

Montoursville Brethren in Christ

Celebrating 100 years of Ministry
1917 - 2017



A Brief History

In the beginning...

Brethren came occasionally from Lancaster County to Lycoming County on horseback for services at Fox Hollow, Blooming Grove, Anthony Church and Rose Valley Church. Only in the Fox Hollow Community has there been any membership of a permanent nature.

Brother John Wolgemuth was among the first of the Brethren who came to preach the gospel here. The earliest date known was in the late 1850's. Other ministers who came with him were John Gish, Jacob Brubaker and Samuel Brehm. Three brothers, Elias, Fred and David Slagenweit, were early members here. There was also fellowship between the Lycoming County Brethren and the Longs in Clinton County.

No regular services were held at Fox Hollow until 1917 when B.F. Long conducted a revival. The resulting converts became the nucleus of the congregation.

In 1920, **Henry T. Frey** responded to the ad in the Evangelical Visitor magazine asking for someone to pastor the Fox Hollow congregation. Henry Frey was a tobacco farmer in Lancaster, PA, with his wife, Katie, and daughter, but he felt God calling him to this small church in the mountains about six miles from Montoursville. In that same year, Bishop H.B. Hoffer installed Brother Frey as pastor.



The Fox Hollow church building was formerly a German Baptist church, but had been vacant for some time before Henry Frey took the congregation there in 1920. Sunday School was started in 1920. Sunday's would be very busy days for the Frey family. They would begin with services at Fox Hollow, then drive out to Butternut Grove for afternoon Sunday School, and then return to Fox Hollow for evening services.

Pastor Frey conducted all these Sunday services, a midweek service, visitation, helped his daughter and son-in-law and their large family, and he held down a full time job. In 1942, Henry Frey retired as pastor, but stayed in the area until 1944 when he moved to the Brethren in Christ retirement home in Harrisburg, PA.



Charles McCulloh was installed as pastor in the summer of 1942. Both he and his wife, Miriam, were factory workers. They raised three children. The church continued to function with all the same weekly activities for many years.

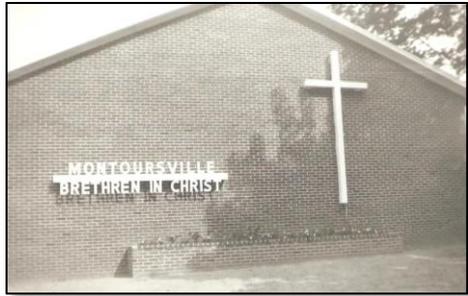
The McCulloh's served the Lord faithfully at Fox Hollow until Charles developed pleurisy and was told by his doctor to find an indoor, sitting job. It was then that Pastor McCulloh left to serve the Cross Roads BIC church, which was a paid position.



In 1958, **John Bundy** answered the call to pastor the Fox Hollow church. John and his wife, Mary, had two sons. The pay for pastoral services was still small, so John worked as a banker to compensate.

During the years of Bundy's ministry, attendance increased from the mid-30s to 60-65 and the church people decided in 1964 to build a church in town to have a more visible presence in the community.

The building was completed in 1965 and the first services in the new church were held on June 6, 1965. In September of 1970, the Bundy's moved in order to serve the Pleasant View BIC Church.



Frank Schweitzer, a retired Wesleyan pastor, served as an interim pastor while the congregation searched for a new pastor.



Omer King and his wife, Marty, responded to the call for the Montoursville Church in 1971. They stayed for three years, and then were called to another pastorate.

Rev. Schweitzer again came to serve as interim pastor for part of 1973 or 1974.

Larry Strouse, his wife, Melba, and their three children came in 1974. The church building was paid for in 1975, the 10th Anniversary of the present church, and the congregation then started plans to build a parsonage. Rather unexpectedly, the lot next door to the church became available, and the congregation purchased it and built a parsonage. The new church parsonage was completed in 1975, and the mortgage was paid off in 1993.

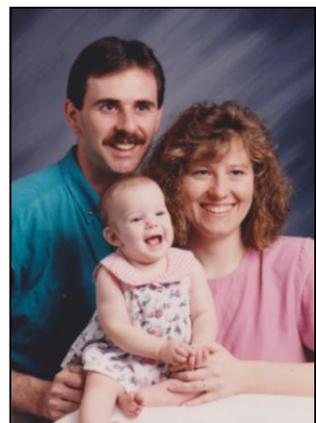


In 1981, **Mark Alleman** and his new bride, Maxine, briefly served the congregation.



Harry Bergey became the first full-time pastor in 1981, largely through a grant from the Board for Evangelism and Church Planting. He and his wife, Mary Beth, homeschooled their boys and had a ministry to homeschool families and a vibrant music ministry. They moved to Baltimore, MD in 1992 and recently moved to South Carolina.

Gary Herrfort, and his wife, Susan, natives of Ontario, Canada, came to serve the Montoursville Church in October of 1992. In November 1995, the church celebrated their 75th anniversary based on the calling of the first pastor in 1920. They adopted a daughter during their years here, and after returning to Canada in 1998, adopted another daughter.



The church was without a pastor for a period of time and could not afford a full-time pastor. The members of the congregation met with Carl Shenk from the conference to determine the future of the church. During that time, Eric Hartshaw, a member of the congregation, agreed to preach one Sunday a month, and the remaining Sundays were prayer services or testimony Sundays led by the people.



In 1999 **Eric Hartshaw** was appointed as interim pulpit supply for one year while he completed his doctrinal questionnaire and core courses to be a licensed minister. He was installed as part-time pastor in 2001 and has served with his wife, Sherri, for the past 19 years. Eric is bi-vocational and has worked at several garden centers, a pet food store, and presently as a parking lot attendant at the airport. Sherri is a full-time

administrator at an Episcopal Church in Williamsport. They have two grown children.

The parsonage has been rented out since 1999 and the basement was rented to Head Start for many years and is currently rented for an autism support program for children.

The congregation met with Warren Hoffman in the spring of 2017 to renew our vision for the church. Our new mission is “to be a healthy small church that together makes an impact on our community in big ways.” Although Montoursville BIC has always been small in number, we have impacted many hundreds of people in our 100-year history.

We celebrate the ministry of these pastors and their wives and families, and also thank each one of you who have made today's 100th Anniversary Celebration possible. Praise God for His love and faithfulness!



*For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalm 100:5*

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