

# Faith Connection

April 2014

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...

As Holy Week approaches and I anticipate our Maundy Thursday meal and foot-washing service, when we commemorate Jesus' last meal with his disciples, my thinking moves in two directions. First I think about Jesus' meal, often called "the Last Supper," and all of the meaning it carried in the actual moment and down through the millennia. Jesus' meal was a Passover meal, imbued with centuries of meaning for the Jewish community, recalling their history of liberation from slavery in Egypt. The Passover was a family meal and for this final Passover, Jesus ate with the family of disciples that he had invited to follow him. Like all families, Jesus' family of choice experienced moments of conflict and misunderstanding. In fact, Jesus came to the table knowing that one of the persons he had chosen to be part of his most intimate circle, one who would share this final meal with him, would betray him.

Despite the growing political tension that was whirling outside the walls of the room where they met, and the understandable anxiety that must have been growing within the disciples, Jesus used the most familiar and comforting things—bread and wine—to signal that his coming death would mysteriously bring life. Grain must be finely ground to become bread; grapes must be crushed and ferment to become wine. And then there was the foot-washing. Jesus lovingly knelt before each of his disciples, vulnerably washing their feet, to show that our deepest joy and satisfaction comes in serving rather than being served.

The second direction of thought is toward the ordinary meals we share on a daily basis with family and friends. Some years ago I was invited to give a presentation on "Peace at the Table," reflecting on how our household tables are a place for making peace and forming peacemakers. As we share meals together several things happen. First, we learn the grace of sharing. We sometimes need to remind younger children, as they

learn to serve themselves and pass the dishes, that it's important to look around to see how many people must be served from the dish before deciding on an appropriate portion size. Even if stuffing is my favorite part of Thanksgiving dinner, I can't take half the dish when ten more people need to be served! Second, we learn the grace of not always getting our way. Most families don't function like short-order diners with individual orders to accommodate individual preferences at every meal. Some meals won't thrill as much as others and we might even complain when something we don't like shows up too frequently in the menu.

But we learn that different people have different preferences and, sometimes we grow to like things we didn't initially favor. Finally, and perhaps most important, we learn to have respectful, intergenerational conversations. With the TV, computers, and phones turned off, we gather face to face to pause and give thanks for the gifts we receive, to hear about the happenings of our days, to discuss events in the neighborhood and the world, and to share new ideas or problem solve together. Inviting diverse people to our table, as Jesus did, allows children and adults alike to hear perspectives and experiences we might not hear otherwise.

One of the challenges of the Information Age in which we live is that so much sharing of ideas takes place in cyber space where people are not close enough to look in each other's eyes, pass food across the table to one another, or to stoop down to wash another's feet. No wonder many on-line conversations quickly devolve into drone warfare—even among Christians. Being part of a community of Christ-followers draws us to the table again and again so we can see Christ in one another and continue to learn his way of vulnerable love and peace.

As we move toward Holy Week, I invite you to consider taking part in our Maundy Thursday meal and worship, especially if this isn't something you've experienced

before. And let us be deliberate in sharing meals with others. Whether we live alone or within a family setting, we will experience joy as we invite others to our table.

“Where two or three are gathered as my followers, I am with them” (Matthew 18:20).

--Joetta Schlabach

### **Ministry staff report...**

For the third year in a row, the Missions & Service Commission, along with some community collaborators, is going to put on a Neighborhood Sustainability Fair, coming up on Saturday, April 26, noon-4:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. We're hoping to lay out the basement as in previous years, with a bicycle repair shop in the library, a kids' activities station in the center, used clothing and toy exchange tables in the far corner, and an electronics and small household appliances drop-off area.

Many environmental organizations are already confirmed and will be setting up displays: Applied Energy Innovations, Minnesota Community Solar, Hennepin County Environmental Services, Center for Energy and Environment, MN 350, and Minnesota Arms Spending Alternatives Project. A new organization this year will be Universal Health Care Action Network, which is advocating for a single-payer coop system for Minnesota health insurance. Also new will be Humming For Bees, who I understand can tell you all about “neonicotinoid insecticides and their effect on pollinators.” Plus, I hear they have some good dandelion recipes!

I'm also looking forward to having the Sisters' Camelot kitchen bus make an appearance on 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. again for the third year in a row. I don't know what they will be cooking up for us on their menu this year, but it will be all organic food, taste fabulous, and best of all, it won't cost a dime! Check out their video at [www.sisterscamelot.org](http://www.sisterscamelot.org).

Patricia Mack is scheming about setting up a table exploring toys that we can make ourselves, or interesting things we could convert into toys. Kristin Green is working on two stations that will feature everyday items for the house that you can make yourself—lip balm and laundry detergent. I've also heard a rumor that Karen Wiebe is thinking about a sauerkraut-making station--yum!

I still need some more ideas to fill out our fair. So, let me know if you'd like to set up a table and share your

household sustainability and more-with-less skills with our neighbors. I'll also need some volunteers for flyering in the neighborhood, coordinating children's activities, and setting up and tearing down the display area. Contact me at: [minstaff@faithmennonite.org](mailto:minstaff@faithmennonite.org).

--Phil Stoltzfus

### **Holy Week at Faith Mennonite Church**



#### **Palm Sunday**

9:30 a.m. Worship beginning with a process of palms

#### **Maundy Thursday**

6:00 p.m. Soup meal followed by a service of communion and foot washing

#### **Easter Sunday**

8:30 a.m. Breakfast in the fellowship hall  
9:45 a.m. Worship celebration of the resurrection

Many churches in the community offer Good Friday and Holy Saturday services for those who cannot attend our Thursday service or desire additional worship opportunities during Holy Week.

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

#### **Ecuador Fellowship & Learning Tour Report - Part 2**

*This is the 2nd installment of the report that I wrote following Gerald's and my January 17-28 trip to Ecuador. The report had three sections: Learnings, Fellowship, and Recommendations.*

**Learnings (continued).** We witnessed expressions of prejudice against the indigenous population in Ecuador. The new pastoral coordinator of the Riobamba church spoke of how they lack education and culture and misuse the many resources they have received from the current government. Colombian refugees also told stories of discrimination: of not being paid for work and of being turned away from rental opportunities. One of

our guides suggested that the latter may be due to assumptions by Ecuadorians that anyone leaving Colombia has committed a crime or is involved in the drug trade, and that they are taking scarce jobs. (Similar assumptions prevail in the US regarding immigrants.) David Shenk, a Mennonite Mission Network volunteer who directs the Refugee Program of the Quito Mennonite Church, helped us understand the situation in Colombia that is producing 1000 refugees entering Ecuador each month. The refugees' personal stories put flesh on his information. One woman came with her children after paramilitaries came to her home at night and forced her husband and her to the floor with faces down. When her husband raised his head, the intruders shot and killed him. She took her family and fled the next morning. Another, Rosío, explained that her family (husband and 4 children ages 19, 17, 5, and infant) fled after witnessing a murder and receiving death threats.

Since arriving in Ecuador the oldest daughter has had a child and several weeks ago the father was put in prison when he was with some people accused of a crime. The family currently has no source of income and fears eviction from their apartment. They are depending on support from the Refugee Program and the Quito Mennonite Church which they attend. A third woman was from a wealthy family in Colombia. Her father was a Caterpillar mechanic with an automotive and airplane parts business. She followed in the family business and had a parts store in another city. The guerilla group FARC murdered her father and several years later, when the family publicly denounced the killing, the FARC made death threats against her family as well. Overnight the family decided to leave everything they had and go to Ecuador with only clothes in suitcases. Her teen-age daughters have had an especially difficult time going from privilege to poverty.

This woman is now using her business knowledge to begin a food business, selling arepas (corn patties) and salchipapas (sausage and potatoes) on the street. Her husband has had multiple experiences of not being paid for work. According to David and pastor César Moya, the Mennonite church is the only protestant church involved in refugee work. They are understandably elated that Mennonite Central Committee has just made a three-year commitment of support for their work. The Mennonite refugee program is increasingly collaborating and finding support with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

--Joetta Schlabach

## Canadian Mennonite University Choir Concert – April 29

The Chamber Choir and Male Octet from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba, will begin their post-commencement US choral tour with an evening concert at Faith Mennonite Church on Tuesday, April 29. The Fellowship Commission is inviting all who are able to participate in hosting the choir. Opportunities include providing soup or bread for a pre-concert meal for the choir and/or overnight hosting of choral members. Everyone is invited to enjoy an evening of choral music and encouraged to invite a friend.



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 5<sup>th</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).

April  
Birthday  
Brunch

Saturday,  
April 5<sup>th</sup>  
9:30-11  
a.m.

### *Spirituality journal...*

#### How Did The Rose?

How  
did the rose  
ever open its heart  
and give to this world of its beauty?  
It felt the encouragement of light against its being,  
otherwise we all remain too  
frightened.

--by Shams-ud-din Muhammad Hafiz (14th century Persian Poet)

The encouragement of light against [our] being— I can't think of words more fitting for this season of the year. The return of the light and warmth of the sun encourages our being, our opening, our shedding of all that we do to guard ourselves against winter. But many

of us remain guarded in other ways as well, frightened to shed our protection and show the world the gifts we hold inside. As Hafiz says, this is the human condition, we are all frightened except when freed by the experience of another's love for us. One story from the recent Olympics has it that a figure skater tweeted her twin sister before her competition saying, "I'm afraid." Her sister tweeted back, "Everybody's afraid, it's the Olympics!" Indeed. And I would add—so go out and give to the world the beauty you have to give today.

O God, thank you for the return of the light, and for your abiding love for each one of us. Thank you for the many ways we are encouraged to add beauty to this often pain-filled world. May the tight frightened places in us thaw, that we might find in our own hearts, the trust of the opening rose. Amen.

--Ruth Johnston

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

#### **Augsburg College Masterworks Chorale Presents War and Peace Concert**

Hermann Weinlick will be one of the choral members in the April 5, 2014, 5 p.m. concert "War and Peace" at Central Lutheran Church, 333 South 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Minneapolis. The concert will include Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*, the US premiere of *A Lenten Cantata* by Patrick Hadley, *Let Peace Then Still the Strife* by Mack Wilberg, and Egil Hovland's "Stay with Us" from the opera *Captive and Free*. Admission is free; a free-will offering will be taken.

#### **Eastern Mennonite University Safe Space Invites Stories**

Several years ago we added rainbow stickers to our FMC copies of the *Sing The Journey* songbooks in honor of Mennonite pastor and musician Randall Spaulding, one of the compilers, who lost his ordination credentials when he entered a committed same-gender relationship. The rainbow sticker project was initiated by the Eastern Mennonite University Safe Space student group.

The Eastern Mennonite University board is currently in a six-month listening process regarding their hiring policy, which excludes persons in committed same-gender relationships. EMU Safe Space has communicated their intention to be "an active participant in this process with conversations, raising awareness, and most importantly story telling." To

fulfill the latter they are inviting people to submit stories of "pain, sorrow, hurt, and those of great joy, encouragement, and belonging as a lgbtq person or family/friends/allies of lgbtq people. ... We will collect stories, poetry, and songs to share with the campus community."

Stories will be collected until April 28. They can be sent to [emusafespace@gmail.com](mailto:emusafespace@gmail.com) or by mail to: Safe Space advisor Kathy Evans, Education Department, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

--FMC office based on letter from EMU Safe Space

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

The Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC) is a Minnesota consortium of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim groups (denominations, congregations, religious orders) that seeks to advocate for social justice. Its board and small staff identify important issues on which there is consensus and encourage persons and groups of faith to contact legislators.

For twenty-some years JRLC has sponsored Day on the Hill, a spring gathering of 800-1000 people from all over the state of Minnesota, meeting around tables with others from their legislative district, at River Centre in St. Paul. The morning includes an inspiring speech, briefings on key issues, and meeting other persons from your district (this year there were about a dozen people from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, which is located near the East Lake Library); groups schedule meetings with their legislators sometime in the afternoon. I attended this year's Day on the Hill on Thursday, March 13.

Sometimes these meetings of perhaps between six and sixteen citizens with their legislators are leisurely; sometimes they are ten minutes squeezed between committee meetings and other engagements. One purpose is to build relations with legislators and encourage contact with them throughout the year. Keynote speaker this year, Rabbi David Saperstein of Washington, D.C., spoke of God's passionate concern for justice. Focus issues at Day on the Hill this year were

- payday lending reform,
- maintaining an impartial judiciary,
- state support for affordable childcare,
- state bonding for affordable housing, and
- increasing the minimum wage.

Issue papers on these and other issues are available at [jrlc.org](http://jrlc.org). All issue papers of the JRLC have been

approved by the Boards of Directors of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, the Minnesota Council of Churches, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, and the Islamic Center of Minnesota.

I would encourage Faith members, especially if you have a strong concern for one or more of these issues, to check the website for more information and to be in touch with your legislator in this short legislative session.

--Hermann Weinlick

### Thank you, thank you...

Thank you, Faith Mennonite Church, for your partnership with Mennonite Mission Network. Your donations, prayer, participation, and enthusiasm for mission are felt across the street and around the world. Because of your generosity, this year, we're able to respond to even more calls to ministry.

--Your friends at Mennonite Mission Network

Thank you for giving \$1,717 to Mennonite Central Committee in 2013. This year MCC is working in 61 countries, with 476 partner organizations, affecting the lives of some 6.5 million people. Church partners in the Philippines helped MCC distribute food baskets to 3,750 families, and 2,250 families received other essential items such as cooking pots, fuel and other non-food items. Nearly 3,000 families will receive home-starter kits and hurricane approved shelters. Near Dimla, Bangladesh, agriculture and income generation projects of MCC are changing the lives of Amina Begun and others. Begun received goats as part of the income generation program, bred them and now has so many that people in her village call her "the goat lady." New libraries in Western Nicaragua offer Dan Reyes and other students the chance for expanded learning and reading for fun. Again, thank you for partnering with MCC to share God's love and compassion around the world.

--J. Ron Byler, MCC U.S. Executive Director

On behalf of the Longfellow Faith Forum, we would like to thank you for your generous donation of \$65. It will go to connecting homeless and highly mobile students with much-needed school supplies.

--the Faith Forum planning committee

On behalf of Fellowship of Reconciliation, USA, I write to express our deep appreciation for your gift. This

spring, FOR will publish a new groundbreaking report that evaluates the human rights impact of the \$20 billion plus that the United States spends on military assistance to other countries. Plus, we are sponsoring the first Future is now Summit, a gathering of intergenerational activists that will take place in Minnesota this August. For more information about our current work please visit <http://forusa.org>. As we are fast approaching FOR-USA's centennial celebration in 2015, we count our blessings for your steadfast support.

--Jonette O'Kelley Miller, Development Director

Thank you for your generous donation to Wilderness Wind. We have been able to continue to broaden our programs and facilities to meet the needs and interests of numerous campers.

--Stan Bontrager, Executive Director

**The deadline for May newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, April 23<sup>rd</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.

### Psalm

No-one kneads us again out of earth and clay,  
no-one speaks our dust.  
No-one.  
Praise be to you, no-one.  
For your sake  
we will bloom.  
Towards  
you.  
A nothing  
we were, we are, we shall  
remain, blooming:  
the nothing--, the no-one's-rose.  
With  
our pistil soul-bright,  
with our stamen heaven-ravaged,  
our corolla red  
from the crimson word that we sang  
over, O over  
the thorn.

--Paul Celan  
(translated: Gregg Richardson)

