

Faith Connection

April 2010

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church
2720 E. 22nd St. Minneapolis, MN 55406
Ph: (612) 375-9483
e-mail: faithmc@faithmennonite.org
web: www.faithmennonite.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...

The liturgical season of Lent offers us six weeks to prepare for Holy Week and the celebration of Easter. This year we focused on the theme of "holding on, letting go" during this time. Easter, too, is an entire season, not a single day as we often think. We will celebrate seven weeks of Eastertide before the observance of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Just as we needed temporal space to let go of things that obstructed our relationship with God (the work of Lent), so we also need time to grow into the new reality of the resurrection (the work of Easter).

In fact, taking on a new way of life can be daunting. The reaction of Jesus' disciples—men and women—to news of an empty tomb ranged from excitement (Matthew 28) to fear and silence (Mark 16) to considering the news an "idle tale" (Luke 24) to assuming that Jesus' missing body had been stolen (John 20). Like the disciples, we need the Easter season to live into the newness of life that we celebrate on Easter Sunday. We need time to develop new habits that we desire to hold on to.

The coming of spring in the upper Midwest is a fine example of how new life emerges: it is a fitful process. The temperature can fluctuate 30 degrees within a 24-hour period. Snow can fall on daffodils in bloom. One doesn't put away winter clothes after a 90-degree day in April (as I did one year) without the possibility of shivering through a cooler-than-normal May. The flush of a celebrative Easter Day can quickly fade if we don't daily continue to remind ourselves that "Jesus is risen!"

The theme for our coming Eastertide worship will be "New heavens and a new earth." This image is drawn from an Old Testament text, Isaiah 65, which envisioned resurrection long before the time of Jesus. Each successive week of Easter will lead us to consider areas for new growth as individuals and as a faith community. We will claim a new voice, a new peace, a

new way of seeing, new compassion, a new commandment, a new call to follow, new boldness, and finally, on Pentecost, a new community.

I look forward to getting into my home garden very soon to begin turning the soil and planting seeds. I look forward to hearing stories of new life and growth within our church in the coming weeks of Easter. "Jesus is risen!"

--Joetta Schlabach

"To be interested in the changing seasons is a happier state of mind than to be hopelessly in love with spring."

--George Santayana

What's happening at FMC...

Outreach Ministry Update

Greetings, friends. This past month has been a busy one! I've had the opportunity to meet a number of you over coffee or at the office to talk about the congregation and your dreams for it. Donna Minter and I have been working to raise money for scholarships and arrange opportunities for her to give presentations about STAR and the training scheduled for June. The Christian Education team has made headway on planning for Vacation Bible School, June 14-18.

I've also begun identifying people within FMC, the Community of St. Martin, and Laughing Waters Quaker meeting who are interested in exploring the possibility of becoming congregational hosts for a refugee family. Our hope is that by working together, several congregations can effectively share the responsibilities of providing support for refugees during their first four months in the Twin Cities.

Kristin Zoellner, from the Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services program, is working with me to schedule an information session. There is no commitment required to attend the information session. If you think you might be interested in helping to host a refugee family, just contact me on my email (minstaff@faithmennonite.org) or leave a message for me at the FMC office.

The information session will probably be held sometime on a Saturday during the latter part of April. I'll post the specifics as soon as the date, time, and location are set.

--Peace, Kathleen

Faith Mennonite Church Hosts Worship Arts Tour

Fourteen members of Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC) congregations gathered in the Twin Cities on March 12-13 for the first-ever "Worship Arts Tour." The event, hosted by FMC, was sponsored by the CPMC Congregational Ministries Committee. The tour was co-led by Joetta Schlabach and Martha Yoder, assistant pastor of West Union Mennonite in Parnell, Iowa. Other members of the local planning committee were Clea Roth Gingerich, Michael Okerstrom, and Sandra Westby.

The purpose of the tour was to expose participants to ways that churches use the visual arts to enhance the worship experience of those who enter their sanctuaries. Six different churches in Minneapolis and St. Paul opened their doors to the tour group: St. Mary's Basilica, St. Francis Cabrini Church, Peace Lutheran Church, Faith Mennonite, Bethany Lutheran Church, and Emmanuel Mennonite. These churches provided a wide variety of architectural styles, stained glass windows, worship banners, and other Lenten symbols. Several of the guides from the local congregations shared stories of how the renewal and use of visual arts in their congregations has contributed to their community outreach. For instance, Peace Lutheran Church in Lauderdale hosts art exhibits and they have involve their members in creating silk screens, stained glass, and in a neighborhood home repair program.

Tour participants came from Bethel Mennonite in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, Hutterthal Mennonite in Freeman, South Dakota, First Mennonite in Iowa City, Iowa, Bellwood Mennonite in Milford, Nebraska. Dick Westby joined others from the FMC planning group as a participant. Each participants brought ideas and photos

from their home congregations to share with the group. Martha Yoder led a discussion of how visual arts can aid in the interpretation of scripture. The tour inspired participants to work within the opportunities and limitations of their home churches and to consider new ways of enhancing the worship experience through use of visual arts.

--Peg Burkey, tour participant

Women, Save the Date! **May 7-8**

Women's retreat, Carondelet Center, St. Paul
Friday 7:00 pm, to Saturday 5:00 pm

Contact Kami Blackwell-Kinney if you'd like to help plan!

Church Council Decision Regarding Deacon Commission

A question was raised at the Annual Meeting in February about the constitutionality of Greg Renstrom's nomination to serve on the Deacon Commission since he is not able to hold formal membership in Faith Mennonite Church, due to guidelines of the United Methodist Church governing retired clergy. He has, however, made public his intention to be an active participant in our faith community. The question was referred to the Church Council and Constitution Committee (Gregg Richardson, Hermann Weinlick, and Kathleen Harder).

After consultation with the Constitution Committee, the Church Council determined in its March 2010 meeting that the Constitution does allow for Commissions to invite non-members to serve with them and assist in their work as long as their participation does not require actions requiring church membership. Greg Renstrom will thus be allowed to serve with the Deacon Commission but he will not serve in roles requiring membership such as the Commission's representative to Church Council or on the Gifts Discernment Committee.

--The Church Council

Holy Week at FMC

The days between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday are deeply significant days in the Christian year. It is during these days that we commemorate the mystery of God's love poured out for humanity as Jesus willingly accepted the way of the Cross, dying as a common criminal between two thieves, and then rising victoriously on the third day. Many Christian communities have services on each day of the triduum, the three days beginning on Maundy Thursday evening and ending on Easter evening.

At FMC we hold a Maundy Thursday meal and service with communion and foot washing (6 p.m.) and an Easter celebration including a breakfast (8:30 a.m.) and worship. We invite individuals and families to consider attending other churches that offer services on Friday and Saturday. Following are several options to consider:

Good Friday

7:00 p.m. Service at Bethany Lutheran Church, 2511 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, in the Seward Neighborhood.

7:00 p.m. Walking With Jesus, Stations of the Cross Labyrinth Walk, adapted from Henri Nouwen's Walk With Jesus, Lyndale United Church of Christ, 2822 Lyndale Ave. South, Minneapolis.

Holy Saturday

7:00 p.m. Easter Vigil, Basilica of St. Mary, Minneapolis

7:30 p.m. Easter Vigil, St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, St. Paul

-The Lenten Worship Planning Committee (Lauren Brown, Adam Nafziger, Gregg Richardson, Ry Siggelkow)

Comings & Goings

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently visited or begun attending our worship.

Casey Englund

Shawn Helmeke

Christa Hillstrom

Anna, James, Sophia & Nathan Gambucci

In February we said goodbye to *Tom Johnson*, whose company has transferred him to Albuquerque, New Mexico. His new address is:
3434 Crest Avenue SE, Apt #2
Albuquerque, NM 87106

Congratulations

- to Gerald Schlabach, whose book, *Unlearning Protestantism: Sustaining Christian Community in an Unstable Age*, has just been published by Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group.
- to Beth Richardson, who was recently honored as one of the top five RE/MAX realtors in Minnesota

Scrabble Night

Friday April 9th

7:00 pm

Joan Kreider's house

2162 Carroll Avenue, St. Paul

651-645-2660

All are welcome—beginners and experienced alike!
Bring a game (if you have one), and a snack or a beverage to share.

Canadian Choir performs at FMC April 27

The 17-voice chamber choir from the Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, will begin its two-week spring tour with an evening concert at Faith Mennonite Church on Tuesday, April 27, 7 p.m. We will invite other Twin Cities Mennonite Churches to join us in the hosting responsibilities that include serving the choir a simple meal at the church on Tuesday evening before their concert, providing overnight lodging in our homes and sending them on their way with a sack lunch on Wednesday morning. More details will be available soon. Mark your calendar for an evening of fine music and a chance to meet some Mennonite friends from north of the border.

MMA Stewardship University at FMC on May 1

The Twin Cities Mennonite Churches are teaming up with Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA) Stewardship Solutions to offer a half-day Stewardship University titled "Your Lifestyle, Faith, and Money: Are They Speaking the Same Language?" at FMC on Saturday,

May 1. The morning will feature a keynote presentation, “WWJI (Where Would Jesus Invest)?” by Mark Regier, MMA stewardship investing director and former board chair of Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. His presentation will get at the very heart of following the perfect example of Christ in our imperfect world. Where would Jesus invest? Would he invest at all? Where can we find guidance for being faithful stewards that is both responsible and responsive?

Following the plenary session there will be two break-out sessions offering a variety of sessions on community investing, family budgeting (led by Minke Sundseth and Matthew & Shelly Hendricks), wise use of credit and debit cards, long-term care considerations, and the importance of self-care in good health (led by Cynthia Miller). Brochures with more information will soon be arriving in church mailboxes. This event is open to anyone so spread the word.

--Teresa Wasick, MMA advocate & Joetta Schlabach, planning team members



**Announcing FMC's
Vacation Bible School
Ages 4 through 4th grade
M-F mornings, June 14-18**

**To register, contact Kathleen at
minstaff@faithmennonite.org or leave a message at 612-
373-9483.**

Deacon Commission Report

The Deacon Commission meets at the Richardson's home from 9:30-11:30am on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Meetings begin with a brief check-in followed by a short meditation. The remainder of our time is

spent lifting-up those in our church who are struggling and in need of special prayer and in some cases assistance. We make a concerted effort to be sensitive to the ups and downs that can occur at anytime as each of us journey with our church.

Significant time is also spent exploring ways to enrich the individual and collective spiritual lives of those in our faith community. Currently we are delving into how our community connects with one another and how that connection is sustained and nurtured in a way that fosters an inclusive environment.

These are challenging and hopeful times in our church. The presence of so many children and young- to middle-aged adults is very encouraging. Creating an environment where everyone feels like they are a part of something bigger than themselves will need to be both purposeful and spontaneous.

As Deacons we are committed to sustaining and nurturing in a way that encourages a sense of mutual support and giving.

--Neil Okerlund, Chair

Spirituality Journal

In a particularly poignant moment, the little mouse named Despereaux (in *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo) comes to the realization that only he has the power to save the princess--the girl with whom he has fallen in love. She has been abducted and forced to go down into the dungeon, a fetid place of complete darkness, filled with rats and the bones of those who have not managed to make it back out alive. Despereaux decides to tie himself to a spool of thread before venturing in to find her in order to have a guide back out of the dank underground maze. Unfortunately, after a difficult journey to get the thread and roll it down through the castle to the top of the stairs of the dungeon, he doesn't think to tie it on before sending it down the steps. It rolls away from him never to be seen again. His security rope is gone and he is left with a very difficult decision: continue on the quest into the dark dungeon filled with rats who have a taste for mice, or turn back.

From *Despereaux*:

"It's impossible, he said to the darkness. "I can't do it." He stood very still. "I'll go back," he said. But he didn't move. "I'll have to go back." He took a step backward. "But I can't go back. I don't have a choice. I have no choice." He took one step forward. And then another.

“No choice,” his heart beat out to him as he went down the stairs, “no choice, no choice, no choice.” (DiCamillo)

In November of 2007, Shuji and I, waiting to be parents through adoption, matched with a little 6 month old boy we found on the Waiting International Children’s list. His name was Jeeho and he was beautiful. We fell in love just like Despereaux. In December of that same year we withdrew all of our savings and took out a loan in order to be able to pay for all the care our baby would have received before he came to us, because to keep paying it forward for the next children is how it works. It was a scary financial step to take but we still had threads we clung to—our jobs. Two months later we found out the nursing facility Shuji worked for was closing its doors, he would lose his job. Our thread rolled down the steps and out of sight. Going forward seemed impossible, yet the idea of going backward was inconceivable. Like Despereaux, we put one foot in front of the other with precious little between us and disaster except faith, and a deep love for the one we were seeking. We could not see how we would be able to complete our “quest.” But also we could not predict the ways others would step up to help. Nor did we know about the opportunities that would emerge in the midst of it all (such as Shuji’s new job.)

I am not naturally a person of courage. But I am a person of faith and my faith was, in very large part, what got me through this time of my life. I felt I expanded spiritually through my time of anxiety, fear, trust and hope. Despereaux’s situation makes me reflect and ask how God is present and at work in us when our life situations include loss, fear, vulnerability and urgency.

--Ruth Johnston

[If you have your own “spirituality journal” that you would like to share through the FMC newsletter, please contact Ruth Johnston, who is willing to coordinate submissions—the editor]

Share the Gift of Hospitality!

As registrations begin to come in for the STAR training Donna Minter is offering in June, we anticipate a need for housing. Some of the participants will be coming from outside the Twin Cities metro, and will need a place to sleep at night. If you have comfortable space for a guest, live within a few miles' radius of Augsburg College, and would like to extend hospitality to a STAR participant, please contact Kathleen at minstaff@faithmennonite.org or by phone at 612-375-9483.



April
Birthday
Brunch

If you or a family member has a birthday in February, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on April 17. (This invitation is for whole families and significant others, not just the birthday person.) Please RSVP on the sign-up sheet in the fellowship area or email:

Saturday,
April 17
9:30-11:30
a.m.

jschlabach@faithmennonite.org.

What's happening here and there...

Star Workshop

Navigating for Healing and Resilience with STAR: Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience Level-I Training, will be offered on June 23-27, at Augsburg College, to be led by Elaine Zook-Barge, MA STAR Program Director and Donna Minter, PhD, STAR Associate.

STAR trauma healing workshops have trained thousands of caregivers and leaders worldwide to promote healing, revitalize their communities, and stop cycles of victimhood and violence.

By attending this four-day experiential education seminar, you'll join more than 5,000 participants from 62 countries who have been equipped with strategies for handling post-traumatic stress and leading others beyond traumatic events, informed by the latest trauma healing research from the fields of neurobiology, psychology, restorative justice, conflict transformation, peace-building, and religion/spirituality. For more information go to: starmpls.eventbrite.com. Register by April 30, 2010 and receive the discount rate of \$525.00 (full cost is \$625.00). Four scholarships will be available to FMC participants. Those interested in

scholarship assistance may contact Kathleen Remund, FMC Ministry Staff Person, for details: minstaff@faithmennonite.org.

Central Plains Seeking Conference Minister

Central Plains Mennonite Conference is seeking a gifted leader for the position of Executive Conference Minister. This is a full-time position for an individual who will be able to give overall leadership to the conference through tending and articulating the vision of Central Plains. It also involves leading and working with a ministry team that has two members in place. A complete job description is available at www.centralplainsmc.org. If you know of someone who you think is especially gifted for this role please encourage them to apply. Interested individuals should forward their Ministerial Leadership Information Form and send a letter of application to moderator@centralplainsmc.org or Central Plains Search Committee, c/o Diane Zaerr Brenneman, 3243 Johnson Iowa Rd., Wellman, IA 52356. The target start date for this position is August 1, 2010.

Quaker Songwriter/Activist Carrie Newcomer to Perform at Ginkgo

Carrie Newcomer will be performing on April 25, 7:30 p.m., at Ginkgo Coffeehouse, celebrating the release of her new album on Rounder Records, *Before and After*. Barbara Kingsolver wrote, "Carrie Newcomer is much more than a musician. She's a poet, storyteller, snake-charmer, good neighbor, friend and lover, minister of the wide-eyed gospel of hope and grace." For a free music download of her song "Before and After" please go to www.carrienewcomer.com/freemusic and enter the promotional code, "beforeafter." For more information about this show and Carrie Newcomer visit: www.carrienewcomer.com.

Peace Among the Peoples conference

An ecumenical peace conference, Peace Among the Peoples, will be hosted on the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary campus, July 28-31. The event will bring together peace activists, pastors and academics to explore how they can encourage each other and make peace theology more central in Christian thought and practice.

In May 2011, the World Council of Churches will hold the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in

Kingston, Jamaica, culminating the 2001-2010 Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) program. The immediate objective of Peace Among the Peoples is to critically appropriate the agenda of the 2011 Convocation.

The meeting will include daily panel presentations from leading thinkers and activists, including Vincent Harding, Rita Nakashima Brock, Stanley Hauerwas, John Perkins, Micheal Kinnamon, Mary Jo Leddy, Brian McLaren, and Guillermo Kerber. For more information, go to: www.peace2010.net.

Gene Stoltzfus, 1940-2010, Peace Team Pioneer (Part I)

My uncle Gene Stoltzfus, founder of Christian Peacemaker Teams, passed away on March 10. Five years since his retirement from CPT and living across the border from International Falls in Ft. Frances, Ontario, Gene continued to be very active in speaking, writing, and peace and justice activism. He gave the morning sermon at FMC just last fall on Nov. 1, and was the keynote speaker at the Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation annual meeting later that day. Candace and I last saw him here in Minneapolis on February 17 at St. Martin's Table (greeted by Cleta Gingerich), when we met Gene and Aunt Dorothy Friesen for lunch after her return from a trip to the Philippines.

We are still in the midst of coming to terms with the broad scope of Gene's life and work as peace and justice activist and pioneer in the international peace teams movement. Articles have appeared in the Mennonite press, as well as in the *Chicago Tribune* (Gene and Dorothy lived there for 25 years), the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and in various online sources. A large memorial service is scheduled for April 11 in Goshen, Indiana.

A farm boy from Aurora, Ohio, Gene went to Goshen College and first became attuned to issues of social inequality while working with migrant laborers at a Goshen turkey processing plant. After college he served for four years in Vietnam with International Voluntary Services, an organization specializing in grassroots development work. Increasingly uncomfortable with the role of Western aid organizations as the war ground on, Gene and several colleagues dramatized their frustration by destroying their privileged "PX" cards used for purchasing cheap Western goods at Defense Department-operated stores, and voted down a generous offer for development funding from the Asia Foundation (later exposed as a front organization of the

CIA). After viewing waves of US bombers flying overhead on bombing runs while he was on vacation in Laos, Gene submitted his resignation. Three other colleagues of Gene's, including Vietnam IVS director Don Luce, followed suit, the group releasing a public letter cosigned by 40 IVS staffers to Lyndon Johnson declaring the war "an overwhelming atrocity." The action, being the first anti-war protest by the American community in Vietnam, was covered in the *New York Times* on Sept. 20, 1967.

Back in the States, Gene spoke across the country of his experiences, participated in protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and worked for several years on legislative issues in Washington, DC. While accompanying a congressional delegation on a tour of Vietnam in 1970, Don and Gene helped steer the delegation into a secret area of a prison camp which revealed the existence of "tiger cages"—tiny cells for holding and torturing prisoners. The delegation's explosive photos were published in *Life Magazine* on July 17, 1970.

In the 70s Gene worked in Newton, KS for a number of years as director of Mennonite Voluntary Service, and did graduate work at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN where he met Dorothy. After AMBS the couple became Mennonite Central Committee country co-directors for three years in the Philippines, and then moved to Chicago where Gene was director of the Urban Life Center, an urban immersion program for college students. In a conversation in our living room in Iowa City in 1980, Gene, Dorothy, my father Ed, and I came up with "Synapses" as the new name for a peace and justice and human rights organization they subsequently founded out of their home in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, with Dorothy serving as director.

Gene returned to Manila in 1986 and was present on EDSA Avenue for the People Power Revolution, when over a million citizens used nonviolent tactics to block the military forces of the Marcos regime. Not only did Marcos fall that weekend, but the EDSA experience provided the template for mass nonviolent protest in subsequent years in the Eastern Bloc and around the world. (Part II next month: CPT and beyond)

—*Phil Stoltzfus*

O Taste and See

The world is
not with us enough
O taste and see

the subway Bible poster said,
meaning **The Lord**, meaning
if anything all that lives
to the imagination's tongue,

grief, mercy, language,
tangerine, weather, to
breathe them, bite,
savor, chew, swallow, transform,

into our flesh our
deaths, crossing the street, plum, quince,
living in the orchard and being

hungry, and plucking
the fruit.

Denise Levertov

The deadline for May newsletter items is noon, Thursday, April 29^h.

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.