



Sowing hope in Indiana

Pleasant Chapel spreads smiles and love near and far

by Val Kline

One cold night this past winter, my husband woke me up to tell me the neighbors' house was on fire. We prayed a quick prayer, and then immediately heard and saw fire trucks arrive. My husband went outside, and I started our prayer chain.

We live in the parsonage by Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren (Ashley, Ind.), and it wasn't long before we had some church members at the church, offering coffee and a place of refuge for the firefighters. Five fire depart-

ments were on the scene for about five hours, and many of them took the opportunity to warm up in the building. I was so happy to learn that they did, and even more so after I found out they had icicles on them.

We were joy-filled to learn that everyone was okay, but saddened that the house was a total loss. It was suggested that we collect an offering for the neighbors, and we did so. Another church in our small town did the same thing and gave us their money to deliver with ours. I was overjoyed to give the generous offerings to our neighbors and to let them know that we love and support them.

And it wasn't surprising. I've been the pastor at Pleasant Chapel for over 12 years, and one thing I learned early on is that Pleasant Chapel is a generous congregation. When there are opportunities, the church gives generously and joyfully.

Shortly before I came, the congregation started collecting peanut butter and jelly one Sunday each month for a local food pantry, along with monetary gifts. That monthly offering collection continues to this day. Children pull a little red wagon through the center aisle and collect the donations while regular tithes are also being collected. On that Sunday, we always eat snacks together, most of which are made with peanut butter and/or jelly.

Pleasant Chapel's reach stretches much farther, too. The year before I came, the congregation began a partnership with another nearby congregation (from another denomination) to participate in the ministry of Foods Resource Bank

Seyran, Trino, and Anna came to Pleasant Chapel from Armenia to share how Growing Projects have made an impact on their community.



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Manwel, originally from Rwanda and later a refugee, was a beneficiary of Pleasant Chapel's Growing Project.

(FRB). FRB often partners a rural church with a city church, one to grow crops and the other to raise funds. The two churches usually get together a couple of times a year to worship and to celebrate the harvest.

One of the goals of FRB is to train people in other countries to break the cycle of poverty and end their struggle with hunger through agricultural development. FRB has growing projects around the world, and partners in our country choose projects to support. Every year, FRB staff members from our country visit growing projects in other countries, and sometimes partners from other countries come here.


Through our participation in FRB, we have had the privilege of meeting several brothers and sisters from different countries. During one Harvest Celebration, two people from Myanmar—Dominick and Agnes—joined us and shared ways the ministry has changed their lives and community. Dominick told us, “If you could see how your growing projects are helping people in other countries, you would be so proud.”

FRB decided to change its name a few years ago, because there was ongoing confusion about the ministry (some people thought it was a food bank). I was invited to be on the conference call to brainstorm ideas. During that call, the name “Growing Hope” was shared, and we all liked it. Foods Resource Bank officially changed its name to Growing Hope Globally (GHG).

In the past few years another city church joined our partnership, and we have had a great time getting to know brothers and sisters from that congregation, too. Members from the three churches, as well as GHG staff members, have planned, worshiped, eaten, celebrated, and laughed together.

In these past 12 years, we have seen many changes within our church family, including the fact that some of our farmers have gone on to glory. But their families have decided to continue farming designated acres to continue supporting this important ministry.

After our last harvest, we discovered that we, along with our partner churches, have raised more than \$200,000 since 2007 to help growing projects around the world. Growing Hope Globally is a wonderful ministry that has allowed us to make a positive impact in many countries. (Learn more at growinghopeglobally.org.)

For a little country church in northeastern Indiana with fewer than 50 active members located a few miles outside of a town of about 1,000 people, we are grateful for the contributions we’ve been able to make. And I’m blessed to be a part of Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren, a small church family that, by God’s grace, is making a difference in the lives of our neighbors around the world . . . and across the street. 

Val Kline is pastor of Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren in Ashley, Ind., located in Northern Indiana District.

GROWING HOPE GLOBALLY

A total of 27 Church of the Brethren congregations

participate in one of the Growing Projects of Growing Hope Globally (GHG). According to GHG, most of their projects are ecumenical, and about 10 percent of the 162 current active Growing Projects include at least one Brethren partner. GHG regional director Eric Mattson says the Ashley, Ind., project that includes Pleasant Chapel has raised enough funds to sup-

port nearly 3,800 people in six countries in Africa and Latin America.

The Church of the Brethren supports GHG directly through its Global Food Initiative, contributing \$15,000 to \$30,000 annually as an implementing member to cover administrative and operating costs for the organization. This allows more funds from the Growing Projects to benefit on-the-ground efforts in developing countries.

GHG will hold its annual Growing

Hope Summer Celebration for all its partners July 24-25 in Grabill, Ind. Find out more about GHG at www.growinghopeglobally.org.

