

What Is Your "Behind the Scenes" Story?

What our friends said about last year's retreat:

- ◆ "I didn't know anyone when I came, but they were all so friendly and kind. I made new friends."
- ◆ "It was a 'safe' environment to genuinely 'share' our journey with others who understood and could relate in a non-judgment zone."
- ◆ "At first I didn't want to go, but I'm SOOO glad I did. I made new friends who are on this grief journey that understood the uniqueness of grieving in a fishbowl. Each session was good, and the impromptu "table talks" were my favorite. It was like a rollercoaster ride from sadness to hilarious laughter."
- ◆ "Making new friends & reconnecting with others made the retreat fun!"
- ◆ "The Word of the Lord touched my heart."
- ◆ "A wonderful time filled with great memories."
- ◆ "I've never been to a retreat before and I Loved It!"
- ◆ "I don't know how to explain it, but I feel like a different person since coming home. Reasons? Being with friends, old and new; Getting away from home for the first time in a while; Being encouraged through those sharing & Not having to cook for one."

We look forward to YOU being in this year's photo!



Winter ~ Spring
2024



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*Connecting with
widows and widowers
of credential holders in
the PennDel Network.*



"...in all these things we are
More Than Conquerors
through Him who loves us."
Romans 8:37

Several years ago my husband and I, along with our oldest son, Chris, traveled as Children's Evangelists. For eight years, we learned what it truly meant to 'Live by Faith'.

Each week, we ministered at a different church. While my husband spent his days with the pastor doing pastoral things, my days were spent caring for our son in the pastor's home. Chris was fourteen months old when we started traveling.

We never knew, from week to week, what our income would be because we never asked for a set amount. We were thrilled to be serving God and following His call upon our lives. During our first year, our total income was \$6,000! We never thought anything about that until we were told we didn't qualify for a 1% FHA loan. It was then I realized how 'poor' we were.

One of the hardest things was having no friends. It's hard to have true friends when you are in a town for only a week. I'll never forget how God ministered to me early one afternoon. We were ministering in Nicholson, PA. I can still see the parsonage and the exact spot where God spoke to me.

I was sitting at a small desk located in the living room in front of the window. As I sat there, talking with God about things that I didn't understand, He spoke to me.

He said, "Cindy, I am working behind the scenes. Each night you and Robin work behind the puppet stage to bring my Word in a way that is fun and easy to understand. The congregation hasn't a clue what is going on behind the stage, making it possible for them to enjoy the service. Cindy, you can always trust Me because I am always working "Behind the Scenes." I will never forget that moment!

We have chosen "Behind The Scenes" as our theme for this year's New Horizons MTC Retreat. In this newsletter, you will read stories from our team of their personal "Behind the Scenes" encounters. I'm sure you, too, have had your own "Behind the Scenes" encounter with the Father. We look forward to hearing your story at this year's retreat.

"Clearly, You are a God who works behind the scenes." Isaiah 25:15 (MSG)

SUMMIT24/District Council ~ May 6-9 ~ First Assembly of God, Erie, PA

Tuesday, May 7

8:30 AM Registration Opens
9:30 AM Sacred Assembly
(Memorial Service and Prayer)
12:00 PM Seniors' Luncheon
1:30 PM Business Session
7:00 PM Missions Service

The Seniors' Luncheon is FREE! I hope you are making plans to attend. This will be the perfect time for us to connect and maybe meet in person for the first time. We will take a group photo immediately following this luncheon.

You can register by contacting Susan Lanza.
Call: 717-795-5921 or Email: slanza@penndel.org

Please pray for our Ministry Network Leaders!

Network Superintendent



Dr. Donald J. Immel

Assistant Superintendent



Rev. Steve DeFrain

**Network Secretary-Treasurer &
World Missions Director**



Rev. Jeff Marshall

PennDel Ministry Network Resource Center, 4651 Westport Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-4887

717-795-5921 - penndel.org



It's Time To Celebrate!



Maryann Vespa had a wonderful Christmas! Her daughter, Brenda along with her husband, who are missionaries to Italy, flew in for the holiday. Maryann also enjoyed being with her daughters, three of her six grandchildren and two of her nine great-grandchildren. The family enjoyed good food, playing games and just enjoying being surrounded by family.



Faye White shared, "It was great having our family together for Christmas—all the way from Colorado, Oklahoma and New Jersey."



Vivian Dippold shared, "Meet Kona. A neighbor brought some snacks over while we were in the pasture. Kona had to come to see what was being served. It was definitely not a horse snack. My first Christmas in TX with my oldest son was wonderful! God certainly continues to meet my needs as well as some desires!"



Donna Bole shared, "Both my sons and grandsons were home for the holidays. We had a great time, which was very busy and exciting!"



Barbara Stigile is the proud great grandma to beautiful Cypress, born on November 28, 2023.



Shirley Mattai shared her after Christmas photo. She had a wonderful time with her daughter, Christina, her two sisters, Rachel and Mabel and their families.

Mary Canfijn shared, "On December 23, our children and five of our six grandchildren sang Christmas Carols at the Lancaster square - something we did often with Pop - Pastor Wil. We love to use the opportunity that Christmas gives us to tell the story thru song. The Christmas Carols tell it clearly."



Judy Kyllonen is dearly loved by her daughter and son-in-law, Pastor Mike and Connie Hammer.



Armie, Hannah, Brielle, Remy, & Stella



Dottie Lewis spent Christmas day with her two daughters, Cindy and Linda. She was with all four of her children, two of her grandchildren and spouses, and four of her great-grandchildren. She is grateful for the Lord's constant faithfulness!



Phil Cochrane had an exciting holiday. Along with Christmas he also celebrated the wedding of his Granddaughter, Jessica, to Aaron Nickols.

George Prior celebrated with his children, Kacie (25) and Connor (14).



Ted Graboski shared, "We were all too busy chasing a couple of two-year-olds, and trying to calm down a screaming spoiled four-year-old. We enjoyed brunch and opening gifts, which were mostly toys. It was very exciting!"



Joyce Brotzman: After a series of accidents she is now living in a nursing home.

Judy Baumgartner was hit by a car on December 16, 2023. She fractured her front and back pelvis and L5 in her spine. After undergoing surgery on her pelvis she was sent to rehab, unable to put any weight on her legs. She is rejoicing because there was no paralysis, no major organ damage and no brain bleeds. Judy received a miracle and came home on February 1. Pray for her recovery.

Judy Kyllonen spent four weeks in the hospital just before Christmas, then had a bad fall in January.

Barbara Stigile requested prayer for her granddaughter and her great-granddaughter, who was born in December. Barbara also needs prayer for physical healing in her feet.

Vivian Dippold is undergoing treatment for ovarian cancer. Please pray for strength as she faces the next several months. She shared, "I am very thankful for a body of believers who believe in prayer as I already felt God's presence through the diagnosis and the preparation for the treatments. God is faithful. I have no doubt about that."

Roberta Anderson was sick for three weeks with the flu and is still recovering. She also requested prayer for her daughter-in-law.

A few years ago, **Mari Lynn Richter** was diagnosed with a lung disease called, pulmonary fibrosis (unknown cause). This is scarring of the lungs, and there is no cure. She is now on oxygen 24/7 and has been for a few months now. Her condition is making it harder to breathe.

Marjorie Jones shared that her lungs are filled with scar tissue and only function at 20%.

Robert Lyle is having some major dental work done.

Carol Kenzy asked for continued healing for her eyes as she moves toward the finish line.

Betty Swank requested prayer for weakness in her left leg. She has been falling.

Lois Nelms is battling e-coli and is relocating to a different part of the facility where she lives.

Sherry Sabella returned to Europe on January 26. She will be leading teams in Romania and to Bulgaria. Sherry will also be meeting with several national leaders and Pastors, both Romanian and Bulgarian. For most of them, this is the first time they will be working with a woman in leadership! "Please pray that God gives me favor with these leaders."

Nina Wadsworth requested prayer for her sister, Ruth. As of now the cancer is inactive. She will continue treatments until April and then go from there. Also, Nina's son, Philip, had surgery on his colon.

Update on Pastor Ken & Marlene Martin: Marlene shared that Pastor Ken is a living miracle. He's weak, but his body has been through so much. He has no trouble eating; he just can't eat that much. Marlene is quite tired, but that is understandable. Please pray for extra strength for her.

Pat Lauver has influenza A. The doctor said with all her immune system problems it will take her a while to recover.

<i>Please Pray For Our Newest MTCs</i>	Rev. Walter Lober	Mrs. Marie Hubbard	Rev. Nydia Ramos
	243 McDowell Lane ~ Apt. 203	814 Florence Ave.	1705 South Race Street
	Canonsburg, PA 15317	Avalon, PA 15202	Allentown, PA 18103
	412-257-5275	412-805-8682	484-951-5871
	B.D. 7/8/1947	B.D. 2/22/1945	B.D. 10/26/1941

My "Behind the Scenes" Story ~ Celeste Falvo



Celeste Falvo writes: "We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!" 1 Corinthians 13:12 (The Message)

My salvation came at twenty-three with so many 'behind the scenes' that prepared me for my life today! As a teenager, I worked on a farm — that instilled in me a good work ethic. As a wife, mother and grandmother — I know how to multitask, keep a good house, and "Train up a Child"! In my adult jobs, I worked as a caterer, and there were always "Pot Luck" Dinners to organize!

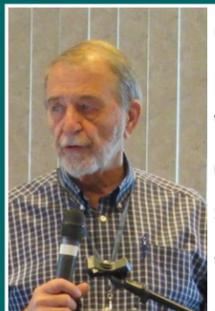
I became a Teacher/Preschool Director, learned patience, wisdom and also learned to speak in front of people. I also entered full-time ministry with my husband. You just do it all!

When my husband died, I was and still am a licensed insurance agent, mostly retired!

I can see now how all my different jobs and "behind the scenes" training helped to prepare me for what I do now! I am, with a team of like-minded facilitators, helping others through the grieving process as the Lead Facilitator for my Church's GriefShare ministry.

God has used all my "skills" to prepare me to be the person I am today. He knew every "talent" I would need to fulfill His call on my life. Thank You for who You have made me to be, Lord! I am a daughter of the King! I Praise You for my life and I am excited for the next "scene" You have planned for me.

Retreats ~ "Behind the Scenes" ~ Otto Wegner



Otto Wegner shares, "Retreats are Breathers," times to relax and rest, to review and renew. Retreat participants are reluctant participants of "More Than Conquerors." We'd rather have our spouses still with us. In reality, our companions have moved to their best and eternal address. The ensuing realities of life for MTC members: loneliness, uncertainty, ill-defined expectations...the list is endless, zaps strength and calls for a new perspective for moving forward.

The best part of retreats is that they are designed to be as brief as possible, interlude to routines, and refresh and redefine strategies for what is next. The enthusiasm for the next steps, an eager look to the future, and a resolve to continue on the mission are needed and to be expected on retreats. Military leaders know their troops must get a "new grip" on their mission. I am looking forward to regrouping, refreshing times in worship and prayer, and sharing life and hopes for the mission. We have a future. How Christian leaders demonstrate their trust in Jesus, deal with new realities, and apply themselves to the unfinished mission is part of our legacy for generations to come. Retreat, briefly! Retreat, with purpose! Retreat, and go forward!

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18

Robert Lyle celebrated his 88th birthday with his three preacher daughters, (L-R) Melissa, Karen and Rachel. He started going to the senior center a couple of times a week and enjoys visiting with others.



Donna Noll spent Christmas with her brother and sister in New York. They had a wonderful visit!



Liz Ferguson shared that God has led her to a Baptist church where she serves on the Sunday morning worship team and leads Sunday night worship every other week. She is also teaching a ladies Bible study. Just recently, she started a job at the local library. She said, "I just want to be where people need Jesus!"



Carol Kurka was asked to speak on December 13 as their church celebrated paying off the debt to the ministry center. She shared, "It was my husband's vision to build the ministry center and now we rejoice it's all paid for!"



Jerry Olshevski spent Thanksgiving with his son, Scott, and his family, in Texas. He spent Christmas with his daughter, Jodi, and her family, in California.



Emma and Ruby



Jerry ~ Jodi ~ Ethan ~ Mark



Karen Loose had a wonderful time at Christmas with her granddaughters, Abigail, and Caroline in Indianapolis.

Just as each snowflake is unique, so are you!



My "Behind the Scenes" Story ~ Tom Budzowski



Sometimes, as we look in the rear-view mirror of our past, we see more of the "unseen hand of God" and His provisions for us along the journey of ministry. Those provisions are seen with an even greater appreciation and gratitude. Throughout the many years of bi-vocational pastoring with a family of seven, God had provided many commodities, which included housing, groceries, and monetary gifts. But there was one area of extreme provision that I will never forget. That provision was all the good and reliable vehicles gifted to us while in the Pastoral Ministry, thirteen in all!

Gifted to us from relatives, church folks, and acquaintances. Every kind of vehicle, from a 73' Ford Pinto Station Wagon to a 90's Nissan Pathfinder and, various makes and models in between. God can be seen as our Divine Provider in that none of these gifted vehicles were begged for, asked for, hoped for, or in many cases, even prayed for! God just spoke to people's hearts and He provided each and every one of them. Some were used as a secondary vehicle or as our only vehicle and some for work transportation. But none the less, God provided every one of them.

I'm reminded of a verse in Psalms 68:19 where we are reminded to Bless the Lord, who daily loads us with His benefits, the God of our Salvation. Also, in Matthew 6:33, where Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things and admonishes us to seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness first and all these things shall be added to you. He truly was, is and will always be Jehovah-Jireh (Our Provider) in every stage of life and ministry.

My "Behind the Scenes" Story ~ Arline Grabill



In early 2018, I had a strong sense my life was about to change.

Not long after I went to Delaware, where I grew up, to help my brothers take care of my dad, who was ready to join heaven's saints. At one point, Dad told me that he and my brothers had decided I should move home to Delaware and purchase my parent's townhouse. I thanked him, but had no intention of leaving Pennsylvania, which was home to my family and held so many precious memories. One day, I was sitting in my parents living room, and the thought came to my mind, "What would I do differently if this was MY home?" From there, everything seemed to go very quickly.

I asked the Lord for two things: 1) Get a fair price for my house in PA; 2) that the move would come together quickly. I knew if it wasn't quick, *I would chicken out*. Well, my house sold in two days, and the buyer wanted me out in two weeks! Dad went to heaven, and I came home.

As I look back and see the Lord's incredible hand throughout – from the way my family and local church cared for me to my move home - there were so many moments when the Lord provided "behind the scenes."

Today, I am often helping neighbors, my oldest son and his family are close by. I am enjoying catching up with my brothers and getting reacquainted with my school classmates.

My "Behind the Scenes" Story ~ Nilli Oliver



Back in the 90's, God called my husband and I to Philadelphia to oversee what seemed to me an unconventional multi-cultural, multi-ethnic group of churches born out of a Christian-owned company. After several years and many wonderful learning experiences with these congregations, God again spoke to us to plant a church in the Spanish area of Kensington.

Are you aware that God *strategically* places people in our lives? After a few years of using company chapels, we needed our own space. One of my coworkers, a Pastor's wife, mentioned that her husband was resigning from his pastorate and was selling the church building, which was right in the middle of the neighborhood where we were looking to plant a church.

After negotiating with the pastor, an amount was agreed upon, and a purchase date was set. However, we didn't have anywhere near the amount needed. One night I was awakened in the early morning hours with the command to write a letter to friends and family. After wrestling with God for a couple of hours because *I HATE to ask people for money*, God won.

As the weeks went by, mail started arriving with checks in various amounts. The night before closing, we were \$5,000 short of what we needed. I asked my husband what were we going to do. His annoying reply was "That's God's problem, I'm going to sleep." The next day closing was set for 3 PM. During breakfast the phone rang, and the secretary of a Christian-owned foundation said that a check in the amount of \$5,000 was ready for pickup.

Many years have passed, my honey has been relocated to heaven, and the church is thriving and remains debt-free. Lessons learned in this journey: God is always working behind the scenes; He has strategically placed me where I am and He also strategically places people and opportunities in our path to accomplish His will. People want to help expand the Kingdom of God, we just need to ask for their help. Many times He takes us out of our "comfort zone" but if we allow Him, it helps us to grow and brings Him glory.

Home With Jesus!



Shirley Helsel passed on April 30, 2019.

Mary Elizabeth Ogden-Lober, 75, passed on December 20, 2020. Mary was a woman of God and a devout Christian who loved singing in the church choir. She adored her family and her grandchildren, as well as her many groups of friends that she kept in touch with no matter where life took her. Mary enjoyed playing cards with the girls, getting to know people, and she had an infectious laugh that brought a smile to everyone's face.

Loretta M. (White) Jacobs, 89, passed on Thursday, November 2, 2023, at home. She was a member of the Monroeville Assembly of God. After her husband, Paul, passed, she obtained her certified ministerial credential with the Assemblies of God. She was a member and leader of the Silverliners, and had served as the sectional representative for the PennDel District Women's Ministries. She also served as chaplain for the Arc Manor Personal Care Home, Delmont.

Steven Ellis Hubbard Sr. (Aka Chaplain Steve), 66, went to meet his Lord and Savior on November 11, 2023. Steven was married for thirty-nine years to Marie L Gustafson Hubbard, currently living in Avalon, PA. He was the son and grandson of missionaries who served in Korea, China and Turkey. Steven earned two Masters degrees and was ordained to the ministry with the Assemblies of God. Since ordination, Chaplain Steve served his Lord as a Chaplain to men in prison, Hospice patients and workers in businesses, and he officiated at more than 300 weddings. Steven also participated in ministry at the New Day Assembly of God, Upper Saint Clair, PA, and the Bethel Assembly of God, Pittsburgh.

Priscilla K. Richmond, 84, passed away on November 30, 2023. She and her husband, George, served in ministry as lead pastors at the following PennDel churches: Elwood City and Latrobe. Priscilla remained active in various ministries over the past forty years without her loving ministry partner.

Henry Lee Shaffer, 93, entered into the presence of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on Monday, December 25, 2023. Henry was a graduate of Enola High School (now East Pennsboro) in Enola, Pa. He went to Eastern Bible Institute (University of Valley Forge) in Phoenixville, PA., where he graduated in 1953, receiving his minister's license for the Assemblies of God. He was ordained in 1956 and continued serving in full-time ministry over the next six decades as the lead pastor at New Cumberland, Dover, Newport, Muncy, State College, Huntingdon, Hamburg and Orbisonia Assemblies of God, as well as serving in various district offices with the Penn/Del District. In 1993, he retired as a full-time pastor, but continued to serve as interim pastor and pulpit supply. In 1998, he became a part-time pastor at Pleasant Valley Assembly of God (now Trans4mation Church) as the Senior Adults Pastor. During the course of his ministry, he traveled to Israel, Greece, Netherlands, Bahamas and India leading mission teams, serving as a crusade speaker and speaking at Bible school commencement services.

Angel G. Ramos, 83, was ushered into the arms of Jesus on January 17, 2024. He was born in Corozal, Puerto Rico and earned his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez. Angel was inducted into the US Army in San Juan, Puerto Rico and served in the First Calvary Division 32nd Heli Airborne Division. Later he was employed as a surveyor by the Department of Treasury in P.R. He is survived by his wife, Nydia. Together, they served in Puerto Rico with Adult & Teen Challenge, building a women's center prior to transferring to the PennDel Ministry Network. Angel was the Lead Pastor of Spanish Emmanuel Assembly in Allentown. In addition, he was a Chaplain at the Police Department for twenty-seven years.