

Pentecost – Anniversary Offering

New Heart

New Spirit



Offering celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren
Suggested offering date: May 11 or 18, 2008

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you... Ezekiel 36:26a

What a beautiful phrase of hope, promise and newness comes from the Messianic chapters of Ezekiel! The images of new things: new songs, new names, a new heaven and a new earth, new life in its wholeness are authentic pictures of the renewal and restoration of God's people, envisioned many times in the Old Testament. (Other texts that include and expand this imagery are: Isaiah 42:9-10; 43:19; 48:6; 65:17; 66:22; Ps. 96:1; 2 Pet. 3:13.) Paul echoes the Jews' expectancy in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" Certainly the experience of the early followers of Jesus at Pentecost (Acts 2) brought new strength and a binding-together through God's spirit as they moved into the uncertainty of their future. As followers of Jesus, we too seek renewal in the moments, days and years of our faith journeys.

What does such newness of spirit mean for the Church of the Brethren in this, its 300th anniversary year?

Does Pentecost fire and wind inspire us to new life? What are the ministries of renewal and restoration to which God calls us? As we look towards the future, let us join our hearts and hands together to share gifts that will bring a new heart and a new spirit among us.

Here's how this special offering will work.

It is quite different than others we encourage and resource each year! Plan your in-gathering for either Pentecost Sunday (May 11) or the Sunday following (May 18).

When the offering is received, your congregation will keep one third for local ministries. Then within four weeks, forward the remaining two-thirds to the General Board Stewardship offices in the enclosed green envelope. Stewardship staff will then gather together all the offerings sent from your district churches and return one-half of that total (the second third of the total offering) to your district office for district ministries. The final third of the offerings will, after expenses, be shared with other denominational ministries. What a marvelous way to share gifts, support and dreams for our ministries!

**This offering will be a gift
from all of us
to the whole church
for the new day!**

Worship Suggestions

From Hymnal and Hymnal Supplement:

"Here in this place"	6
"Holy Spirit, come with power"	26
"New earth, heavens new"	299
"O Holy Spirit, making whole"	300
"Move in our midst"	318
"Invocation"	1087
"A prayer for the path"	1079 (unison reading)
"Wind who makes all winds"	31
<i>includes beautiful, close harmonies for a lovely choir or quartet anthem</i>	

LITANY OF NEW LIFE

- One:** "Behold," God tells us:
"Amid all of your coming and going and doing, pause for a moment."
- Many:** We gather to pause, reflect, observe, and marvel!
- One:** "Look closely," God says:
"Sharpen your focus and observe again:
Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new." (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Many:** New life comes -- as it always has come, and as it always will.
- One:** "You have heard these things," God tells us once again:
"Now see and declare it!
From this time forward I will make you hear new things, hidden things that you have not known." (Is. 48:6)
- Many:** We listen for God's still small voice on the winds.
- One:** "See and be held by my promise," God tells us:
"I promise new life – a new heart and a new spirit!" (Ez. 36:26)
- Many:** We see the beauty of God's promise.
We are comforted by its truth.
We are strengthened and supported by its power.
- One:** "Look," God says,
"though nothing can hinder my purpose,
you can do much to help it, for I have made;
I am making;
I will make all things.
New.
Now."

- Many:** With God, we can speak and work with one voice:
ALL: With God, we have made;
we are making;
we will make all things new.
Now.

Offering invitation:

Think for a moment of the gifts that have come to you through your faith community.
Silently ponder some of these as they are named:
(pause after each)

- Nurture and growth
- The Word – made flesh, and written down.
- Love. Compassion. Community.
- Support – be it emotional, tangible, or through prayer.
- Opportunities to share the Good News here locally, or in the wider church or in the world ...

Now silently name other gifts you have received.
(pause)

In gratefulness for what we receive,
let us give - so that others may also receive!

Dedicatory prayer:

God, you give us all we have. You give us today and you have given us our past. Thank you for the 300 years of history that have brought us to this day of celebration, empowerment and renewal. Here in this place, we join our hearts, our hands, our prayers and our pocketbooks together - seeking a new day and new hearts as we look forward with hope and promise. As we join in this dedication in different times and places, fill your Brethren children with a new spirit that sweeps across the land. We ask this blessing in Jesus' name. Amen.



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