

# Faith Connection

April 2012

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...

Last weekend I attended the winter (*sic!*) concert of the Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra in which Anna Dennis and Karen Wiebe are members, playing the cello and viola, respectively (and very respectably!). The concert ended with a riveting composition by Paul Hindemith, *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, which commanded the attention of all—the musicians and the audience. It was a piece that highlighted a wide range of orchestral voices, including the percussion section.

I don't usually think of percussion players as the heart of the orchestra, but during the Hindemith piece, I found my attention returning to them time and again. I gained a new appreciation for how much precision is required to play an instrument as small and seemingly simple as a triangle. The musician responsible for the triangle may only play a small fraction of the total notes played by other instruments, yet the inclusion and placement of those notes is vital to the overall sound. And to get those few notes just right, the percussionist must be attentive throughout the entire piece.

Watching the percussion section that night—as well as the whole orchestra—reminded me of how the Apostle Paul used the metaphor of the body to describe the way the church functions in his letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12. An orchestra is also a good metaphor for the church. I noted that some of the sections, brass and woodwinds in particular, were mostly hidden behind their music stands, yet beautiful music soared from their sections. This brought to mind our weekly nursery volunteers and children's Sunday school teachers who are hidden from most of us on Sunday morning, yet contribute so much to the formation of our youngest persons. I also began to think about who the triangle players are in our church—persons who may not speak much, who may sit along the sides or in the back on a Sunday morning, yet reach out in hospitality to a visitor, speak words of encouragement to others, make coffee on Sunday morning, or sing in our occasional choirs.

Orchestra concerts don't just happen, and neither do the various aspects of our life as a congregation. Each musician must have the discipline to practice on their own and also show up regularly to rehearse as a whole. Individual interpretations of a given musical score give way to the unity of a shared interpretation for a given performance.

When using the orchestra as a metaphor for the church, it might seem natural to equate the pastor and conductor. However, from an Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of scripture, the pastor is more akin to the section leaders or Concert Master, whose role it is to make sure the orchestra is in tune and ready to follow the directions of the conductor. God in Christ is the church's conductor. The conductor puts his/her reputation on the line at each performance, believing in the musicians, drawing out their best, and then acknowledging the participation of each.

As we enter Holy Week, we are invited to reflect on the way that God put God's own reputation on the line in Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. Mid-week of the MPO concert, Karen confided that the final rehearsal of the Hindemith had been difficult. It sounded as if some musicians may have doubted that they were ready to perform. During the events of Jesus' trial and death, the disciples surely wondered what the Conductor had in mind. On Easter we celebrate the great performance, the triumph of life over fear and death. We celebrate the wisdom of God in our darkest moments. But we can only fully celebrate if we have allowed ourselves to walk with Jesus through the darkest night. Let us follow him from death to life.

--Joetta Schlabach

"Let Him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cressed east."

--Gerard Manley Hopkins

## Ministry Staff Update...

This past week I found myself down in the church kitchen sorting plastic containers brought in during the Neighborhood Sustainability Fair. Clear 1s in one bin, 2s of different colors in another, etc. (Eastside Coop requests this for their Thursday plastics recycling drop-off.) When Lucy and Sam Reinert; Noelle, Micaiah, and Shelly Hendricks; and Dick Westby showed up to help out, though, the nature of this activity changed considerably. “Oh look, it’s a 3!” “Wow, I’ve never seen a container like that!” What might have seemed a mundane, predictable task turned into something energetic, spontaneous, and fun. A new plastics sorting community had been born. (I understand that the Seward neighborhood will very soon be moving to “single-sort” recycling—so no sorting necessary!)

March has been full of special events like this for FMC. First was the Missio Dei dinner in the fellowship hall on March 3, an event to benefit their fundraising drive to open a new hospitality house and peace & justice center. \$2,800 was raised (considerably more than last year’s dinner). Then, the annual benefit concert for Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership took place on March 11 in the sanctuary. More people than ever turned out for an afternoon of great folk music, and an additional \$2,000 was raised for SLRJP that afternoon. FMCers hosted a second concert on March 20, by the 50-voice Bethel College (Kansas) Concert Choir (along with a meal for the choir beforehand and reception afterwards), a highlight of which was their performance of *When David Heard* by Eric Whitacre. Then members of the congregation began participation in the March food drive for Community Emergency Service—that’s why we have all the grocery bags lining the walls of the entranceway and the narthex.

Our biggest event recently was the sustainability fair on March 17. Besides the mountain of plastic containers, several truckloads of electronics were collected by Free Geek, countless bikes were repaired in our makeshift bike repair station (i.e., the library!), and some 150-200 meals of free organic food were served out of the Sisters’ Camelot kitchen bus parked right outside the church basement door along 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. Many environmental organizations came with displays and literature, but I particularly liked the “more with less”-type activities organized by Patricia Mack, Joan Kreider, Marybeth Luig, Cindy Bjork, Kristin Green, Melissa Hochstetler and others. There’s a surprising wealth of sustainability experience right here in our own congregation and our own neighborhood!

After Holy Week there is yet another event like this coming up, where people from outside the congregation will be coming to FMC. For the Creating a Culture of Peace nonviolence training that I will be co-facilitating April 13-15 I am expecting at least ten participants from out of the Twin Cities area or out of state. It seems there may be extra interest in active nonviolence due to the spring activity related to the Occupy movement. There are currently three people from FMC that are registered for the training—it would be great to have several more locals! Some scholarship money is still available. Let me know if you are interested. At this point I will be able to include more participants up until several days beforehand.

Many thanks to all of those in the congregation who have volunteered to make these events happen, or have simply come to enjoy them. This Lenten/Easter season has certainly been a time of new and unexpected happenings—of hospitality for new people coming to our community, and also of reaching out to create new connections and relationships.

--Phil Stoltzfus

## What's happening at FMC...

### Holy Week Services

You are welcome and encouraged to join in the following services that draw us into the final days of Jesus’ life and his death and resurrection:

**April 5, 6 p.m.** Maundy Thursday meal and service. We will gather in the fellowship hall for a simple soup/bread/fruit supper, woven around a worship service including communion and foot-washing. Chris Jones will provide music for this service.

**April 6-7.** Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Many churches offer services on these days/evenings. Please consider inviting other FMC friends to attend a service together.

**April 8, Easter.** We will begin our celebration with a carry-in breakfast, beginning at 8:30 a.m. If you are able to bring a dish to share, please bring one of the following, according to the initial of your last name: A-G: Fruit; H-P: Egg and/or potato dish; Q-Z: Breads or muffins or coffeecake. Worship will begin at 9:45. There will be no Christian education.

## Coming and Going...

Among recent visitors to FMC are:

**Corey and Karenza Mamchuk**, who have moved to the Twin Cities from Manitoba.

**Alison Fahy**, a violin teacher at MacPhail.

Please watch for them and other visitors, and be sure to make them feel welcome.

## Interested in Quilting...?

There is an opportunity to acquire a quilt frame for Faith Mennonite, at no cost. The owner wishing to find a new home for this item is also willing to offer training and some of her own stories and experiences, if her quilt frame finds a new home with Mennonites. (She has past connections to Mennonites from her parents home community in Ohio.) A possible location for the quilt frame has been identified, though further discussion on that would have to come up. The first question is whether there is enough interest to merit taking up the offer. If you would enjoy the use of a quilt frame--also usable for making banners and wall hangings--with a quilters group, or on your own, and support exploring this offer, please respond to either Marybeth Luing at mb.luing@gmail.com or Donna Stucky at joy7light@yahoo.com, or leave a note in either of our message folders. Please put 'quilt frame FM' in the subject of your email. We'll tally responses and make a decision on April 18th (the next Faith Crafter's group gathering).

--Marybeth Luing

## MDS week in Minot, North Dakota

The terrible flooding in June 2011 affected approximately a quarter of the population of Minot, North Dakota. Since the fall of 2011, Mennonite Disaster Service has been based out of the Congregational United Church, a UCC church which has generously housed the temporary MDS local office and the volunteers. MDS hopes to move the base of operations soon to the Bible Fellowship Church, a Mennonite Brethren church, which is being rehabbed, and the church's parsonage. Bunk beds are set up for around 40 people at Bible Fellowship. The current number of long term volunteers is seven and there were 16+ short term volunteers last week. Teresa Wasick and I volunteered with MDS in Minot for the week of March 19-23. Andy Bardo-Martinson, whose childhood home

was in Minot, volunteered for two days, and then vacationed with his family for the rest of the week.

MDS has been working on several houses in Minot as well as the church. Andy did some finishing work while Teresa and I got down and dirty. For three days we sanded (and Teresa mudded) the walls of a three-bedroom home. Happily, we were treated to morning coffee and cupcakes by the daughter-in-law of the owner. The other 1½ days were spent by Teresa at another house where she added insulation. I was also adding insulation until I fell off a ladder and twisted my ankle on Thursday morning. Several highlights of the week included an evening at Andy's parents' house with a dinner prepared by Alyssa and an evening featuring the story of the Jones family whose home is being rehabbed by MDS. They have survived several physical ailments over the past several years as well as having flood waters to the ceiling of their home, which is one house away from the Mouse (or Souris) River. On our way back home, Teresa and I had a late lunch at the very trendy and famous-for-15-minutes Olive Garden in Grand Forks.

--Leslie Minkler

## FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	January	February
<b>Total Giving</b>	\$13,154	\$11,021
<b>Giving Target</b>	\$11,667	\$11,667

## Deacons on Hospitality

The deacon's commission met on Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. Joetta shared updates from her travels and the deacons shared updates from the congregation. The theme of offering hospitality was discussed in response to the story of a guest who recently attended a church event and shared her experience of feeling unwelcome with one of the deacons. The deacons would like to offer a gentle reminder to all to be intentional about welcoming newcomers in our midst and offering them opportunities to share and connect.

--Aryn Baxter



*April  
Birthday  
Brunch*

If you or a family member has a birthday in April, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on April 21<sup>st</sup>. (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: [jschlabach@faithmennonite.org](mailto:jschlabach@faithmennonite.org).

*Saturday,  
April 21  
9:30-11:00  
a.m.*

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

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

Each spring 800-1000 persons from every legislative district in Minnesota gather at the RiverCentre in downtown St. Paul for a couple hours of inspiration, briefing on legislative issues, and talking with one another to plan their afternoon on the Hill—Capitol Hill in St. Paul. After box lunches they move to the Capitol Rotunda for a short ceremony recognizing some social action leaders from around the state and then the real action of the day begins: meeting with state senators and representatives to share specific concerns and establish some relationship. These meetings may be short, perhaps with a legislator called out of a committee meeting, but it is a chance for people of faith to meet, sometimes for the first time, the persons representing them.

The Day on the Hill, which this year was held Tuesday, March 20, is planned by the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC), an ecumenical and interfaith—Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim—consortium advocating for social justice. Each year JRLC chooses a few issues that it thinks are the most important justice issues and prepares brief talking points on each of these. This year's issues are protecting the safety net, initiatives to end poverty, and affordable housing. JRLC also provides alerts when contacting legislators about specific legislation might be most important. For information about JRLC, visit [jrlc.org](http://jrlc.org).

JRLC tries to be nonpartisan, but it is fair to say that social justice legislation faces a more difficult time in the present legislature. A message heard many times is “Speak to your suburban and rural friends about justice issues.”

This year Joetta Schlabach and Hermann Weinlick from Faith attended Day on the Hill.

*--Hermann Weinlick*

**The deadline for May newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>.**

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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.