

# Faith Connection

April 2007

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church  
2720 E. 22<sup>nd</sup> St. Minneapolis, MN 55406  
Ph: (612) 375-9483  
e-mail: [faithmc@faithmennonite.org](mailto:faithmc@faithmennonite.org)  
web: [www.faimennonite.org](http://www.faimennonite.org)

*Faith Mennonite Church is a Christ-centered community which seeks to be a place of welcome and nurture for all. Our lives are guided by the life of Jesus and the historic peace position of the Mennonite Church. Our members are people from varied religious backgrounds, and diverse cultures, gay and straight, young and old. We invite you to join us in being a sign of God's healing and hope in our community and world.*

## Pastoral Musings...

A few weeks ago the congregation sent Patricia, Jenny and I off to New Orleans with these words, "We accept your service as an extension of our congregation. Consider your assignment as God at work in you, ministering to human need. May you be given a deep love for those among whom you will live" (#796 HWB). The truth about service is that we always get more out of it than we put into it. It deepens our personal spiritual lives. It deepens our relationships with those we serve. It expands our perspectives and our appreciation of a new geography and people.

My personal spiritual life was deepened. Confronted with the Katrina tragedy face to face, I couldn't help grieving the event. Being there put me in touch with the reality in a way that reading newspapers cannot. I don't know about "God at work in me" but I definitely saw God at work in the courage of the Iglesia Amor Viviente members who are rebuilding their wrecked houses, especially the 80 year-olds. What a symbol of tenacity and faith.

I feel a stronger bond with Patricia and Jenny through this experience. It was uncomfortable sleeping on the church floor the first few nights in an unheated church building. But as in a Boundary Waters trip, the adventure outweighs the discomfort. And like a Boundary Waters trip, we quickly bonded through relying on each other. We found our way around the city on public transportation or with the help of rides when we got lost. We had fun cooking together and scavenging Mardi Gras beads. I really appreciated our conversations about family while we painted. I have a new and deeper appreciation for these women of faith and action.

I have a new appreciation for the geography, the culture and the people who live "down river" from us. At first I was irritated by the relaxed pace of life. I wanted to get work done like an anal German. Our Honduran hosts

took time to visit, drink coffee and talk. They enjoy life and the moment, and will be working at rebuilding for a long time, so why get in a hurry? I found myself enjoying the project more when I took up their pace. I also found myself relaxing and enjoying the larger cultural events, the Mardi Gras parades.

"Such whimsical role-playing has a special poignancy in post-Katrina Louisiana, as many residents still struggling to recover from America's worst natural disaster savor the prospect of becoming, if only for a day, a character with fewer problems and brighter prospects. Carnival can promote healing – not only for the spirits of Louisiana's walking wounded, but for the social fabric at large. In shucking our old selves to try on some new Mardi Gras identity, we imagine, for a few, brief hours, what it's like to be someone else – a reminder that empathy always begins as an act of imagination." – *The Baton Rouge Advocate*

Mennonite Disaster Service has recently re-opened their work center and volunteer dormitory in New Orleans. They have many other worksites throughout the Gulf Coast as well and are planning for a 10 year recovery project. I would encourage other Faithers to consider a service week with MDS. It is the best thing about being a Mennonite. Melissa Falb, Melissa Hochstetler, Atlee Geiser Schrock, and Jenny Wandersee from our congregation have all participated in recovery projects and testify that it is a powerful experience. There is travel assistance available through the Mission and Service Committee.

--Patty Friesen

"Jesus cannot forget us; we have been graven on the palms of his hands."

--Lois Picillo

## ***What's happening at FMC...***

### **Holy Week Schedule**

#### **Monday, April 2**

7 pm Church Council meeting at FMC

#### **Maundy Thursday, April 5**

6:30pm Meal and service of communion and foot washing in the Fellowship Hall. Sign up this Sunday to bring soup, bread, or fruit

#### **Good Friday, April 6**

Noon Community Good Friday Service at St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, 2836 33rd Ave S., Minneapolis.

#### **Easter Sunday, April 8**

No Sunday School

9 am Easter breakfast in the Fellowship Hall. Bring egg dishes, rolls, or fruit to share.

10:45am Worship Celebration of the Resurrection

### **Footwashing**

After my personal experience of Christ at a charismatic camp, I decided to get baptized. I wanted to give a public testimony to my newly found love in Jesus. My sister and some of my church girlfriends and two guys met for thirteen weeks of a dull Saturday morning catechism class about Mennonite history and theology and were baptized together on a Sunday morning. We stood in a row and said our vows that we believed in Jesus and wanted to be received into the church as members. We knelt with a towel around our shoulders while water was slowly poured out of a pitcher onto our heads.

Later in the evening service, we shared in communion for the first time. The bread was silently and reverently passed down our pew and we held it until all had some and then we partook together. Then small cups of grape juice were passed and we did the same thing. After that, the men went to the fellowship hall to wash each other's feet and the women stayed in the sanctuary where we wriggled out of panty hose and waited for someone to invite us to wash. Neta Shantz, the church matriarch asked me to "wash feet" with her. I sat on the front pew

in front of the basin while she knelt down on the other side of the basin, her knees cracking as she went down. The water was warm and her rough hands tenderly washed my feet. With cracking knees, she rose again and gave me a hug.

This was the other half of my adolescent religious experience. After the canvas tents came down and the painted school buses loaded and the good-looking revivalists left me and returned home across the Dunvegan Bridge, I was left to the awkward, shy, plain, faithful people in my church, with their quiet and odd ways. Like a faithful, if dull marriage partner, they were around all year. They were there not just in the hot summers, but through the long, dark, bitterly cold winters as well. They fed me at potlucks, told me their same old stories, washed my feet and embraced me.

On Maundy Thursday, we at Faith will have a soup supper, take communion, sing hymns and have the opportunity to wash each other's feet. It may be new and uncomfortable for a number of folks. In our tradition, it is a powerful symbol of humility. It takes humility to receive it as well as give it. We will do it together in a big group and go around the circle so no one has to feel out of place. Others will sing hymns during this time. Please join us in the imitation of Christ's example.

*--Patty Friesen*

### **Church Membership Series Begins April 29**

Anyone who has been attending Faith Mennonite Church and who is interested in exploring church membership is invited to participate in a three part Church Membership Series that will be offered during the Christian Education hour in April and May. Faith Mennonite offers both full and associate membership options. People who only intend to be here for a limited amount of time, or who wish to maintain ties to another congregation, may choose associate membership.

The membership series, to be held on April 29, May 6, and May 20, will offer the opportunity for:

- Faith sharing-- what past church and personal faith pilgrimage experiences have shaped us and brought us to this church?

- Learning more about the history of Faith Mennonite and its relationship to the broader Mennonite denomination.
- Discussing the basics of what Mennonites believe, using the Mennonite Confession of Faith.

We will also offer an optional opportunity for a half-day retreat sometime in June when new members can explore various spiritual disciplines and discern how best to offer their gifts and become more involved in the mission of the church. Interested persons may speak with a pastor or simply come to the first meeting on April 29, 9:30 a.m.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

### **Important Trustee Update**

Darrell and Glenn have reviewed our Sunday offerings through the first Sunday in March; January offerings totaled approximately \$7,900 and February offerings were approx. \$5,200 (three Sundays with a snowstorm). The March 4 offering was \$4,500 which was a good catch up Sunday.

The 2007 budget that we approved at our annual congregational meeting in January calls for monthly offerings to total \$10,000 each month; Jerry has updated our giving information and as of the end of March, the church is about 15% behind budgeted giving.

This would not be an issue for us except for one important change that we became aware of after the congregational meeting and the budget approval. We budgeted \$2,000 for gas to heat the building for the year based on previous years' expenditures. Over the past several years we have suspected that our gas meter may not have been recording gas usage accurately because our gas bills have been very modest for such a large pair of buildings (sanctuary & education wing). We think that CenterPoint Energy fixed the gas meter sometime in January and the church is now receiving accurate gas bills each month. January's bill was \$2,200 and February's bill was \$2,150. Now you begin to see the issue we are facing. The trustees estimate that the church's gas bill will exceed our budget amount by \$8,000 – \$9,000 for the year 2007 which puts our treasury in a bind.

The trustees are in conversation with all of our tenants as it is time to renegotiate lease agreements with them. We are proposing fair, across the board rental increases

to help address mounting utility costs. We are also asking church commissioners to minimize expenditures as possible until we come to terms with our increased costs. Finally, we are asking the congregation to increase Sunday offerings as you are able to help meet the increasing costs of maintaining our facility.

Thank you for your support and please talk to us if you have questions or suggestions.

--*Glenn Geissinger and Darrell Martin*

### **Deacons' Report**

The deacons met on January 25 at Beth Richardson's home to thank and say farewell to Erin Geiser, who was completing her term, and to welcome Martha Mayou and Hermann Weinlick to the commission. In that meeting, and the two following meetings (February 22 and March 15), the deacons discussed ways to share in congregational care matters with the pastors. Other topics of discussion have included new models for small groups, plans for a church membership class this spring, and a new format and location for the annual fall church retreat. Plans are being made for a one-day retreat on Saturday, October 20, at Villa Maria Retreat Center near Frontenac (more details will be forthcoming). The deacons spend a portion of each meeting praying for the spiritual care needs of the congregation.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

### **Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting February 12, 2007 @ FMC**

**Present:** Neil Okerlund, Moderator; Joan Kreider, Moderator-elect; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Sandra Westby, Worship; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; John Ratigan, Education; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor.

**Absent:** Patty Friesen, Pastor; Patrick Preheim, Pastor; Missions & Service representative; Trustees representative.

**Minutes.** Minutes of January 8, 2007 Council minutes approved with corrections. Minutes of January 28, 2007 annual congregational meeting provisionally approved for publication in the newsletter, pending full approval by congregation.

**Affirmations and recognitions.** Neil affirms Jerry Janzen, Glenn Geissinger and Darrell Martin for their work as Trustees on the furnace problem in the education wing in the past week. Joetta expresses her

thanks for Carol Harder's work on the nursery transition.

**Treasurer's report.** Giving is on track for the year. The long-malfunctioning gas meter was fixed this month, so the gas bill, which has been incorrect for a long time, will be corrected, resulting in much higher expenses than was budgeted. Church also needs to file its regular report to the county assessor on the building use for our continued tax exemption.

### **Commission Reports**

**Christian Education.** Has not yet met as a commission, but is planning on meeting perhaps twice this year. John Ratigan is the Adult Education Commissioner, and has planned a Bible overview for adult classes this spring and into fall. Class will use a facilitator rather than a teacher, with discussions on brief selected passages.

**Trustees.** ISIAIAH wants more office space in the education wing. Trustees asked them about long term plans and they do want to stay. They would like to use two thirds of the old nursery and we'd use the other third for office and storage. The trustees also want the classroom with the folding doors for classroom space, using the doors to divide. Joetta believes this would still leave us enough space for expected children's Sunday school growth. She asks if that old nursery space is too cold for the tenants? Trustees think they can fix that. The boiler for the education wing is being repaired and they anticipate no big problems. Council agrees to move forward.

**Deacons.** Deacons met two weeks ago to get acquainted, no real decisions. There was some discussion of new 4x4s, but no decisions made yet.

**Missions and Service.** No report, Minke Sundseth was ill, Patrick absent and Gregg was ill for the M&S meeting and wasn't present.

**Worship Commission.** Commission still needs another member, and Sandy and Aryn Baxter will be finished at the end of this year. They are currently planning for Lent. Angela Sprunger will be working with designing space. The organ hasn't been tuned in about eight years. David Mayou recommended the name of a tuner, and Worship recommends getting an estimate for further refurbishing. Council agrees. Brief discussion of how to recruit another commission member.

**Pastors' report.** Patrick is working in his other job tonight. Joetta says pastors are working on what it means to be a team, and how to share coordinating duties. Pastor/Parish Committee is now filled and will be meeting monthly for a time. Pastors are working out the office e-mail confusion.

### **Old business**

**Handbook.** Neil wants Council to start thinking about FMC vision and identity. Handbook revision hasn't begun yet. They will try to get the documentation portion done by the May meeting.

**AMBS church study.** Neil asks Council to re-read this document for the vision/identity discussion next time.

**Housekeeping** Gregg will add Council meeting dates to newsletter, and send out minutes to Council members a week ahead of each meeting.

*--Gregg Richardson, Secretary*

**The next Church Council meeting will be in the FMC chapel, Monday, April 2, at 7pm.**

### ***What's happening here and there...***

#### **An Invitation from the Hmong Mennonite Church**

In 2004 the Mennonite Church started a congregation among members of the Twin Cities Hmong community, with the Rev. Chue Vang as pastor. Faith has supported this work with \$3,000 a year. The congregation has grown slowly to a worshipping group of 40-50, including a large number of older youth, and now is moving toward self-support.

The Hmong congregation invites the other Mennonite congregations of the Twin Cities to join with them to celebrate their progress on Sunday, April 29, with worship at 1:30 and a delicious Hmong meal to follow. The congregation worships in St. Paul on Hamline Avenue, a block north of University Avenue.

*--Hermann Weinlick*

#### **Legislative Day on the Hill**

The annual "Day on the Hill" legislative training and lobby day at the State Capitol will be held Tuesday, March 27, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC) organizes the event each year to better prepare social justice activists to meet with their legislators and effectively lobby. The public is invited to attend and meet other people of faith committed to social justice. The day will begin at 8:30 a.m. at RiverCentre in downtown St. Paul. Participants will hear legislative briefings on ending poverty, affordable housing, tax fairness, health care,

and child care, as well as briefings on other topics. Shuttle rides will take participants from RiverCentre to the Capitol to meet with lawmakers.

All participants are asked to make appointments with their legislators between 12:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. on March 27. To identify your legislators, call the Minnesota House of Representatives at 651-296-2146 and the Minnesota Senate at 651-296-0504. In advance, participants are encouraged to find out more about their state legislators, such as the committees they serve on and the leadership posts they hold. Participants are encouraged to visit lawmaker web sites to learn about their views and anticipate their responses to social justice causes. Good places to start are the House and Senate web sites at:  
www.house.leg.state.mn.us  
www.senate.leg.state.mn.us.

The “Day on the Hill” fee is after \$35 March 19. Registration is available online at [www.jrlc.org](http://www.jrlc.org), or call 612-870-3670 for a registration form. The Joint Religious Legislative Coalition began in 1971 as a nonpartisan, interfaith public policy group and has a reputation for helping to shape policy in Minnesota. For several years, the “Day on the Hill” has brought together about 950 faithful citizens to work for social justice in Minnesota. This year organizers hope to see the power of a thousand voices for social justice. Participants are encouraged to bring a friend.

### ***In review...***

### **Patty's Picks**

Moving from the memoirs of white middle-aged women, I'd like to recommend these gems from Africa.

*A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, by Ishmael Beah is a difficult but important read. It is quite graphic and may not be for all readers. I wouldn't know a thing about the civil war in Sierra Leone if it were not for Rebecca Johnson. *A Long Way Gone* has deepened my understanding and empathy for the national chaos and violence that ravages most of Africa at this time.

*Unbowed*, by Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, is a beautiful account of a love of land (Kenya) and keen awareness of the connection of our upbringing and our social action. “I have long suspected that the voice to lead us forward would come out of Africa, and

it has – a voice of humor, sense, strength, and compassion.” (Alexandra Fuller)

*There is No Me Without You*, by Melissa Fay Greene is a biography of the courageous Haregewoin Teferra of Addis Ababa who saves orphans of AIDS, one child at a time. I have only started it and am hooked. It is a beautiful description of the land and people who are some of the most courageous people I know.

--Patty Friesen

### **Easter Hymn**

If in that Syrian garden, ages slain,  
You sleep, and know not you are dead in vain,  
Nor even in dreams behold how dark and bright  
Ascends in smoke and fire by day and night  
The hate you died to quench and could but fan,  
Sleep well and see no morning, son of man.

But if, the grave rent and the stone rolled by,  
At the right hand of majesty on high  
You sit, and sitting so remember yet  
Your tears, your agony and bloody sweat,  
Your cross and passion and the life you gave,  
Bow hither out of heaven and see and save.

--A. E. Housman

**Deadline for May newsletter items is noon, April 26<sup>th</sup>.**

*Faith Mennonite Church publishes our official monthly newsletter Faith Connection. The purpose of this publication is to enhance communication about the various types of the ministry of our congregation among the members and also with the community. Due to the space limitation, the editor may edit, modify, and change the submitted documents.*