

“The Little Church That Could”
Ocean View Presbyterian Church—Bethany Beach, DE
The Story of a Partnership with Water4
February 2014—January 2017



The Ocean View Presbyterian Church, Ocean View, Delaware was the first church to be built in the area known as Bethany Beach in Sussex County. It was formed in 1856 by members of the Blackwater Presbyterian Church. The money for the original structure was obtained from going house to house asking for donations. The present sanctuary was constructed in 1907, and the church presently has 76 members.

In 1879, the Sewing Circle was organized taking both men and women as members. The Sewing Circle has the honor of being the oldest society in Delaware operating under its original name. It is still active, meeting once a month. The purpose of the Circle is to share in Bible study, to equip the work of the congregation, to do mission, and to provide fellowship for the congregation.

In December of 2013, a small group of women gathered in the Fellowship Centre to decide where the money that the Circle had made for the past year would go. After making many important decisions about what charities would be chosen so that there was an amount going to local, national, and international organizations, one of the women mentioned that maybe they should put more focus on one charity for the next year. Betsy Henifin said, "I think we should do something having to do with clean water." Beverly Bailey stated that she also had been thinking about clean water. The group looked through some giving catalogs and saw that one large charity had a link that led to a smaller non-profit called Water4. Bev said that she would be glad to get more information on Water4, and it was decided to meet again in January of 2014 to discuss and come to a decision.

Bev called Water4 and asked to speak to someone who might be able to help a small church with a possible charitable partnership. Jim Stewart of Water4 came on the phone, and after a long conversation between an organization in Oklahoma City and a small church in Delaware, Bev was excited to share her findings with the Women's Sewing Circle. Water4 would provide posters and information and videos and whatever they could find to keep the energy up of this little church in Delaware. This was a new idea for the church—to put energy into a single project for a long period of time as the group wanted to commit to 3-year partnership. The small group of women wondered, "Can we keep up our energy over three years in this church of senior citizens who are all over 50 years of age?"

Bev took her findings back to the seven women, a decision was made, and a partnership was born in February of 2014. Their plan was to have a "Giving Well" built by a member who was a carpenter, and place it in the entrance to the fellowship center where people could put their donations. They would also have a poster of a water well with a thermometer as a visual showing their progress and how much money was collected. The goal initially was to raise \$1500 for one well in Africa—and perhaps even get to 3-5 wells over the 3-year period to which they had committed! They decided that every time \$1500 was collected for the cost of one well, they would send in a check to Water4.

And so, it began! The project was introduced to the wider membership of the church at a Potluck Supper with Water4 placemats and information sheets at each table. A video about the work in Africa was provided by Water4 and shown at the supper. The Circle also arranged for a "Minute for Water4" every 3rd Sunday in the worship service complete with bulletin inserts. Tee shirts and water bottles from Water4 were sold to Church members and to the community. In addition, they invited other community organizations that used the church building to give to Water4 through the "Giving Well".

The decision was made with Water4 that the money would go to Zambia. Water4 sent a pump to display and pictures of the drillers. Bev noticed they wore hats that said 'Samfya Drillers', so the committee ordered hats like theirs and wore them to church. During the Christmas season each year opportunity was given for members to give a gift to Water4 in honor of a loved one. Water4 sent key chains and thank you notes to go with these gifts. And slowly but surely the money came in—from parishioners and friends and others in the community. Our Giving Well was busy! A first check for \$1500 was sent in March 2013, and that was collected in less than a month!! The women on the committee were excited!

The committee thought it might make enough money over the 3-year period for 3-5 wells, but the campaign took off beyond expectations! People loved the idea of Water4 because it provides the product and teaches local fellows to install them. The Water4 model is also to educate the villagers on how to use the pump and the new well, and perhaps start co-ops to pay for any upkeep. It is more than clean water. It is a new way of life for villages.

The energy and enthusiasm continued! And in the Spring of 2015 it was decided to have a summer concert to benefit Water4, bringing in a popular trio to do the singing. Water4 was asked to send a representative (Jim) to come in late August and spend the weekend with the Church. The concert was a success. Jim spoke to the crowd of 175 people and it was a wonderful evening. Jim also spent time with the committee, working to keep the energy going after the concert. He suggested that the Church change where their money was to go as a sizable grant was given to Zambia to meet its needs, and the money was really needed in the DRC where Justin Wren was ministering. The committee agreed. Jim then preached in church and the weekend was so successful.

The 3-year commitment to Water4 came to an end in January 2017 with a closing concert presented by our choir, and a weekend visit from other representatives of Water4, Jerry and Sharyn Regier. Jerry told stories about Water4 and the people it affects, and the choir (complete with everyone wearing Water4 tee shirts!) gave a wonderful concert with every song around the theme of water. An evening dinner was held with the committee and the Water4 representative, and Jerry preached on Sunday morning. It was a great celebration weekend.

What is the bottom line? All together "the little church that could" donated \$23,000 to Water 4 in three years to provide just over 15 wells. The members of the Church in Delaware are proud of what was accomplished. They worked hard. They gave 3 wells (at that time \$1500 equaled one well) in 2014, 8 wells in 2015, and 4+ wells in 2016. If they had not had the forethought to think about what was needed for a longer campaign, they believe they probably would have given Water4 \$3000 and had no ongoing relationship. But they did have a relationship with Water4, mostly because they cared so much about helping people get clean water. Everyone

got involved. A granddaughter of one of the women did her 5th grade project on Water4 and sent a check for \$250 that she collected by giving a handmade bookmark with each donation. Grandparents gave a gift to Water4 to honor their grandchildren, and children honored their parents with a donation.

The committee experienced some burnout in the last year, but they still look back on this with pride and love for accomplishing so much through their small church. All are very grateful for the opportunity to serve the people in Zambia and the DRC through Water4.

(as told by Beverly Bailey, church facilitator of the Water4 Project)

