

# Faith Connection

April 2009

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church  
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*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...

Each time I read the Easter stories in the Gospels, I'm struck by the emotional rollercoaster ride the disciples were on. First there is the grief and despair of Jesus' death. Then there is the women's numb walk to the tomb as they pondered the insurmountable question: how will we roll the stone away? Then there is the incredible sight of an empty tomb and messenger(s) who say that Jesus is risen. And finally there are the encounters with the resurrected Christ. Each of the four Gospels tells the story a bit differently, describing emotions that range from fear, doubt, and trembling to wonder, amazement, and belief.

The gospels were all written a generation or two after Jesus' death, with time for Jesus' followers to look back and interpret the events they had experienced. I wonder how historians will write about our current time in 30 to 60 years from now. Some writers are bravely trying to interpret events within the Christian church as they are right now unfolding. Some see death; others see an emergence of new life.

If you read *The Mennonite* (copies are available on the periodical rack at the back of the sanctuary) with any regularity, you will hear fairly frequent voices of fear that the Mennonite Church in the United States is shrinking and that its membership is growing older. I found a much more optimistic outlook when I recently read *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* by Phyllis Tickle. She boldly suggests that we are living in the midst of a 500-year cycle of "Christian rummage sales," when the church sheds things it no longer needs—namely institutional practices and bases of authority that no longer fit our contemporary setting. Some things die, giving life to new, lively forms of faith and practice. The church that is on the horizon (and right next door!) is being called the "emergent church." Some forms of it are referred to as the "new monasticism" because of the commitment

of people to live in shared community and to live out their faith in service to a particular neighborhood and to the poor.

One never sells everything one owns in a rummage sale, and vestiges of earlier forms of the church have continued through every 500-year change cycle. Protestantism did not end Roman Catholicism in the 1500s; both have grown and adapted over the years. As some Mennonite leaders fear for our shrinking denomination, I find encouragement in the fact that emergent churches such as Missio Dei and a new church that is forming in St. Paul's Midway neighborhood find their theological moorings in Anabaptism and are looking to the Mennonite Church for resources on living Christ's gospel of peace.

I believe we have a wonderful opportunity to journey together. While our emergent church neighbors may be pushing away the stone of institutional rigidity and cultural conformity, participants of Faith Mennonite Church are disciples with a long spiritual tradition, plus material resources such as our building, to share with the emergents. We need each other and I believe we will grow through collaboration and interaction.

The first Easter was as bewildering as it was exciting. Our current situation is no different. Now as then Jesus' words remain: "I go before you ... my Spirit of truth will guide you and give you peace."

--Joetta Schlabach

"The world is made up of two kinds of people, the good and the bad, and it's always the good who take it upon themselves to decide which are which"

-- John Howard Yoder

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

### **Holy Week 2009**

**April 5 ~ Palm/Passion Sunday**  
**Women's Ensemble sings**

**April 9 ~ Maundy Thursday**  
**6 p.m. – Shared Meal & Communion**  
*Childcare provided.*

**April 10 ~ Good Friday**  
**Noon – Longfellow/Seward Community**  
**Good Friday Service**  
**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2730 E 31<sup>st</sup>**  
**St., MPLS**

**April 12 ~ Easter**  
**“Rolling the Stone Away”**  
**8:30 – Breakfast**  
**Bring an egg dish, rolls/muffins, or fruit.**  
**9:45 – Celebration Worship**  
*There will be no Christian Education classes*

### **Women's Retreat, May 8-9**

Living simply and sustainably, with regard to what we eat and purchase, how we get around and how we order our lives, have long been commitments of Mennonites and our congregation. But we all know that living simply just ain't simple! It often involves complicated choices and sometimes requires extra time.

In 1976 *Living More-with-Less*, the sequel to the best-selling *More-with-Less Cookbook*, introduced five “life standards” to help us navigate some of the difficult decisions. Some 30 years later, we'll take a new look at these standards and consider how they can guide us toward joyful, sustainable living in an increasingly complex and fragile world.

As always, there will be plenty of time for laughter and conversation, opportunities for body work and movement, times for silence and reflection, singing and worship, and (if the weather cooperates) outdoor walks, including a labyrinth prayer walk. Special guest Franciscan Sister Joanne Klinnert of Sabbath House in South Minneapolis will lead us in thinking about the role of Sabbath in creating a life of simplicity.

We will meet at Carondelet Center (1890 Randolph Avenue), beginning at 7 p.m. on Friday night and ending at 5 p.m. on Saturday. Women may choose the overnight option or just come on Saturday. Brochures have been placed in mailboxes and a pre-retreat reading assignment will be given to all who register.

Registrations are due on April 12 and payment can be made through the Sunday morning offering (memo: Women's Retreat) before or after the retreat. As with all FMC retreats, we ask each person to pay according to ability. If anyone who is not able to attend the retreat has a copy of *Living More-with-Less* that they are willing to share, please notify one of the retreat planners. Questions can be directed to the planning committee: Erin Geiser, Rhonda Martin, Leslie Minkler and Joetta Schlabach.

### **Pan-African Meal And Entertainment To Support The Pan-African Community Organization**

In FMC's discernment this past fall about community relationships we were called to expand, connections with East African neighbors in Seward came out as a clear priority. In following up in that area, FMC is developing an ongoing partnership with the Pan-African Community Organization (PACO), which is based in Seward. We are working with PACO to help them establish a new Learning Center in the neighborhood, which will provide ESL for adults and a range of other services for African immigrants.

We would like to encourage everyone at FMC to get to know people and programs at PACO at this fundraising meal, hosted by FMC on Saturday April 25th, 4:00–7:00 pm at FMC. The schedule will be:

4:00 – 5:00 pm	African Cultural Show by Titambe West African Dance Ensemble.
5:00 – 5:30 pm	Presentation and Stories from the Pan-African Community Organization
5:30 – 7:00 pm	Pan-African Meal, with dishes from several African cultures

Suggested donation for the event: \$10 - \$30 per person. Pay as you are able. Contact Michael Bischoff (612-521-1889) with questions.

-- *Michael Bischoff*

## Faith and Community

I am slowly getting to know about the amazing service and ministry work that Faith Mennonite members do through other organizations. At a church service in March, Pat Eliason read a long list of service work that members of the congregation were involved with. I was moved by the depth and range of this list—from international work with Mennonite Central Committee to tutoring in Minneapolis, and much more. I also know that many people at Faith are involved in paid work that carries out values that are core to this community.

Outside of my work at Faith, I'm doing some studying and writing about how spirituality and organizational life can be integrated. I'm interested in how we can each bring our deepest values to secular organizations that we are involved with. I'm posting some writing and videos about the topic on this blog:  
[spiritofinstitutions.blogspot.com](http://spiritofinstitutions.blogspot.com).

From this perspective, I see Faith Mennonite as a place where people can practice and deepen a distinctive kind of leadership, which can be carried by each of us into all the other organizations and communities we are a part of—workplaces, neighborhoods, volunteer organizations, schools, etc. I see this leadership that is cultivated at Faith as a shared leadership, based in listening, collaboration, peacemaking, and discernment.

I know that many of us are at full capacity in the work we are currently doing—both paid and unpaid work. I'm interested in how we can support each other as “do ministry” in our workplaces and in our daily lives. At the Council & Commission Members Retreat in March, Neil Okerlund led a short training on meeting facilitation. I see this as a good example of one way we can support each other in carrying out the values of Faith into other organizations. I think there are many other ways—through discussion, prayer, etc. I'm interested in listening to church members to hear about how you draw on your faith and values in other organizations. I'd be happy to stop by your workplace if you want to chat about it there. Please contact me at 612-521-1889 or [michael@clarityfacilitation.com](mailto:michael@clarityfacilitation.com) if you'd like to set up a time to talk.

Given how busy many of us are with other work, I recognize that we all have limits in the amount of time we can commit to new community projects at Faith Mennonite, so I want to be selective about times that we request large numbers of the congregation to join a community activity. The Pan-African meal to support the Pan-African Community Organization (PACO) is

one of those times that I hope we can bring together a large number of church members. The meal will be on the evening of April 25th, and I think of this meal as a way for Faith Mennonite as a whole to deepen our relationship with PACO. We are supporting PACO as they start an adult learning center in this neighborhood, to provide English classes and cultural integration support for Africans who have recently arrived in Minneapolis. There are details about the event in the announcement section of this newsletter. Please plan to join us for the evening.

--*Michael Bischoff*

## What's Happening In Missions and Service

The Missions and Services Commission met on March 3, 2009. We discussed upcoming events including the March 15 forum on Affordable/Supportive Housing; the March 29 Immigration and Food Justice Forum; and the April 25 fund-raising event for the Pan African Community Organization (PACO) learning center. We discussed the adult education series in May that Missions and Service will coordinate. Our plan is to feature organizations that Faith/M&S supports financially. The Twin Cities Pride Parade is coming June 28 and we discussed plans for FMC to march; Katie Hochstedler will coordinate this. CROP walk is also approaching in October, Melissa Hochstedler will be coordinating FMC's participation this year.

We discussed our connections in the community including the Seward Peace Garden and possibly increasing our participation there. Also the idea came up to host a meal to invite the local community to share a meal and learn about our church/Mennonites. This idea came from hearing about a mosque that hosted a community meal in Minneapolis.

After evaluating the Simply in Season project from last summer, we are planning to carry on with the strawberry picking event this summer. We will begin by looking for one or two people from the church to coordinate the event.

The Commission will contribute to the MDS trip to New Orleans by reimbursing the group for gas. We also discussed having a Car Sabbath where those attending FMC would come to church by foot, bike or bus one Sunday (or maybe multiple Sundays) or choose to attend a church for that one Sunday that they can walk, bike or bus to. The next Missions and Services meeting is planned for April 6, 9:00 am.

--*Katie Hochstedler*

## What's Happening In the Deacons

The Deacons' Commission met on March 18, 2009. We began with updates on a variety of upcoming events and activities going on at FMC. The theme for this year's women's retreat is "Simple Living." A brochure will be available this Sunday. The "Soup & Silence" gathering continues each week throughout Lent and is fulfilling its purpose. There will be a VBS planning meeting on March 26th. There seems to be good support among FMC parents to offer VBS and help make it a reality—if not this summer already, then the following year. We are still working on developing an internal FMC "Craigslist." On Sunday, March 29th, there will be a greeter and usher breakfast to review together our Sunday morning roles.

We dialogued about the "Ways People are Alone in Church." Joetta shared a bit of her talk given at the Council & Commissions Retreat, based on Phyllis Tickle's book on the emergent church. She noted how society's basic family unit has changed. This reconfiguration has changed how and where religious instruction and spiritual formation happens. It was eye-opening to realize that nearly half of FMC attendees come to church without a partner. We will continue to explore what that means for us as a congregation.

We spent time discussing the Quaker Clearness Committee approach to discernment and plan to further explore whether this might be an effective model to adopt/adapt at FMC. We concluded the meeting with a time of prayer for personal needs within the church.

--*Kami Blackwell Kinney*

## Meet Your Fellow FMCers

At first glance, it appears to be the setting of a spy novel: an American translator, toiling away on Soviet ships in the icy waters off of Alaska. But for Jenny Wandersee, it was just another episode in the life of the unassuming flute player who calls FMC her spiritual home.

Jenny did not grow up Mennonite. Originally from Springfield, in Southwestern Minnesota, Jenny's home church is now a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. In fact, Jenny knew little about the Mennonites aside from the fact that they were a peace church. But after moving to Minneapolis to attend Augsburg College and living in the Seward neighborhood, she came to find our little corner of the Mennonite world exactly what she was looking for.

At Augsburg, Jenny majored in Russia Area Studies, which led her to her first job as a translator for a small company that translated and published Pravda in English. In the late 1980's, she found herself at sea, working as a liaison and translator for a Soviet-American fishing company. She spent time on the Soviet ships working with American fishing vessels. She stayed on the West Coast for about five years, but further south in Seattle, where she worked as an "office person" for both psychologists and psychiatrists. Jenny moved back to Minneapolis and continued in various administrative roles until she found her current job as a technical writer for Fairview Health.

Jenny had several early encounters that would eventually lead her to FMC. Both she and Karen Wiebe had temporary jobs at Dayton's in 1984, and she knew Dick and Sandy Westby through the Seward Concert Band, where Jenny still plays both flute and piccolo. In addition to spending her free time as musician, she greatly enjoys movies and visiting her family in Springfield.

Although she initially visited FMC in 1994, Jenny started regularly attending in 2001-2002. She really appreciates the close-knit community and informal worship style. Jenny also likes how progressive the congregation is and that congregants "really live by their values." At FMC, Jenny contributes to our worship experience by sitting on the Worship Commission where one of her many roles is scheduling the song leaders and accompanists week in and week out. It has now been nearly a decade since Jenny made FMC her faith home, and when asked if there is anything she misses about her Lutheran upbringing, she has one simple answer: "Perhaps the sung liturgy."

--*Adam Nafziger*

## Musicians Workshop

On Saturday, March 22, 14 Faith Mennonite musicians participated in a workshop led by Jane Ramseyer Miller, Artistic Director of One Voice Mixed Chorus and member of St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship. The three-hour workshop was envisioned and commissioned by the Faith Worship Commission. "Our musicians are gifted but are not trained as directors," said Pastor Joetta Schlabach. "Our goal was to provide professional development for our musicians so that together we could talk about our role as music leaders."

During introductory remarks Jane, who grew up in the Mennonite tradition of singing 4-part hymns, paid

tribute to her mentor Mary Oyer, professor of music at Goshen College for 40 years and a contributing editor of our Mennonite Hymnal.

Jane gave an overview of resources and practical ideas for selecting hymns and leading singing. She advised church musicians to purchase their own hymnals and to write notes in them. She stressed the importance of studying each hymn, deciding how to present it and how we want the congregation to sing it. The majority of hymns in the Mennonite Hymnal Worship Book are written for 4-part singing and are therefore pitched higher than in hymnals of other denominations. Jane suggested that if many of our congregation are not accustomed to singing in parts, we could teach hymn singing, possibly in brief sessions before the morning worship service.

Participants joined together as a “congregation” to sing under the direction of our seven song leaders. Each leader was given time to prepare a hymn with input from accompanists-- taking into consideration whether the hymn should be sung a capella or accompanied, where it should be placed in the service, whether she would make any recommendations for language changes. As each song leader directed, Jane critiqued, offering helpful suggestions.

“It was a very valuable session,” song leader Donna Stucky said. “I’ll be more conscious of listening to the congregation; when and how do they need me to lead?”

“The workshop was a real shot in the arm,” commented Chris Semanchin Jones, “to get a fresh perspective and to re-emphasize our talent. Jane was both encouraging and assertive. It was like an invitation to better myself musically.”

The group ended the morning by singing #118, “Praise God from all blessings flow.” While packing up to leave, several members asked, “When can we do this again?”

--Sandra Westby

## Comings & Goings

We welcome those who have recently visited or begun attending worship. If you haven’t yet met these folks, please say hello and look for an opportunity to get acquainted.

*Rich Deming  
Edie Dorsey  
Steve Mandell  
Charlie Thompson*

## Your Picture Needed

A pictorial directory and display of FMC members and friends is going to be set up in the church foyer, and your help is needed. Please e-mail a photograph of you or your family to [minkesundseth@gmail.com](mailto:minkesundseth@gmail.com) by April 17, 2009. Minke will have the photos printed for the display. Dan Leisen will capture a photograph of everyone who has been missed, but the more people who could e-mail their own photographs, the better. Any setting, formal or casual, is fine.

--Minke Sundseth

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

### April Adult Education Events at the Community of St Martin

Adult Education is usually held in the upstairs chapel in the Sunday School wing. Location may vary, so watch for signs! We meet from 5:30 - 6:25 pm on Sunday evenings and we'd love to have you join us!

Sunday, April 19: Community members Nils Dybvig and Michele Braley will share their stories from their work with the Christian Peace Maker Teams. Nils and Michele lived and worked with CPT for 18 months in Columbia, returning to the Twin Cities last fall.

Sunday, April 26: Nate Kerr, Lutheran Volunteer Corps member and Community Organizer with the Midtown Greenway Coalition will be our guest speaker. He'll be presenting information about the Greenway, as well as sharing stories of being a year-round bike commuter.

--Carol Witte, Community of St Martin

### Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership

Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership builds community by bringing youth offenders, victims, community members and trained facilitators together in a conference to repair the harm done by the youth offender and promote healing, accountability and reconciliation. We need people who have a stake in Seward or Longfellow neighborhoods to volunteer at the conferences as a community member or a trained facilitator. Our next facilitator training will be April 24-26. Please contact Michele Braley at 612-338-6205, ext 108 or [michele@sng.org](mailto:michele@sng.org) for more information about the program and how you can become involved.

## Gender Identities & Our Faith Communities Workshop

On Saturday, April 25 from 9am to noon, the Human Rights Campaign presents a moving workshop on Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities. Join transgender educator, Rev. Erin Swenson, in the journey from acceptance to advocacy on issues of gender identity and LGBT equality from a faith perspective. Bible study, stories on gender identity, and advocacy curriculum are provided. For more information or to register for this FREE workshop hosted by Edina Community Lutheran Church at 4113. W. 54th St. in Edina, contact Lauren Wendt at [Lwendt@ecl.org](mailto:Lwendt@ecl.org) or 952-926-3808.

## Connecting Families Weekend

It's not too late to register for the Connecting Families Weekend! This is a time of support, relaxation, worship and sharing for (mostly) Mennonite and Brethren families with LGBT members, allies, and LGBT people. The event will be held at the beautiful setting of the Pearlstone Conference and Retreat Center, in Reisterstown, Maryland, a welcoming facility ([www.pearlstonecenter.org](http://www.pearlstonecenter.org)) and will include meals and lodging.

Connecting Families is very pleased to announce that Steve Clapp, president of Christian Community, Inc. in Fort Wayne, Indiana, will be the guest resource person. Steve is the author or coauthor of over thirty books on congregational life. He is currently directing a project on LGBT rights and the church which has resulted in the publications, "Silent and Undecided Friends: Motivating Greater LGBT Rights Advocacy Among Clergy and Congregations" and "Taking a New Look: Why Congregations need LGBT Members." Steve will lead a conversation on "How to Effectively Confront/Respond to Homophobia."

To learn more about this event or to download a brochure and registration materials, go to the BMC website at [www.bmclgbt.org](http://www.bmclgbt.org) and click on Connecting Families Weekend.

Connecting Families is a wonderful and welcoming group, and many have found this weekend to be an incredible source of support, healing and joy. All are welcome. If you have any questions about the weekend, please feel free to call Rose or Bob Moyer at 215-256-0247.

### Bi-Focal

Sometimes up out of this land  
a legend begins to move.  
Is it a coming near  
of something under love?

Love is of the earth only,  
the surface, a map of roads  
leading wherever go miles  
or little bushes nod.

Not so the legend under,  
fixed, inexorable,  
deep as the darkest mine  
the thick rocks won't tell.

As fire burns the leaf  
and out of the green appears  
the vein in the center line  
and the legend veins under there,

So, the world happens twice—  
once what we see it as;  
second it legends itself  
deep, the way it is.

--*William Stafford*

**Deadline for May newsletter items is noon, Thursday, April 30<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.