

Faith Connection

April 2013

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...

In mid-March several of us from FMC attended an interfaith Seder, the traditional Jewish Passover meal, at Temple Israel in South Minneapolis. Temple Israel offers this annual activity as part of their interfaith outreach. The afternoon event began in their sanctuary with an orientation to the design and symbolism in the architecture and a demonstration of the chanting of scripture from a Hebrew scroll. We learned that Jewish congregations read through the entire Torah, the first five books of Bible, each year. Then we moved to the basement hall where we sat around tables and sang and ate together in an abbreviated form of the Seder, a several-hour meal. We followed along from books of the *Haggadah*, the Seder guide.

I imagine that each of us who attended (Rich Deming, Thaine Dirks, Joan Kreider, Leslie Minkler, Donna Stucky, and I) came away with distinct impressions. Two things stand out in my memory. One was the reminder that our Christian Holy Week, which usually occurs in close proximity with Jewish Passover, has been a fearful time for Jews at various points in Christian history. In some of the more violent, anti-Semitic expressions of Christianity, Good Friday was a day when Jews went into hiding for fear of being attacked by Christians who blamed them for the death of Jesus. It is disturbing to think of the followers of the One who freely gave himself up to death, threatening the lives of others. In contrast, during the Seder meal, as each of the plagues that God visited on the Egyptians is remembered, each person blots a drop of wine on their plate in memory of the suffering of innocents in the process of the liberation of their ancestors. Interfaith conversations such as this are important in keeping us humble and honest about the past.

The other memorable moment came for me during the demonstration and discussion of the scrolls. An audience member asked whether the Hebrew text is sometimes updated to reflect new biblical scholarship.

Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman was quick to respond, "No! We don't change the words; the word changes us!"

I am grateful for careful biblical scholarship that probes the original languages and seeks to render a faithful translation. And I am sympathetic to concerns about exclusive language in ancient biblical texts. But Rabbi Zimmerman's comment is a wise corrective to the tendency that many of us have to quickly turn away from passages of the Bible that sound peculiar or leave us feeling uneasy. The purpose of scripture is to frame our lives within a larger story. Some parts offer comfort; others sift and shape us, at times in uncomfortable ways. Moving from a purely rational to a more relational engagement with the Bible can draw us toward God, the Living Word, and lead to a rewarding, life-giving undertaking.

I am writing in the midst of Holy Week as the U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments concerning same-sex marriage. As I listened to the news and heard the voices of dueling crowds in front of the court building, I couldn't help but think of the silhouetted image from our passion reading last (Palm) Sunday, of the crowds who yelled "crucify!" Then I thought of Jesus who remained largely silent when he was on trial, for actions that involved caring and healing for the poor and the outcasts. His death and resurrection were later interpreted by the Apostle Paul as an act of breaking down the "diving wall...of hostility" and reconciling opposing groups to God in one body" (Ephesians 2). May we enter the Easter season with a renewed commitment to being people of the Word, offering hope and reconciliation.

--Joetta Schlabach

"You can tell you have created God in your own image when it turns out that he or she hates all the same people you do."

-- Anne Lamott

Ministry staff report...

The Neighborhood Sustainability Fair is fast approaching. Last year we (that's the Missions and Service Commission, along with Mennonite Worker, Community of St. Martin, and the Seward Environment Committee) tried this for the first time, and we are back at it again. It's coming up on Saturday, April 13, from noon to 4:30 in the fellowship hall. Also on April 13 is the CSA fair over in the Seward Coop parking lot—so two destination events in the neighborhood on the same day!

What to bring? Free Geek will be here again, and they love collecting old electronics (computer-related equipment, cell phones, etc.) and small household appliances (blenders, vacuum cleaners, microwaves) to try to repair or to dispose of properly. During the fair they'll take off your hands and haul away, for free, things like CRTs that might normally require a disposal fee. (By the way, did you know that they sell very cheap refurbished computers in their store at 2537 25th Avenue South?) There will not be a plastics recycling station this year, since single-sort recycling has now come to Seward.

There will be a clothing exchange again this year, so bring your good used clothing to swap. Plus, we're going to have a toy table this year. Have some used toys and games that are gathering dust? Come on over and swap them for something "new." Also, any used seed packets that you have—another swap opportunity in the garden center over next to the composting worms. Back by popular demand will be a firestarter-making table, so bring your empty egg cartons and dryer lint. Also, you'll want to check out the green cleaning supplies table—new this year. Activities for kids, too!

The FMC library will again be converted into a bicycle repair station. If your bikes need some minor tune-ups, bring them in—and get some pointers on new alternative transportation initiatives while you're at it.

There is no such thing as a free lunch—except from Sisters' Camelot! Their kitchen bus is expected to make an appearance again along 28th Avenue. That means free organic food—you can check them out at www.sisterscamelot.org. While you're eating outside (if the weather is good), you can spend some quality time visiting with the Mennonite Worker chickens and learning about how they are grown. Also, inside you'll find some hot coffee that Peace Coffee is donating to the cause.

Many environmental organizations are already confirmed and will be setting up displays: Midtown Greenway Coalition, Sierra Club, Xcel Energy, Hennepin County Master Recyclers/Composters, Mississippi River Network, Applied Energy Innovations, Do It Green, Hub of Heaven, Growing Lots, SPOKES, MN Renewable Energy Society, Minneapolis Energy Options, MN Center for Energy & Environment, Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy, Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee. Come stop by their booths and ask them about what they do!

Also coming up this spring, likely on April 17, watch for a special Wednesday evening event after the community meal: "The Land where Mangoes Grow: Community Re-building after the Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka." Our own Andrew Jilani will be sharing about his trip to that country. If you recall, FMC helped Andrew raise funds for the trip last June with a Pakistani-themed meal and an amazingly popular "Understanding the Taliban" talk.

Andrew writes: "The long civil war in Sri Lanka rendered many people homeless, scores dead on both sides and unspeakable damaged to the environment in the small island. Many fled to India. After the cessation of the armed conflict in 2009, communities are seeking housing and livelihoods. Kurunagar, a fishing community, situated along the western coast of Jaffna City, Sri Lanka is the most populated area in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka and some 3,800 families are huddled and compelled to stay in small apartments, risking their health for generations. The community has come together to secure a livable place and build their lives after the war."

In May, Andrew and Missions and Service are hoping to collaborate with some Luther Seminary students to help transform one of our Wednesday evening events into an interfaith meal. We are blessed by the goodness around us which manifests itself in many ways, but particularly in different foods and people of different faiths who are our neighbors and friends. Over a simple but celebratory meal, we hope to share with one another and form new friendships.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Twin Cities Mennonite Gathering April 21

After getting snowed out in January, we're looking forward to a gathering of Twin Cities area Mennonites to eat and sing together on Sunday, April 21. The

current plan is to gather at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, 725 E. 25th Street, Minneapolis, at 12:15 for a meal and then to sing and share music for about an hour, beginning at 1:15. Originally planned as a potluck meal, women from the Hmong Mennonite Church will prepare a meal to serve as a means of raising funds for their trip to Colorado this summer for a gathering of Hmong Mennonite women. Each church will take a turn providing special music and/or leading the group in hymns/songs of their choice. We will take our *River of Gladness* songbooks by Bret Hesla and share songs from our 50th Anniversary. Suggested donation: \$10-30 per person.

Music and Worship Leaders Workshop May 11

The Worship Commission is busy planning a workshop for the music and worship leaders of Faith Mennonite Church. Bret Hesla and Mary Preuss, music leaders at Our Saviors Lutheran Church on Chicago Avenue, will provide an opening plenary session and then spend time working with our song leaders and accompanists. Worship leaders and scripture readers will have a separate break-out session to work on speaking/reading/leading dynamics. The workshop is scheduled from 9:15-11:30 on Saturday, May 11. Anyone who has ever been involved – or would like to become involved – in a worship role is warmly invited to attend!

--The Worship Commission (Gregg Richardson, Joan Kreider, Donna Stucky, Kristi Zabriskie)



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 20th. (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.

April
Birthday
Brunch

Saturday,
April 20
9:30-11
a.m.

Twelve Scriptures Project

There was laughter, singing, and discussion for the last three Sundays in January during Adult Education time as members of our community chose their favorite scripture passages and favorite hymns. Joan Kreider led each session of this 12 Scripture Project and about 50 different people participated in one of the three sessions.

The top choices will be the focus of worship time in April and May: seven weeks devoted to the scriptures starting on April 4 and ending on Pentecost. Coincidentally the top two Bible passages chosen, the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel of John, are the topic for two adult education classes this quarter. Joan noted that the top choices tended to be exhortations and reassurances. Stories fell in the third tier. Among the total list of scriptures people selected, there were some challenging themes such as violence in the Old Testament, women's subservience, being subject to rulers, judgment and hell, and others.

Each week people gathered and individually listed their twelve favorite scriptures on slips of paper. Each slip of paper was then posted on a bulletin board which listed all books of the Bible. The slips of paper presented a visual of favorite choices. The scriptures were also discussed in small groups as well. Hymns were chosen similarly. Hymn numbers from the *Hymnal Worship Book* and *Sing the Journey* were grouped by tens on a bulletin board and participants again placed the slips of papers with their favorite hymns in the correct number category.

Here are the top 36 Scriptures for Faith Mennonite Church, January 2013.

1. **Matthew 5-7.** Sermon on the Mount, including Beatitudes, love your enemies, do not be anxious, seek first the kingdom, salt and light, judging (speck/moat)
2. **John 1:1-17.** In the beginning was the word...light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot put it out
3. **Jeremiah 29:11.** The plans I have for you are for welfare not calamity, to give you a future and hope
4. **Revelations 21 and 22.** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; God shall dwell with us; the city of God, river of water of life flowing through it
5. **Micah 6:8.** What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.
6. **Romans 12:2.** Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind
7. **2 Corinthians 5:16-21.** The old things have passed

away; He makes all things new; ambassadors of reconciliation

8. **Luke 1: 39-55.** Meeting of Mary and Elizabeth; the Magnificat
9. **Romans 8:38-39.** Nothing can separate us from the love of God
10. **Matthew 25:31-46.** For I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger and you fed me, clothed me, took me in
11. **1 Corinthians 12.** A variety of gifts but the same spirit
12. **Isaiah 60-62, esp 61:1.** The spirit of the Lord is upon me...to preach good news to the poor

And the rest:

13. **Galatians 5:22-23.** The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace...
14. **James 2:14-26.** What good is faith without works?
15. **John 3:16.** For God so loved the world, he gave his only son...life everlasting
16. **Romans 12:17-3:8.** Return good for evil; by doing this you heap burning coals...
17. **Galatians 3:28.** Neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free
18. **1 John 4:7-21.** Let us love one another because love is of God
19. **Psalms 23.** The lord is my shepherd
20. **Matthew 22:37-40.** Love the Lord your God with all your heart mind and strength...and your neighbor as yourself
21. **Colossians 3:12.** Clothe yourselves with compassion
22. **1 Corinthians 13:1-13.** And the greatest of these is love
23. **Philippians 2:1-12.** Make my joy complete by being of the same mind; work out salvation in fear and trembling; servant song
24. **Matthew 18:15-35.** Settling disputes, whenever two or three of you are gathered, forgiving seventy times seven
25. **1 John 8:1-11.** Jesus and the woman caught in adultery
26. **Philippians 4:4-8.** Whatever is true...dwell on these things
27. **Book of Job.**
28. **Jeremiah 17: 17:8-9.** Tree planted by the water bears fruit
29. **Luke 10: 25-37.** Parable of the Good Samaritan
30. **Genesis 1 and 2.** Creation
31. **1 Kings 19:11-13.** Elijah on the mountaintop hears God's voice not in gale/earthquake/fire but in a whisper
32. **Psalms 27:14.** Wait for the Lord
33. **Psalms 51.** Create in me a pure heart, O God
34. **Psalms 85:10.** Mercy and truth have met together; justice and peace have kissed each other
35. **Ezekiel 37:1-4.** Dry bones come to life
36. **Philippians 3:14-21.** Press on to the prize

You are welcome to help plan the April and May worship services or participate in them. Perhaps a particular scripture listed has touched you along the way. Please share your interest with any of the Worship Commission members. The Commission is grateful to Joan Kreider for leading this project.

-- Donna Stucky for the Worship Commission

Council and Commissions Retreat Recap

Council and commission members gathered February 9th for a half day retreat of reflection and planning. After a welcome which included a delicious coffeecake by Cleta Roth, Cynthia Miller led us through a guided meditation that focused on listening and increasing awareness. Time followed in which we shared ways we've exercised our minds, bodies and souls as part of this winter's activities.

Continuing, Joetta introduced the seven priorities of the Purposeful Plan created by MCUSA to guide the church forward during the next ten years. These priorities are: Christian formation, Christian community, holistic Christian witness, stewardship, leadership development, undoing racism/advancing intercultural transformation and church-to-church relationships. We reflected on ways that FMC is currently living out these priorities, and how we might strengthen our commitment to them through the work of our various commissions.

Shelly Hendricks reported highlights of the first several Wednesday evening meals and ongoing possibilities. Bruce Brunner handed out recent financial reports and reviewed basics in reading reports and answered questions. Matthew Hendricks shared best practices for communication and organization related to meetings. We wrapped up voicing one-word affirmations for the morning, and singing "Here in This Place".

--Karen Wiebe

What's happening here and there...

Workshop On Managing Storm Water

Anyone with interest in addressing storm water runoff and preventing pollution from their yard, as well as calming traffic in their neighborhood is welcome to a presentation on Thursday, April 11, 2013, 7:00 p.m. at the Matthews Park Center, 2318 29th Ave. S. The Seward Neighborhood Group is sponsoring the workshop that will include a presentation by Metro

Blooms on why it is important to address storm water runoff, and some simple, as well as more extensive, actions that can be taken within your own property. Stantec Engineering will present the concept plans for storm water curb extensions on 34th Avenue. Stormwater curb extensions are bump-outs with rain gardens, which address two issues, managing storm water runoff before it enters the storm sewer and calming traffic on the street. Information will also be provided on other innovative projects in the Seward neighborhood.

The Seward Neighborhood Group has received a grant from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization to develop a concept plan for storm water curb extensions on 34th Avenue between 24th Street and 25th Street. The 34th Avenue project was first initiated by residents as a traffic calming measure because of the large number of young children living on the block. The project is the first of its type in the Twin Cities and will serve as a pilot project that can be replicated on other blocks. You don't have to live in Seward to attend.

--*Andy Martinson*

The deadline for May newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, April 24th.

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.

Manifesto of the New West

guys ordering cokes
built right for sauntering
not enough to pull what they'd call a cow down
by its ears
wandering up to folks
nudging things alright
spare a dime
a new dialect for a new time

boots preferred
shoes maybe
don't make a difference for wide smiles across rooms
waving hands all around about vast
or smaller events
positioning the hat
essential prop though functional
in the way of rain or snow
pulled down low against wind
hiding in the way of so many lonesome
or wide back on the head
halo to a good green smile
witness to the shape of a new moon

the reason shooting will start on the ridge
is a climb to the top in ricochet
dawn of a day gone to ride through the night
legions of sharpshooters in sights
pausing stiffly in full stare
before falling away without a shot
on to rocks and bodies
leaving empty cowboy hats in the sky.

--*Travis Lusk*