Mennonite Mission Network

NOVEMBER 2026



EXTENDING BEYOND

Food, fellowship and game night for Tucson, Arizona, SOOPers Tim Hershberger, Marj and Bruce Weber, Derrell Ness, Ted Kuntz, and Gwen Hershberger. Photo provided.

A deeper call to service

By Marisa Smucker, executive director



According to Hymnary.org, "The composite [text of this hymn at the right] is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to work renewal in the individual heart (st. 1) and to make these renewed people one in love and service (st. 2)." The hymn references Acts 10:44, "While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on everyone who heard the word" (CEB).

I learned this hymn during my childhood. Growing up in a Mennonite congregation, I learned about service and following the teachings of Jesus. As I reflect on these words today, I am reminded that service is not merely doing good deeds, but it is a transformation of one's heart and spirit. The second stanza, "Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me," is about being transformed, ready to respond to a call — a beckoning of the Holy Spirit to serve.

It feels good to serve, to use one's hands and feet to help others. However, when that service comes from one's own strength, there may come a time when one will grow weary or become resentful. This hymn is a reminder that there is a deeper call to service — one in which I am first prepared, shaped and filled by the Spirit and provided a strength that is not my own.

Therefore, let us consider the heart from which we serve, compelled and guided by the Holy Spirit, as we join in God's work in the world. ■

Marisa Smucker

Marisa Smucker
Executive Director

**"Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me, (x2)
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God
fall afresh on me."**

— Daniel Iverson,
"Spirit of the Living God" (Voices Together 740)

"So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith."

— Galatians 6:10 (NRSV)



Photo by Dan Beachy

Dan and Tina Beachy continue to find joy and purpose in retirement through service with Mission Network's SOOP program.

From secret dating to serial serving

By Travis Duerksen

After raising a family and building careers, many people look forward to a quiet retirement. For Dan and Tina Beachy, retirement opened the door to something more purposeful: intentional service through Mennonite Mission Network's SOOP (Service Opportunities with Our Partners) program.

Service isn't new for them. The couple met, and began dating, while serving in the same Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) unit. MVS discourages dating between unit participants, so, "We decided to keep it a secret," recalled Dan. In hindsight, he admitted that it wasn't a very well-kept secret, "but we thought it was."

Service has remained woven into their lives ever since. While attending Philippi (West Virginia) Mennonite Church, in the late 1980s, the Beachys helped host the first unit of Mission Network's fledgling Service Adventure program. Thirty-seven years later, that program has placed hundreds of young adults in service units across the country. The Beachys continued to serve, as well — at food pantries, Meals on Wheels, an animal rescue and even doing short-term service in Jamaica — but SOOP is different.

"This is more focused," Tina said. "You come for a short time, and get it done. I like that feeling."

Retiring but not tiring

Early retirement brought new commitments — caring for grandchildren and navigating other responsibilities — but their desire to serve never faded.

"It feels like an extension of how I was taught, to help people around you," said Dan.

Once the youngest of the Beachys' local grandchildren started school, they finally had enough free time to explore longer-term service

"It feels like an extension of how I was taught, to help people around you," said Dan.

"You see the need, you help meet it, and you know you're making a difference," said Tina.

opportunities. Friends at church recommended SOOP, and it felt like the perfect fit.

Their first assignment took them to Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, near Colorado Springs, Colorado. Dan had attended camp there as a child, so returning to a place full of memories felt special. "It was going back to something familiar," he said, "but everyone there was new, and I built new relationships."

For their second SOOP assignment, they spent two weeks at Hesston (Kansas) College. Their projects ranged from renovating an administrative office to moving books and clearing out storage in the library to helping in the greenhouse of the nearby arboretum.

"You see the need, you help meet it, and you know you're making a difference," said Tina.

They said that the work wasn't always glamorous, but the gratitude from staff and the visible progress make it worthwhile. They've also enjoyed making new friends and experiencing local life, including thoughtful outings arranged by their hosts.

Service, they emphasized, has enriched both their marriage and their retirement years. "We couldn't have done this when we were raising kids or in the middle of careers," Dan said. "Now, it's a great fit."

Easy to say yes

The couple praised the SOOP process, saying working with program coordinator Stephanie Weaver and local site coordinator Bill Zuercher made everything simple. Arrangements for housing, service placements and meals were all handled before the Beachys got into their car for the long drive from Virginia to Kansas.

"[SOOP] is so seamless," Tina said. "There are so many things to choose from. You pick your top choices, and they help find a good match."

They also saw firsthand how camps and ministries value extra hands. "When you volunteer, people are so grateful for help, and you build relationships quickly," said Tina.

Their advice? Just try it!

When asked what they would tell other retirees or empty-nesters considering SOOP, Tina's answer was enthusiastic: "Why wouldn't you do it? Try it! You get to travel, be with people and do something worthwhile."

Continued on page 4



Photo by Travis Duerksen

Part of Tina Beachy's service placement at Hesston College was tending to plants at Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, a 13-acre botanical garden in Hesston, Kansas. In the greenhouse, she prepped plants to sell for an upcoming fundraiser.



Photo by Travis Duerksen

Tim Goering and Dan Beachy line up a countertop in the workshop of the Laban Peachy Center at Hesston College. Goering volunteers at the college in his retirement, and frequently works with SOOPers that come by, including getting Dan started on the renovation project that made up the majority of his work there.

From secret dating to serial serving

Continued from page 3

They noted that placements are flexible — often two to four weeks — and accessible, even on a limited income, since housing and some meals are provided, depending on the location. "We're not spending much money to do this," Tina observed. "It's a chance to use our time and skills in a meaningful way."

The couple acknowledged that service involves hard work — both physically and emotionally — but the richness of the experience far outweighs the challenges. "You wouldn't trade the hard parts for anything easy," Tina reflected. "[SOOP] is rich in relationships and lessons."

Dan and Tina plan to continue serving. Their next SOOP placement will take them to Baltimore, Maryland, to support a ministry house for asylum seekers. They look forward to new relationships and new ways of living out their faith.

"It feels good to feel like you're doing some good in the world," said Tina.



Photo provided

Tina and Dan Beachy, and Audrey Kleinsasser served with SOOP together at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, September 2025.



Are you feeling called to serve but unsure about how much time you can share?

Do you want to use your gifts and skills to work alongside others? Are you looking for a different kind of family vacation?

SOOP is for you!

Service Opportunities with Our Partners (SOOP) offers flexible service terms at 60 locations for individuals ages 25+ and families of all ages. Housing and meals are sometimes provided. From valleys to mountains to shores, SOOP has diverse and rewarding opportunities for all kinds of interests and skills. We have a life-changing experience waiting for you that you will never forget! Scan the QR code or visit **MennoniteMission.net/SOOP** for more information.

Support programs like SOOP by visiting MennoniteMission.net/Mobilize.

When you give to the Mobilize for Peace Fund, you help support service programs which create worthwhile service experiences like the ones the Beachys shared.

Please note!

Thank you for your faithful readership of *Extending Beyond*! We are grateful for the time you spend reading and sharing our stories, learning alongside us, and generously supporting the vital work of building peace and justice.

In May, we transitioned *Extending Beyond* to a digital format that we email to you every three months. If you prefer to receive a paper copy by mail, please email **CaitlinL@MennoniteMission.net** with "Extending Beyond – Paper Copy" in the subject line.

OCT-2026

www.MennoniteMission.net
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

Office locations:
Elkhart, Indiana
Newton, Kansas

Mennonite Mission Network