

Giving Back: The story of Grace Mennonite by Richard K. Early

Only one of the ten lepers healed by Jesus came back to thank Him. I have always wondered why only one thanked Jesus for the wonderful gift of healing. Gratitude for receiving something especially unexpected truly warrants a response of some kind. This is Grace's story of response by "giving back."



In May 1999, Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Lacey Spring, Va., received word that Mennonite Men, then a General Conference Mennonite organization, named us as recipients of a \$30,000 grant. This grant was to be used to support our first church building project. When our members, who eventually constructed ninety percent of the structure, heard the good news, they were overwhelmed with joy! It empowered us to move forward, trusting God would provide all our needs, according to his riches in Christ Jesus.

At the time, a song came to mind that I sang many Sundays before in 1972, at Broad Street Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

*It only takes a spark to get a fire going,
And soon all those around will warm up to its glowing.
That's how it is with God's love.
Once you've experienced it,
You spread your love to everyone,
You want to pass it on.*



Grace never forgot what the Mennonite Men Tenth Man ministry did for us. That grant was the spark that propelled us to build and complete the building in the spring of 2000. In fact, each year since, our congregation has sent monetary support for the building of more church buildings. Why? There are several reasons.

It is our belief that "giving back" to Mennonite Men's JoinHands ministry is a perpetual reminder of how God met a great need of ours at a time when lack of funds nearly shut the door on our dream. No doubt other churches want their own facility. Perhaps they are praying for a blessing like we received at Grace. Our giving can assist Mennonite Men JoinHands to grant this dream to other churches.



Finally, in 2017, Grace Mennonite Fellowship celebrated twenty years as a congregation. During those years our outreach has included establishing or partnering with, Grace Mennonite Fellowship Learning Center in the Philippines, a school and clinic in Honduras, and Appalachian Service Project. Our local outreach has involved starting the Lacey Spring Community Food Pantry & Clothing Closet and hosting a Spanish-speaking church in the lower level of the second phase of our church building—an educational wing. Grace has adopted as our identity the motto, "Because we care we give back."

Giving back to the JoinHands ministry of Mennonite Men is like lighting a spark for a potential church, waiting and hoping for a fire to ignite! They need our support.