacon chairs, and a podium were purchased from a church in Martinsville.

The ends on one end of each pew section were removed and the pew sawed to the desired length with the removed end replaced. The pews were secured to the floor in the position that they are in today. The original platform was reworked to accommodate the curved



sections from Martinsville. The deacon chairs and podium were placed on the remodeled platform.

Milo Hochstetler, wife Lydia, and their children moved from Howard County, where they had lived for only a few years, to Brown County in 1953. Of their children, Steven Joe Hochstetler, born 1951, passed away 1997. They had four other children, Jerry, Gilbert, Andrew and Elizabeth Mae. The Hochstetler family moved from Brown County to Elkhart County in 1966. Milo (born in 1923) passed in 2001. He was sickened with Polio in 1949 and was confined to a wheelchair. He was a sewing machine mechanic. Milo died of cancer.

The Joseph Swartzentruber family moved from Daviess County to Brown County in March 1954. Joe and Katie (Wagler) moved back to Daviess County in the early 1960's. Joe (born in 1895) passed away in 1965 and Katie (born in 1898) passed in 1969.

Sometime in 1951 or possibly early 1952, Henry Wagler devised a method to keep the old chairs in place. He took planks, 8 to 10 feet long, and screwed the chairs to them. The lines of chairs were then placed in two rows with a wide aisle down the center.

Early in 1952, the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference and the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church planted the Mahalasville Mennonite Church at Mt. Pleasant in Morgan County about 16 miles from the Bean Blossom church. Charles served as minister and Henry taught Sunday School for the youngsters – held in a local school. Times were staggered so that Charles & Henry could cover both congregations.

Until early in the summer of 1953, the front of the church building was about 8 feet, perhaps a little less, from the edge of Highway 135. Members of the congregation dug out a basement a few feet behind (west) of the building and laid up concrete block walls to form a basement to fit the building.

The building was jacked up and 8" x 8" timbers were placed under the building and on top of rollers (round timbers). Henry Wagler brought his Allis Chalmers WD 45 tractor into play, hooking up to the two rear corners of the building. He then towed, very slowly, with frequent stops to allow for slight adjustments, the building over the new basement.

Henry liked to say that it didn't matter about how big other people's tractors were, his was big enough to pull a church building over 40 feet. It should be noted that Henry had worked for a short time for a man down in Daviess County that, among other construction things, did move buildings. Henry consulted with the gentleman for advice on this move.

When the basement was dug, the old outhouse was removed and was not replaced until after the move was complete and the sanctuary was again in use. During that time, the

workers and congregation, with permission, used the outhouse at the store across the highway.

On December 1, 1953, Levi Weirich with wife Helen (Vincent) moved from Middlebury, Elkhart, County, to Mahalsville to minister at the new church.

### **The 1960's**

A women's Sunday School class was started and continued until 2007.

A Bible memory program started.

A number of Indiana University Bloomington Students attended for a few years.

Division of the congregation was caused by disagreement about the gifts of the Spirit.

Oscar Schrock and the Jim Stewart family began attending.

The old log cabin out in front of the church building was torn down.

### **The 1970's**

Charles Haarer was called by the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference to serve a Mennonite congregation in Pigeon, Michigan. He was released by the Bean Blossom congregation June of 1970. Charles had served the Bean Blossom congregation for 25 years and 2 months.

Henry Wagler assumed the role of Pastor for the congregation in June 1970.

Also, in June 1970, the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference sent Dean Slagel to the Mahalasille congregation to become the first ordained minister to serve the congregation full time.

The 1970's were lean and difficult years for the Bean Blossom congregation.

In June of 1972, Dean Slagel resigned his position at the Mahalasville congregation. Dean, his wife Dorothy, and family returned to the Goshen, Indiana area where he continued to serve the Mennonite congregations there. Levi Weirich again assumed the role of pastor for the congregation. Levi was ordained as pastor by the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference in 1977.

6/1974 – Henry Wagler resigned as pastor and Randy Nafziger began as pastor.

Around 1975, small groups were started.

The fellowship hall was added to the north side of the main building in 1976. Construction was done by members of the congregation with assistance from other Mennonite congregations.

Randy Nafziger resigned his position as pastor in August of 1979 and became the pastor at the Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Fulton County, Ohio. Randy served the Bean Blossom congregation four years and 2 months. Again, in August of 1979, Henry Wagler accepted the position of pastor of the congregation.

### **The 1980's**

In June of 1980, Walter Funk became the pastor of the church, relieving Henry Wagler from those duties.

The Mahalasville Church at Mt. Pleasant ceased operation in October 1983. Levi Weirich, the former pastor there, and wife Helen, became a part of the Bean Blossom Mennonite congregation. Levi & Margaret Hicks also came to Bean Blossom.

During the summer of 1985, a new roof was installed on the sanctuary and entry rooms by Walter and Amanda Funk.

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church was celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 1985.

Walter and Amana Funk installed a new drop ceiling in the sanctuary in the winter of 1985 - 1986.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 1986 Walter Funk resigned after serving 5 years and 9 months. He moved on to serve as pastor at Mt. Zion Mennonite Church near Versailles, Missouri.

Henry Wagler, again, became pastor for the congregation on the first of April.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1987, Henry resigned after serving for 1 year and 6 months as pastor and Gary Link became the new pastor.

Gary Link was licensed as a minister by the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 1988.

The Church building and fellowship hall was re-sided with vinyl siding. New signs were placed on the front of the building and on posts near the highway.

### **The 1990's**

During the early 1990's, the families of Tim Davis, Donald L. & Elda Kreider, Jim & Ruth Rowe and Dave & Laverne Deckard began attending.

On Easter Sunday, 19 April 1992, sunrise service was held at the Lutheran Hills camp, by the lake. Jim Marchand, Christian inspirational speaker, led the service.

Gary Link was ordained in the Christian ministry by the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference minister Bill Breckbill during the Sunday morning services on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1992.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, 1993, Don and Elda Kreider donated 50 Mennonite hymnals on behalf of the Lombard Mennonite Church. It was also decided to purchase some new Life Song books.

During May of 1994, the responsibilities of Henry Wagler were changed from assistant pastor to pastor of visitation.

In August of 1994, the accessibility ramp was built.

During the mid-1990's, the congregation was blessed with a very large and active youth group.

The triangle between the sidewalk, fellowship hall and sanctuary was approved in January 1995 as a memorial area, funded by donations, in memory of Scott Nafziger. Scott was the son of former minister, Randy Nafziger, and was killed in an automobile accident.

During the spring of 1995, the large walnut tree on the north side of the building was removed. Then a garden area for flowers and bushes, bordered with rocks, was established on the north side of the building.

The 50<sup>th</sup> celebration for the congregation was held on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. A hymn sing was held under a large tent that evening. The next morning, 190 were in attendance for the Sunday morning services.

In November of 1995, a new sound system was installed.

In July of 1996, the library was moved to the basement. Construction of the accessible restroom in the back of the building was approved and initiated.

The Rick Gillam family began to attend in the spring of 1998.

In July of 1999, the title of those serving as “congregational leadership team” was changed to “elders”.

### **The 2000's**

On Wednesday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2000, the Building Committee was formed, consisting of LaVerne Deckard, Jim Rowe, and Ken Wagler plus the three current trustees. Their duties consisted of fundraising, applying for grants, overseeing the planning process and the building.

New padding was installed on the pews in the sanctuary in September of 2000.

Henry Wagler resigned from meeting with the Elders on Wednesday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2001. The Dan Borisuk family began attending at about the same point in time.

On Wednesday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2001, a vote was taken to NOT join the Mennonite Church USA. This vote detached the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church from the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference.

In July of 2002, the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church was officially documented by the Indiana Secretary of State. This was necessary as a result of leaving the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference.

In August of 2002, the Church Goals that the Elders put together were accepted by the congregation.

Sometime during the year of 2002, the congregation was treated with a question and answer period lasting about 45 minutes with Charles Haarer and Henry Wagler. The two aging gentlemen provided a lot of insight about the early days of the congregation.

On Wednesday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2003, the revised BBMC constitution was approved on its second reading.

The Mission Committee was formed on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 2004. The stated purpose of the committee was to increase the awareness of local outreach as well as other mission awareness. BBMC was also approved to join the Conservative Mennonite Conference.

The Bean Blossom Mennonite Church officially became a member of the Conservative Mennonite Conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2004.

On the weekend of 4 March 2006, a Marriage Enhancement Weekend was held at Lutheran Hills Camp with Robb and Mary Besosa.

In May of 2006, the Brummett property, north of the existing property, was purchased.

A new roof was installed on the sanctuary and entry rooms in December of 2007 by Adam Wagler.

During the spring of 2008, the Trevlac area was hit hard by flooding. In June, the Mennonite Disaster Service was called in. Their coordinator was unable to arrive for the first week, so Dan Borisuk took a week off from work to serve in that capacity until he arrived.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2008, the Building Committee was given approval for the plans for the addition and remodeling. The ground breaking service for the building and remodeling was held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2008.

Among the remodeling projects was the removal of the curved platform at the front of the sanctuary and replacing it with the current rectangular one.

On 20 June 2009, Corey and Cammie (Roberts) Campbell married in the remodeled sanctuary; the reception was held in the unfinished fellowship hall.

The Dedication Service of the new and remodeled building was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2009.

### **The 2010's**

In January of 2010, a new roof was installed on the block building by Alvin Wagler.

During the months of June through August of 2010, numerous families left our fellowship to join a new fellowship started by members of a small group.

During the months of July through August, 2010, the installation of new air conditioning & heating, drywall, etc. was begun on the bonus room above the new addition. The church furnished the mechanicals and the youth through fundraisers funded the drywall, its hanging and finishing. Then the youth painted the room. Matt & Emily Roberts were the lead sponsors.

Work began for the completion of the basement under the kitchen and new bathrooms in March of 2015.

On 1 August, 2015, Gary Link resigned.

During the time between the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2015 and the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2016, the ministerial duties of the church were handled by Jerel Roberts, Matt Roberts, Michael Webb and guest speakers.

On January 4, 2016, Jeff Miller began his service as pastor. Church services were cancelled on January 10, his first morning scheduled to preach, due to a snow storm.

In 2016, the elders, with extensive input and feedback from the congregation, came up with new mission and identity statements for the church, which included a new mission statement, core values, core beliefs and denominational clarifications.

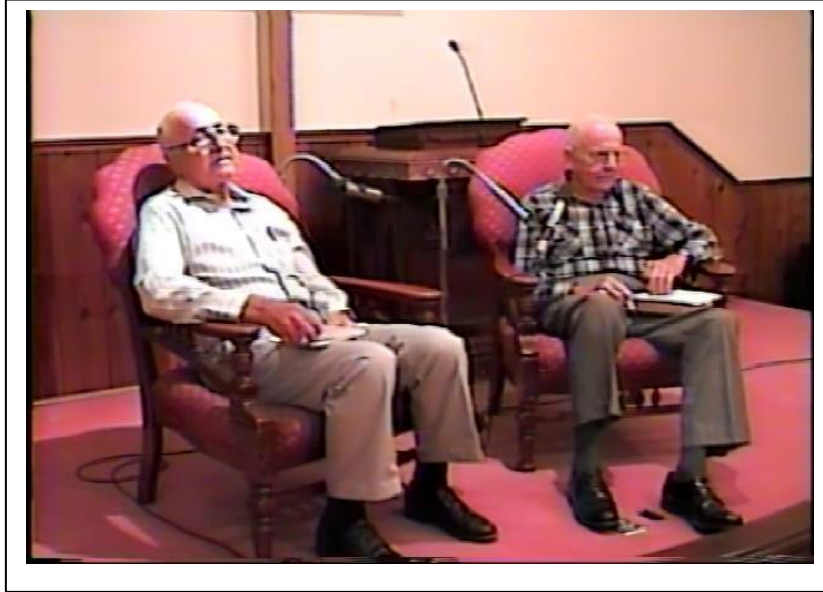
The name of the congregation was changed from Bean Blossom Mennonite Church to Bean Blossom Community Church and was officially recognized by the Indiana Secretary of State on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2017. The congregation is still a Mennonite Church and a member of the Conservative Mennonite Conference. All seekers and believers are welcome.

In early 2017, a new leadership structure was implemented which included six new directors to oversee different areas of ministry within the church.

In October of 2017, the congregation hosted a Fall Fest for the neighborhood. It was a day of games for the youngsters, food and casual fellowship.

Beginning in January of 2020, the United States, as well as the whole world, was stricken with the Coronavirus -19. As a result, most businesses, factories, restaurants, and all sorts of other places, including churches, were shut down for several weeks. People were requested to remain in their homes as much as possible, wear protective masks when out and exposed to others, to maintain a social distance of 6 feet or more from others outside own home, sanitize everything, and to wash hands frequently.

At the time of this writing, it is not known when things will open up, churches can return to normal operations, families can get together, and in general return to their more normal life.



Henry Wagler and Charles Haarer during the 2002 Q & A service



The curved platform in 2002



## **PROFILES OF MINISTERS:**

The following profiles provide additional information about the families and lives of those who have served in the role of pastor at the Bean Blossom Mennonite/Community Church.

In addition, the profiles of the two ministers who served at the mission church, Mahalasville Mennonite Church at Mt. Pleasant in Morgan County, are also included. This church was a plant facilitated by the Bean Blossom congregation and staff.

Obviously, there are many more people involved with the maintaining of a church congregation. To list those people and detail their contributions would take much more research and far more pages than this history has used.

In addition, it should be noted that in most cases in the ministry, the spouses and families of the pastors are deeply involved with the congregations, even if it's nothing more than supporting the pastor. This has been especially true with those in the history of the BBMC/BBCC.

The efforts of those who serve as Elders, the musicians, those who help maintain the facilities, and all of those others who serve in many ways, many of which are not even noticed by the congregation, are the backbone of any congregation. BBMC/BBCC has been blessed with many over the 75 years.

Matthew 28:16-20 (NKJV)

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.

17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

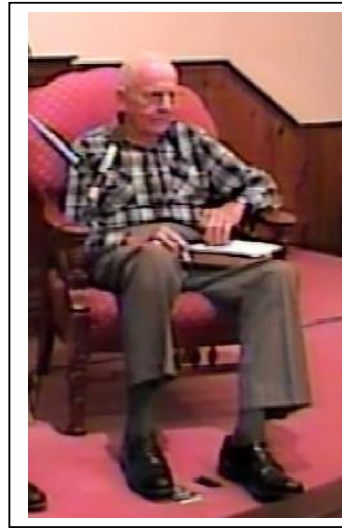
19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

## CHARLES HAARER



Charles & Gladys



Charles 2002

Charles Claude Haarer was born in 1916 in Shipshewana, Lagrange County, Indiana to the marriage of John Jacob Haarer & Edna Mae Eash.

Charles attended Shipshewana High School and graduated in 1934, becoming the first member of his family to graduate from high school.

After graduating from high school, he took courses from the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (now called Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) in Elkhart, Indiana.

Charles married Gladys Witmer on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1938, in Allen County, Indiana. Charles and Gladys had 9 children; Stanley, Ronald, Gary, Charles Jr., Esther Cirilo (Haarer), Rachel Roberts (Haarer), Lois Thomas (Haarer), Mark, and Janet Prawat (Haarer).

Having shown an interest in ministry, he became an assistant minister at a large Mennonite Church in southern Michigan (location unknown, possibly White Pigeon or Pigeon River) for a few years. After some experience there, he made his interests known to the Michigan – Indiana Mennonite Conference.

The conference then sent Charles to Bean Blossom to start a mission church. The Haarer family, Charles and Gladys, along with their 3 young sons, Stanley, Ronald, and Gary, arrived in Brown County in the spring of 1945. At first, they made their home in Helmsburg.

Especially in those days, ministers needed to either supplement, or provide all of, the income needed to support themselves and their family. For Charles, being assigned to a start-up

mission church in a small community in Brown County, it was a necessity. In the beginning of his ministry at Bean Blossom Mennonite Church, he worked at the Helmsburg Sawmill. Later, being a skilled finish carpenter, he was able to find sufficient work in the Bean Blossom area.

In June of 1970, Charles resigned his position with the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church after serving for 25 years and 2 months.

He then served as pastor at the First Mennonite Church in Pigeon, Huron County, (out on the thumb) Michigan.

After serving the church in Pigeon for eleven years before retiring from the ministry, he and Gladys moved to Elkhart, Indiana. There, he got back into finish carpentry and worked for Dutch Mills making cabinets.

Charles & Gladys moved back to Bean Blossom in 1997. Their five sons built them a house on the property owned by their daughter Rachel & her husband Jerel Roberts. Charles did the finish carpentry in the new house.

Charles passed in 2004 and Gladys in 2009.

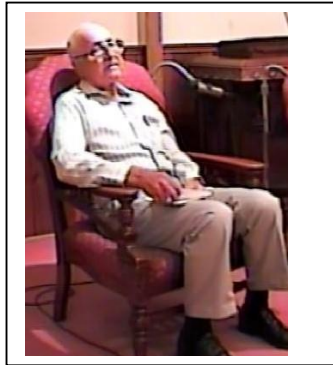


Haarer Family

## HENRY WAGLER



Henry



Henry 2002



Frances

Henry Wagler was born October 10, 1919, in Daviess County, Indiana. His parents were Daniel Wagler and Leah Wagler (Lengacher). The parents were a part of the larger Amish community in Daviess County.

Henry attended the Epsom Elementary through the 8th grade. The school was a public school located in the small community of Epsom, Bogard Township, Daviess County, Indiana.

He grew up with a love for music and was proficient with the harmonica. He also tried the guitar, which did not sit well with his parents. In addition, he had a thirst for knowledge in general and specifically the Bible, again not a part of the particular church district in his Amish community. (Personal Bible Study wasn't encouraged by the Amish community at that time.)

Henry married Frances B. Slaubaugh on January 23, 1945 in Loogootee. Frances preceded him in death on January 19, 2012. Henry & Francis had eight children, Lorene (husband, Gary) Link, Edward E. (wife, Pamela) Wagler, David J. (wife, Eulala) Wagler, Kenneth L. (wife, Lesa) Wagler, Lloyd W. (wife, Crystal) Wagler & Darryl S. (wife, Jackie) Wagler all of Brown County, Howard L. (wife, Cathy) Wagler of Hutchinson, KS and Dorothea M. (husband, Raymond) Troyer of Goshen. All eight of the children are living today.

After Henry & Frances were married, his thirst for learning the Bible grew and he became an avid reader of the Bible. It appears that Frances, having come from a different Anabaptist background, encouraged his interest.

Henry and Frances then began to attend the Berea Mennonite Church in Cannalburg, Daviess County, Indiana.

During this period of time, the Mennonite Church at large, was encouraging families associated with larger congregations to move to locations near small and struggling congregations.

As a result of this encouragement, Frances and Henry, along with the two children they had at that time, Lorene and Howard, moved to Brown County in 1950.

Henry was a farmer and supplemented his income by driving a school bus for many years.

Much to the benefit of the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church, the long years of studying the Bible paid dividends. On three different occasions, for extended periods of time, he served as interim pastor. In addition to serving as pastor in periods between the regular pastors, Henry served the congregation in other leadership roles.

The families of three of Frances and Henry's sons are active in the congregation today. Also, the husband of their daughter Lorene, Gary Link, served as pastor for twenty-eight years.

Henry passed at home at age 93 in 2012.

## **RANDALL "RANDY" L. NAFZIGER**



Randy at work

Randy was born in 1951 in Wauseon, Fulton County, Ohio to the marriage of Everett & Mary Nafziger.

He graduated from Archbold high School (Fulton County, Ohio) in 1969.

He then attended Goshen College (Goshen, Elkhart County, Indiana), graduating in 1972 with a degree in Social Work. This was followed with one year of study at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Master of Divinity) in Elkhart, Indiana

Randy and wife Diane had two sons; Scott Randall Nafziger, born 1973 & died in an automobile wreck in Lucas County, Ohio in 1994, and Steve Nafziger.

Beginning June, 1974, Randy served as the pastor of the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church, Brown County, Indiana. During his time with the congregation, small group Bible study was started (1975) and the fellowship hall to the north side was added to the church building (1976). Randy left Bean Blossom in August of 1979 to answer the call to serve in his home church back in Ohio.

While at Bean Blossom, like many in the ministry who needed outside income to support themselves & their family, Randy drove a school bus for income.

From 1979, Randy served as pastor at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Fulton County, Ohio, retiring in 2005.

After his retirement from serving as a pastor, Randy merged his experiences as a minister & a bus driver to become the Owner/Operator at R & R Tours based in Wauseon Ohio, specializing in guided tours to places like Shipshewana, Indiana; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; & Branson, Missouri. Diane is a part of the operation. As guide & office manager, she takes reservations, handles the money, and serves as escort on multi-day trips. Son, Steve, helps with website details when dad is stumped. Daughter-in-law, Laura, got the office operations up and running and still occasionally helps out with computer details.

Randy & Diane make their home in Archbold, Ohio.

## WALTER JOHN FUNK



Walter, daughter Betty and Amanda

Walter J. Funk was born to missionary parents Cornelius and Lorene (Franz) Funk on September 20, 1926 in rural Henan Province, China, although his birth was recorded in the nearest larger city of Caoxian, Shandong Province, China where the Chinese Mennonite Missionary Society under which his parents worked was headquartered. He, his parents, and older brother Melvin returned to the USA late in 1927 due to constant political and military conflict in that region, which was a serious daily threat to their well-being and to their very lives.

Walter's elementary schooling took place in various locations: on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana, and in the public schools of Floodwood, Minnesota and Hillsboro, Kansas. He graduated from Hillsboro (KS) High School, and studied at Tabor College (Mennonite) in Hillsboro, McPherson College (Brethren) in McPherson and Emporia State University (all in Kansas), and at the University of Minnesota. He graduated in 1965 from Sterling (Kansas) College, and also completed Graduate work at Wichita State University. His area of focused study was Natural Science and Mathematics Education.

In 1951, Walter volunteered for the Mennonite Disaster Service at Topeka, Kansas. While there, he met Amanda Nisly, who was in Mennonite Voluntary service as an Administrative Aide at the Topeka State Mental Hospital.

On June 15, 1952 near Partridge, Kansas, Walter married Amanda Nisly. Four children were born to this union in this order: Harry, Ruben, Marie, and Betty (who had Down's Syndrome).



He was ordained to ministry at Zion Mennonite Church, Pryor, Oklahoma, in 1955, where he pastored for 4 years. He also served in Pastoral roles at Pleasant View Mennonite Church (Goshen, Indiana), Bean Blossom Mennonite Church (Bean Blossom, Indiana) and at Mt. Zion Mennonite Church near Versailles, Missouri, which was his last pastoral assignment. It's interesting to note that his pastoral service began at Zion Mennonite Church in 1955, and ended at Mt. Zion Mennonite Church in 1995.

Walter also was a teacher. He taught at Belleville Mennonite High School (Belleville, Pennsylvania), Bethany Christian High School (Goshen, Indiana), and Valley Center Schools (Valley Center, Kansas). He also taught and served as Administrator of Clinton Christian Schools (Goshen, Indiana).

During his life, Walter also was a farmer in Oklahoma, Indiana, and Missouri. He (helped by his wife Amanda and his sons Harry and Ruben) also built or remodeled more than 12 houses in those states. Over the years, he readily and regularly shared his building and construction skills by helping in structural repair, plumbing and electrical repairs, and providing other practical assistance to the members of the congregations where he pastored, particularly to the elderly and needy.

He was diagnosed with colon cancer in 1994, and passed away in Millersburg, Indiana at the home of his daughter and son-in-law Marie and Ben Whirlledge on November 30, 1996.

His son Ruben passed away from leukemia in 2008, and Amanda and Betty passed away only 6 weeks apart in 2017. Currently in 2020, his son Harry (and wife Margie) live near New Carlisle, Indiana and his daughter Marie (and husband Ben Whirlledge) live on a farm near Millersburg, Indiana.

His ministerial philosophy always was to first of all be a servant of God and of his congregations, and then to faithfully teach God's Word. Last, but certainly not least, he always tried to demonstrate an attitude of quiet humility, in spite of his vast intelligence and knowledge.

Photo and biography by Walter & Amanda's daughter Marie Whirlledge & son Harry Funk

## GARY LEE LINK



Gary



Gary & Lorene

Gary Link was born in 1950 in Wauseon, Fulton County, Ohio. His Parents were Ralph Ray Link & Patricia Jean Crittenden.

He attended Evergreen High School in Metamora, Fulton County, Ohio, graduating in 1968.

Gary & Lorene Wagler were married in Nashville, Brown County, Indiana in 1970. Lorene is the daughter of Henry & Frances Wagler – Henry having served as an interim pastor for the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church. Gary & Lorene have three daughters, Angela (Daniel) Stoltzfus (Goshen, IN), Michelle (George) Bryant (Morgantown, IN), Jennifer (Michael) Webb (Morgantown, IN), three grandsons, two granddaughters, one step grandson, and one step granddaughter.

Gary then attended Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, graduating in 1975 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education.

He taught at Center Grove High School, Johnson County, Indiana, school system for 5 years. Gary then taught at the Central Nine Education Center in Greenwood, Johnson County, Indiana – adult education for 4 years.

During his teaching years, Gary pursued a Master's degree in Business Education at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, graduating in 1987.

In October of 1987, Gary began serving as pastor of the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church. In 1988, he was licensed as a minister by the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference. Gary was also ordained to the Christian ministry by Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference. He resigned his position with the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church on August 1, 2015.

Throughout his years in the ministry, Gary supported his family as a self-employed plumber from 1976 to 1990, and as an entrepreneur in general.

He was the owner of the Helmsburg Hardware store 1982 – 1987. The building was converted in 1995 for storage and has continued since then with 35 storage units as Eagle Storage.

In 2006, The Crystal Source, an ongoing business in Nashville, was purchased and is still owned as of this writing. This shop sells sterling silver jewelry with genuine stones, fossils, minerals, gems, and minerals from around the world.

From 2012 to 2014, a business called TOOLS-N-MORE was opened on Saturdays by appointment in the building across from the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church. Various tools and other returns from Home Depot and other sources were cleaned and refurbished by an outfit in Seymour, then were purchased by TOOLS-N-MORE for resale.

Now, Gary and Lorene, who taught music at Helmsburg and Sprunica Elementary Schools for 28 ½ years, have both semi-retired and are enjoying their blessings of health, loving family, two small businesses, but most of all, learning more to experience the joy and leading of the Lord in this time of their lives.

## JEFFREY “JEFF” SCOTT MILLER



Jeff



Jessica & Jeff

Jeff was born 1983 in Iowa City, Johnson County, Iowa to the marriage of James A. Miller and Deborah Yoder.

He attended Iowa Mennonite School, graduating in 2002. From 1999 to 2012 he served at Crooked Creek Christian Camp Washington, Iowa as a counselor, camp pastor, staff pastor, program assistant, and music leader. After High School, Jeff attended Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minnesota, (the college is a Christ-centered center of higher education). He graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies and Bible degree. During college, he was a co-leader of Barnabas, a college evangelism ministry, and was a worship leader at Immanuel Baptist Church.

Following receiving his BA degree, he attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, (Boston area) Massachusetts, graduating in 2009 with a Master of Divinity degree. From February 2009 to August 2011 he served as a missionary with Eastern Mennonite Missions in South Asia.

From May 2012 to December 2014, he served as an interim associate pastor at Kalona Mennonite Church in Kalona, Iowa.

In February of 2014, Jeff met a woman of God named Jessica. They became engaged in July. Jeff and Jessica felt led to finish serving with the separate ministries they had been serving with and then find a new ministry in a different place where they could both serve. In September of 2014, Jeff gave the church three months notice that he would be leaving in December.

Their wedding was in January, and then they did some traveling together, including a mission trip to the same place where he had previously ministered. They returned in early March and

found a temporary place to live in Virginia, and began preparing for their next ministry while discerning where God wanted them to go.

Jeff started at Bean Blossom Mennonite Church on Monday, January 4, 2016, and his first Sunday (January 10, 2016) the worship service got canceled due to a snow storm, but it worked out well since that day was also their one year wedding anniversary, so Jessica and Jeff were able to just focus on celebrating their anniversary rather than leading a church service.

Jeff was officially ordained by the Conservative Mennonite Conference on May 8, 2016 and is currently serving the Bean Blossom Community Church.

## LEVI S. WEIRICH



Levi



Helen

Levi was born in Middlebury, Elkhart County, Indiana, to the late Samuel E. and Millie (Bontrager) Weirich on January 30, 1928. He was one of 13 children, Enos (1926 – 2005), Fannie (1929 – 1929), Eli S. (1930 – 2005), Simon (1931 – 1931), Manasses S. (1931 – 2014), Elizabeth Miller (1935 – 2018), Joas, Lydia Mae Granger, Mary Weaver, Samuel, and two infants who died in infancy.

He graduated from Middlebury High School in 1946.

On April 26, 1947 he married Helen Vincent (1925 – 2016). They are the parents of 3 children: Ron Weirich and wife Vicki, of Goshen Indiana, Crystal Chandler and husband Carl, of Martinsville, and Gordon Weirich and wife Barb, of Harrisonburg, Virginia. They have 8 grandchildren: Carmen Elliott and husband Randy, Veronica Berkey and husband Gary, Cara Chandler and husband Jason Openshaw, Brad Weirich and wife Melissa, Cary Chandler and wife Michelle, Jessica Weirich, Gordon David and wife Sarah Beth and Justin Levi Weirich and wife Sarah. They have 13 great grandchildren.

On December 1, 1953, Levi and his family moved from Middlebury, Indiana, to Mahalasville, south of Martinsville, to minister at Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church. Following many years of service at Mt. Pleasant, he was ordained to the ministry there in 1977. He continued to serve the Mahalasville congregation until the church closed in 1983.

Levi and family then became active members of the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church in Brown County.

Levi worked for Schnaiter Lumber Co., Gaile's Gas and Electric in Morgantown, Sears, Roebuck & Company in Martinsville, and retired from Indianapolis Power and Light in 1990 after 22 ½ years of service.

He was known for his ability to repair anything, his woodworking skills and furniture creation, and was always available to help a neighbor or friend.

He loved to fish, golf, read, listen to gospel music, and he read many books to grandchildren and great grandchildren. For years he portrayed Johnny Appleseed for first grade classes in Martinsville. He will be greatly missed by his family and the people who were the recipients of his kindness, humor, and acts of service.

Levi passed away at his home in Martinsville on July 25, 2013.

## **DEAN GEORGE SLAGEL**

Dean G. Slagel was born Dec. 17, 1926 in Flanagan, Livingston County, Illinois to George Allen & Clara Lydia (Guth) Slagel. Dean had an infant sister that died at birth, and a brother Duane A. that is still living.

On June 18, 1948, he married Dorothy Lucille (Schrock) Slagel at Metamora Mennonite Church, Metamora, Woodford County, Illinois.

Dean and Dorothy had two daughters, Sharon Rose Berkey, Indianapolis, Annette Kay Slagel, Baldwin, MI, and three sons, David Dean Slagel, Ocala, FL, Paul Allen (Kristi Sommer-Slagel) Slagel, Bristol, Sanford Lee (Linda) Slagel, Goshen. They also have 9 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

Dean was a 1944 graduate of Flanagan High School. He then attended Ball State University, Butler University, Goshen College, and received his master's from Western Michigan University.

He served during WW II in the U.S. Army and was discharged in 1946.

In 1975, Dean founded Slagel & Son Insulation. The company, located in Fairbury, Livingston County, Illinois, specializes in spraying foam insulation in buildings.

He taught school at Honeyville, Eden Township, LaGrange County, Indiana, Ligonier, Noble County, Indiana, Morgantown, Morgan County, Indiana and Goshen, Elkhart County, Indiana.

Dean was a former pastor at the Mahalsville Mennonite Church, at Mt. Pleasant, near Martinsville, Indiana. He served the congregation from June of 1970 to June 1972.

He was also a pastor at the North Goshen Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana and a member of Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, also in the Goshen community, where he was a team pastor. He was Sunday School Superintendent of Conference of Indiana.

Dorothy died December 22, 2018 in Elkhart, Elkhart County and Dean passed away 14 September 2019 in Elkhart also.





The Bean Blossom Community Church – April 2020



## **Bean Blossom Community Church**

### **Mission**

Our mission as individuals and as a body of believers is to know Jesus, become like Jesus, and share Jesus.

We will pursue our mission by engaging in worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching, discipleship, and outreach, while seeking to be empowered and led by the Holy Spirit.

### **Core Values**

To know Jesus

We seek to grow through worship, prayer, and studying God's word

To become like Jesus

We seek to be transformed by Jesus to show his love, compassion, and humility

To share Jesus

We seek to make Jesus known through our words and our actions

### **Core Beliefs**

Our lists of core beliefs and denominational clarifications are not intended to put up barriers to keep anyone away, but rather we are making our beliefs known in order to be transparent about where our leadership stands and what kinds of teachings you can expect to hear at our church. Here are the beliefs that we consider to be at the core of our faith:

God is the one and only true God (Isa. 45:5-6) and the sovereign Creator of all things (Rev. 4:11; Jer. 32:17); God exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), who are distinct from each other (Matt. 3:16-17) yet are all the one true God (Deut. 6:4; John 8:58; Acts 5:3-4).

The Bible is true and inspired by God (Ps. 119:160; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God has revealed himself most fully through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-20).

Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18) and is fully God (Col. 1:19) and fully human (John 1:14).

All of us sin and fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) and therefore deserve death (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus died and rose from the grave to pay for our sins (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3-4) and triumph over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:55-57) so that all who believe in him may have eternal life (John 3:16).

Salvation is available only through Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Salvation cannot be earned but is a gift of God's grace that comes through faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

Repentance and a transformed life are the evidence of genuine saving faith (James 2:17; John 15:4-5) and are possible through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:13-14).

Jesus ascended into heaven and will one day return to gather his people together to be with him forever (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

### **Denominational Clarifications**

Bean Blossom Community Church is a member of the Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC) for the sake of support, accountability, and partnership in missions. We affirm and uphold the official theological statements of CMC since we believe they align with the teachings of Scripture. You can read CMC's theological statements at [cmcrosedale.org/about-us/what-we-believe](http://cmcrosedale.org/about-us/what-we-believe). Most of the teachings would be affirmed by virtually all Christians, but we have summarized below the beliefs that are the most unique or most frequently misunderstood.

**Believer's baptism** – We teach that water baptism is an outward symbol of a person's repentance and spiritual rebirth in Jesus (1 Peter 3:21; Rom. 6:3-8). Therefore, based on our understanding of scripture, we do not baptize infants but only those who are old enough to genuinely accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

**Non-resistance** – The scriptures teach us to love our enemies, do good to them, and leave judgment to God (Matt. 5:38-45; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Pet. 3:9). Since we believe that followers of Jesus should live out these teachings in all circumstances—even in times of war—we teach that Christians should refrain from participating in combat. However, we acknowledge that

there are varying views, even within our congregation, about military service in times of war. We respect and welcome those who hold to other viewpoints on this issue.

Non-conformity – We encourage everyone to live for Jesus and his kingdom rather than the things of this world (Matt. 6:19-21; Col. 3:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17). We do not believe that this means banning the use of technology or requiring people to dress a certain way. Rather, we teach that God desires us to be distinct from the world in the way we live and the way we think (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:5-10).

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Marie Whirledge (Funk), daughter of Walter Funk

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Rhonda Dunn, Brown County Historical Society

This book provided a considerable amount of information that has found its way into this history in one way or another: "The Old Georgetown/Bean Blossom Presbyterian Church 1845 – 1943" published by the Brown County Historical Society.

In addition to general internet searches using the names of people, businesses, churches, education entities, and the various locations mentioned in this history, the following specific sites were also used as sources. Wikipedia.org, familysearch.org, and findagrave.com.

The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana