

Introducing Garden Chapel (Franconia Conference)



We are "The Garden Chapel" from Victory Gardens, New Jersey. We are a small, diverse, loving, and growing congregation located in Morris County, New Jersey. The borough of Victory Gardens was founded in 1941 by the federal government to house workers from a nearby munitions factory. It was named after the vegetable gardens people planted during World War II in response to food shortages. It is the smallest municipality in size (91 acres) and population (1,520) in Morris County, but the most densely populated.

During the Vietnam War young men were being drafted into the military services. Since serving in the military is completely contradictory to our beliefs, the Mennonite Church negotiated an "Alternative Service" arrangement with the government. This allowed conscientious objectors to serve our country in a manner consistent with our understanding of the Lord's commands. Instead of going to war, these men served at Greystone State Psychiatric Hospital assisting patients in various capacities. Initially, the men formed a house church, but they saw that the community of Victory Gardens was not served by a single church. With the assistance of the Franconia Conference, they planted our church in 1971. To this day it remains the only church in the community. How truly wonderful it is that God would plant a peace church in a community founded for war!

We have been blessed with our new Pastor Tim Hart since last March. Tim grew up in the community and has attended our church since childhood. He is keenly aware of our strengths and our needs and has a dynamic vision for the future.

Our mission statement is "Loving God, Loving Our Neighbors, & Loving Each Other." We try to live this out by our outreach to the community. We have an annual "Community Day" picnic where we reach out with food, fun, and fellowship with our neighbors. This year we distributed 105 book bags filled with school supplies to needy children. During the holidays we prepare and deliver meals to shut-ins and seniors. When we visit and fellowship with them we are reminded to "... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

We are praying that God will enable us to develop a Hispanic Ministry and also help us to restore our summer youth program which in the past has shown God's love to many young people. Please pray for us as we are praying for all of you.