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New Church Opens To Community



Ready to welcome area residents to the new Community Church at Garden Spot Village are (from left) associate chaplain Marian Harnish, John Smucker, chaplain Chet Yoder, Jack Estep, CEO Steve Lindsey, and Christel Huxley.

By Ann Mead Ash

A name can say a lot. Case in point is the new Community Church At Garden Spot Village (GSV). "It's The Community Church at Garden Spot Village," said Jack Estep, a member of the congregation's leadership counsel, emphasizing the "at." "(Garden Spot Village) is strictly a location. We want to stress that the community is welcome."

The church first began forming in late 2010, after GSV chaplain Chet Yoder sensed that people attending Sunday morning services were looking for something more in their spiritual experience. "We had services, but not a lot of continuity with participation, and that is understandable given the setting," said Yoder, who listened to regular participants when they asked to take the next steps to becoming a church. "I was hearing a call for more continuity. Persons wanted to be members of the congregation," he noted. "We decided this would be an

opportunity to organize into a formal congregation."

A steering committee, which included Estep, Yoder, GSV associate chaplain Marian Harnish, GSV CEO Steve Lindsey, John Smucker and Christel Huxley, was formed, and the group organized the church's bylaws and core beliefs. The church received nonprofit status and held its first official service on Jan. 15.

Estep headed the committee that worked to develop the core beliefs. "We used as an example the national association of evangelicals," said Estep. "We know they represent many churches across the country." The seven core beliefs the church chose to focus on are the inerrancy of Scripture, the triune God, the person of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the makeup of the church universal, the nature of man, and the coming reign of God. "We took into account our Mennonite ties here (in forming the core beliefs)," noted Estep.

Services are held each Sunday at 10 a.m. in the chapel at GSV, 433 S. Kinzer Ave., New Holland. A typical church service begins with several traditional hymns, and a moderator opens with a prayer. A pastoral prayer, including the Lord's prayer and prayers for missions work and local and extended families, are part of each service, as are special music. Scripture reading and a sermon, which may be part of a continuing series, are also included. No formal collection is received, but baskets for freewill offerings are placed by the doors. The 60-minute services are taped to be shown on the GSV in-house channel. The church has about 70 members, and about 140 individuals attend weekly. Communion is celebrated quarterly.

The church is decidedly mission focused, and due to relatively low overhead costs, a significant portion of the weekly offering can be devoted to missions work. Church members Paul and Janie Hutton have led two mission trips to Honduras. "The church's role is twofold," explained Yoder. "First to offer prayer support for mission trips, and second to provide significant financial support to make that happen." The church also supports the local food bank, ELANCO Ministerium, and Cross Connections Ministries, along with other local, national, and international ministries.

The Community Church offers three membership options. Interested parties may become members, associates, or friends of the church. Associates may retain membership in another local church while participating in The Community Church services. Membership may be achieved by letter of transfer.

Readers who have questions may call Yoder at 355-6203.

New Holland Penny Saver - 09/21/2011

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