



courtesy of McPherson Church of the Brethren

## Engage in service and peacemaking

Oak Harbor Cottages is a community neighborhood sponsored by the McPherson Housing Coalition (MHC). Ten tiny homes offer emergency shelter for families experiencing homelessness. The McPherson church committed to building one tiny home. The congregation raised \$50,000, assisted with home construction, donated home furnishings, and named the home “Peaceful Oak.”

“Watching the church body come together has been an incredible experience for the community, the organization, and the families in the cottage,” said MHC executive director Chris Goodson. “A pastor once said that people are watching to see how Christians act when no one is watching. This project has allowed the community to know the heart and faith of the Christian community in our town.”

## Support youth, families, and young adults

Established in 1982 by the late Barbara Flory, the congregation’s Good Beginnings Preschool serves as a reminder that early childhood education is an invaluable community tool. Teachers focus on social and emotional development, kindergarten readiness, and motor skills.


“Barbara’s vision was that each child would be affirmed and loved as a child of God and nurtured in learning, growth, and development by caring Christian teachers,” said preschool director Carol Temple. “The preschool was and continues to be available to children from the church, from McPherson, and from surrounding communities.”

## Partner for racial justice

Striving to understand ongoing racial differences, a book study convened using Jemar Tisby’s book *How to Fight Racism*. Group members were intentionally invited to assemble a diverse group expanding beyond church membership. Members included a leader from a nearby predominantly Black church, a student leader from McPherson College, and residents at The Cedars retirement village.

“The connection with the neighborhood church continues to grow,” Marty Ward noted. “Future participation with McPherson College students in efforts to improve race relations has also been elevated among our congregation.”



To emphasize this initiative, the McPherson church this year adopted “One Voice” by Ricky Manalo as a signature song. It suggests taking the Word everywhere, including to our neighborhoods. Now “One Voice” is sung regularly during worship services, reminding congregation members about their commitment. And with one voice, they will spread the goodness of God. 

Anne Kirchner is a member of McPherson Church of the Brethren. To learn more about the McPherson “Jesus in the Neighborhood” strategic plan, visit <https://macbrethren.org>.

# With one voice

by Anne Kirchner

*“With one voice we’ll pass the Word along. With one voice, bring justice to the world. And with all the angels, we’ll spread the goodness of God.”* —from “One Voice,” by Ricky Manalo

**W**hen the Church of the Brethren introduced the concept of “Jesus in the Neighborhood” as part of the denomination’s compelling vision statement, McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren was quick to respond. A strategic planning team coordinated meetings and surveys to stimulate congregational conversation and vision. Church members collectively identified four actions to support the community: care for creation; engage in service and peacemaking; support youth, families, and young adults; and partner for racial justice.

“The congregation adopted a long-range plan known as ‘Jesus in the Neighborhood,’ which is referenced constantly in worship services, planning sessions, and conversation among church members,” said Marty Ward, chair of the strategic planning team. “The plan is serving to guide thought and action in important, focused ways.”

Projects are created based on individual interests and, upon church leadership approval, assigned to an established ministry team to ensure accountability and ongoing support. During 2022, McPherson has developed or enhanced more than 10 community outreach programs related to the four action areas. Here are some examples:

### Care for creation

As part of the Central Kansas Conservancy’s “Adopt a Trail” volunteer program, church members adopted a mile of the Meadowlark Trail. This 20-mile “rails to trails” pedestrian and bike path runs between the cities of McPherson and Lindsborg. Volunteers keep the mile free of litter and excessive weeds and report needs for repair and maintenance.

“This project provides congregation members an opportunity to be stewards of the path and the plant life on either side it,” said participant Janelle Flory Schrock. “Additionally, a member of the congregation lives near the trail and has committed to hosting post-work party bonfires, so the project provides an opportunity to gather socially as well.”