

THE SENTRY MAPLE

‘the Vessel’

East Meeting House, German Baptist Brethren Congregation

Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship

A single tree sprouted from a small seed to become a sentry post, an observer of the comings and goings of two Christian communities. Week after week, month after month and year after year, for over 80 years, it looked on as folk gathered to nurture faith and give witness to their love for the Creator and for each other. The tree standing immediately east of the main meetinghouse withstood many storms of life as it grew stronger by flexing its branches and core while deepening its roots. This maturing is not unlike the folk gathering in this place have done by encouraging each other in their own journeys throughout their lives.

Its branches had spread wide and tall providing strength to its core and shade to cool the morning sun as folk gathered for worship and fellowship. Its roots grew deep and broad as it gathered nutrients from the soil that fed its never-ending appetite.

Reaching maturity, it was determined that the tree had completed its best service and was now at risk of fracture that may cause unintended harm to the space and people that had been beneficiary of its best gifts. However, there was strong sentiment that this particular tree should be honored in some way, especially for those who gather in this place, and remember the gifts that were so freely shared over its life.

An artisan was invited to see what could be found within the tree to provide a lasting memory and bring honor to its unique gifts. A small portion was selected, and an amazing combination of color and grain came into view. The vessel that has now found form puts on display the work of the Creator who had been at work over the many years of the life of this special tree. As the vessel finds its way into the life of the congregation now gathering at 2509 Berkey Ave, Goshen, IN, may it be a constant reminder of the presence of God, the Great Spirit, that gives life to all things and beauty even though not always readily seen. May it remind us of the value of staying grounded in the Creator’s love and care, and to be generous in sharing the gifts that we have been given for the good of others who come within our sphere of influence.