

# Faith Connection

August 2008

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...**

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ...a time to break down, and a time to build up;*  
--Ecclesiastes 3:1, 3b

When I arrived in the office on Monday, July 28, I was greeted by the sound of clanging metal coming from the church basement. The demolition crew had arrived and was already sawing and hacking at the water pipes traveling from the boiler to the radiators. I had to think of the times our aging steam system interrupted Christian education discussions in our library (or was it the ghosts of Ebenezer Lutheran Church?). I also thought about the tremendous work that is often required to bring about change and newness in our lives.

We've been fortunate for the expertise and generosity of Darrell Martin in overseeing this project, lining up contractors for each step of the conversion process to a new heating system. In our own lives we can't just call in a demolition or an installation crew to make change. When we want to change and grow we must do the work of first identifying what needs to be broken down and cleared away, and then what new actions and practices will build us up. And as those of us who live in old homes know, beginning to tear the old away often reveals new problems—things aren't aligned; old wood has rotted. But when we stick with the project, and invite the help of friends, we find what it takes to rebuild and create the new.

As we put in a new heating system inside our building, we continue to envision ways to build up our church's presence in the community beyond our walls. The signs of things beginning outside may not be as obvious as the swift removal of pipes and radiators within, but I sense the Spirit moving among us in a variety of ways, opening new doors:

- The July 2 Strawberry Picking outing was a wonderful opportunity for connection between FMC folks and our neighbors—from the Community of Martin, Seward and beyond. Beginning with the vision of Carol Harder and the Food and Spirituality class participants, aided by the organizing work of Candace Lutt, Phil Stoltzfus, and Dick Westby, and supported by the Missions and Service Commission, we have been able to extend our church's interest in supporting local, sustainable food production. An end-of-project evaluation will help us determine how the Simply in Season project might continue and take shape in the future.
- The bi-weekly gift of flowering plants from Carol Stoltzfus has provided an outreach opportunity as several of us take these plants to long-term care centers. Pat Eliason takes plants to Presbyterian Homes where her parents live. I take plants to Galtier Place at the end of my block and to Bethany Care Center at Marshall and Western in St. Paul. Both of these centers are elated to receive the plants and I enjoy my brief interaction with residents when I drop off the plants. If others of you know of a facility you would like to take plants to, I can assure a positive reception! (This would be an excellent family activity; residents in long-term care facilities are delighted to see children.)
- At the July Church Council Meeting, I reported on a visit from an African American pastor who is investigating meeting space for his congregation. We do not know what might be possible or if a relationship will develop, but the Council gave its blessing for Hermann Weinlick and I to open an exploratory conversation.

- Several weeks ago, when I was arriving at church one morning, I saw an elderly Ethiopian woman, presumably from Seward Towers, standing and praying at the corner of our church, in front of the flowering plants. As she crossed herself and walked away, I realized that our church serves as an icon for her, a place in the neighborhood that calls her to prayer.

The wisdom writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us of times and seasons. As we learned this past winter/spring, seasons don't necessarily transition predictably. But in time, things come to pass. I believe God is leading us into a time of building – of heating systems, relationships and outreach.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

"Every calling is great when greatly pursued."

-- *Oliver Wendell Holmes*

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

#### **Holiness the Road: Saints and the Spirituality that Sustains Them**

Ever since the Protestant Reformation, Protestants and Roman Catholics have found plenty of things to keep them divided. Although much has changed within the Catholic Church since that time and protestant theology has continued to develop in myriad ways through diverse denominations (and non-denominations), much division continues around beliefs and practices that were in question back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Since 2001, a grassroots group of Mennonites and Catholics have been meeting annually to discuss some of the painful issues that divide and to learn from the gifts of each tradition. We are drawn together out of a shared commitment to spirituality and peacemaking. Over 200 people have attended at least one of these conferences.

From July 24-27, Gerald and I participated in the 2008 conference, held at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, which focused on the understanding of saints, those who live and have died as Christian disciples and peacemakers. The sessions included stories of saints

and forebears in both the Catholic and Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition who have stayed with their churches in difficult times, who haven't been perfect, who have lived apparently ordinary lives, and who have made peace.

I was privileged to share the story of my parent's life and ministry in Grand Marais, Michigan, and also to plan and co-lead the closing agape meal and foot-washing service. Since church division still stands in the way of Mennonites and Catholics formally sharing in Eucharistic communion, we have chosen foot washing as our Bridgefolk ritual of unity.

Protestants have long been critical of the traditional Roman Catholic understanding of saints as extraordinary, holy persons, verified through the canonization process as worthy of veneration and prayer. Historically this created a divide between *holy* saints and *ordinary*, sinful Christians who weren't expected or necessarily encouraged to seek holiness in their personal lives. Vatican II reforms in the Roman Catholic Church, while still honoring those who have led exemplary lives, such as martyrs, spoke of a "universal call to holiness," inviting all Catholics to seek a path to holy living.

I gained a new appreciation for the idea of praying to saints at this year's conference. Someone pointed out the fact that Mennonites frequently have a sharing time in worship, as we do at FMC, when we invite our community to join in prayer for our concerns. We do not see this as by-passing or replacing our prayers to God. Rather, we expand the circle of those who are praying. Catholics, in praying to the saints, extend this practice to the whole "communion of saints," including those who have died. If we believe in life beyond death, is it so strange to invite our spiritual forebears to join us in prayer and to intercede on our behalf? Are they not the "great cloud of witnesses" of whom the writer of Hebrews (11 and 12) referred?

Participating in Bridgefolk is always an opportunity for learning, breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions, and growing in friendship even when theological differences remain. I am thankful to be part of a "bridging" congregation that includes members and friends from across the spectrum of Christian traditions even as we seek to live out an Anabaptist/Mennonite expression of faith.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

## Comings and Goings

We are happy to welcome and get better acquainted with recent visitors:

*Dale Bergland*

*Don Fuller*

*Greg Renstrom*

*Bob Richardson*

We say farewell to:

*David and Rachel Harder*, who have relocated to Hesston, Kansas.

*Jason Draper and Kat Kohorst*, who are moving to Vancouver, British Columbia.

## Upcoming Events

*Save the Date!*

### **FMC Annual Fall Retreat September 26-28**

ARC Retreat Center, Osceola, Wisconsin  
This is a child-friendly location. Retreat is a great way to get away, relax, and get better acquainted with your FMC family.

More details coming soon.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Twin Cities Festival & Sale for World Relief Nov. 8, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.**

This fun-filled day raises funds for the emergency relief, community development, and peacemaking programs of Mennonite Central Committee. Includes an auction of quilts and homemade woodcrafts, a Ten Thousand Villages shop, bake sale, children's activities, music by the Whistlepigs and more. Plus lots of opportunities for volunteering!

## Meet Your Fellow Members

Arlene Holdeman and her husband Ken arrived in the Twin Cities in 1967 as new college graduates. Arlene was set to start graduate school in English at the University of Minnesota, while Ken was going to begin

working as a computer software engineer. They found Faith Mennonite and began attending. Many other young people were also new attenders around then. Arlene has been active in the church over the years, serving as deacon, commissioner of education, and secretary.

Arlene's love of English literature had led her to major in English at Goshen College. After completing her graduate degree, she began teaching English part-time at National College. Soon she moved to Inver Hills Community College, where she spent 26 years until her early retirement a few years ago.

Arlene and Ken's two sons now live in Oregon and Kansas with their families, and recently all five grandchildren, ranging in age from two to thirteen, visited their grandparents at their Bloomington home. Arlene and Ken also travel to Kansas and Oregon for visits as often as they can. They enjoy traveling and have been to China, Europe, and Mexico as well.

Since retirement Arlene has been tutoring first-graders whose families do not speak English at home. She also helps adult immigrants with reading and writing in the SHAPE program (Southern Hennepin Adult Programs in Education). Arlene drew on her teaching experience last year when she journeyed to Italy with other native English speakers in order to tutor English at a high school. In a conversation at the Second Moon café the other day, Arlene reflected, "I had spent years teaching college students, so I thought it would be nice to work with children." The tradition of service among attenders of Faith Mennonite Church is alive and well.

--*Martha Mayou*

## Central Plains Conference Reflections

My first experience at a Central Plains conference meeting was a bit conflicted. It is always extremely fulfilling for me to have large quantities of Mennonites in one enclosed space—the hymn singing alone makes it worthwhile. On the other hand, participating in voting politics can be exceedingly frustrating; it involves sitting through long sessions, discussing things that don't necessarily bear much importance in your life, but then being forced to compromise when a meaningful issue arises. It was surprising to me to see how much diversity of thought exists in one small section of Mennonite-dom.

The most meaningful part of the conference for me was the conversation, initiated by St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship, on variance within the conference. The conference has disciplined the St. Paul church for being unwilling to agree with the entire Mennonite Confession of Faith, specifically on LGBT issues. About 40 people showed up to the discussion, many of whom were in earnest support of the St. Paul group's right to be accepted in the conference. I participated as secretary while honest, open, and articulate people shared actual feelings, which was a very direct contrast to the extremely careful and diplomatic dialogue in the delegate sessions.

In all, the conference was an excellent learning experience, and I would highly recommend attending one!

--*Hannah Breckbill*

## **CPT Report From Hebron**

*Hannah Breckbill, a student at Carleton College, is spending three weeks in Hebron, West Bank, with Christian Peacemaker Teams this summer. She sent the following reflection after her first week. Hannah will speak about her experience during worship on August 17.*

Until this point in the delegation, we have heard stories from Palestinians and dissident Jews, and the stories have been horrible--houses demolished, people detained for no reason, people denied their right to leave the country, and general arbitrariness at the hands of the Israeli army. But even though we saw the faces and the pain and resignation in them, the stories were still just stories.

Yesterday we arrived in Hebron... better to say we arrived outside of Hebron--we had to walk in, because they weren't letting vehicles in or out of the city (reasons: undisclosed). Horns were honking, crowds were headed in every direction--it was a chaotic welcome. We heard of a woman whose baby had been delivered into the hands of an Israeli soldier an hour ago. After we settled in to the CPT apartment, we took a walking tour of Hebron--6 fast, hilly miles, led by 80-year-old Brit John. I might add here that the holy land is extremely hilly and dusty but hamdulillah it hasn't been too hot. Anyway, on the tour we saw the 5000 year old remains of the original Hebron, the well nearby surrounded by ancient pottery shards, and this is where Abraham lived and was buried. (The Ibrahimi mosque is

over his tomb; unlike the Bethlehem stuff, if Abraham existed then this is definitively true). This walk took us by some (illegal--what am I saying, all of them are illegal) Israeli settlements. And some Israeli settlers, who told us to go home, and numerous checkpoints, but the soldiers are new so they don't recognize the CPTers with the red hats as people to be detained yet.

Right now, one settlement's teenagers have set up a tent on Palestinian land between their settlement and the others in the middle of the city (the ones who drop garbage--dirty water, sand, empty bottles, bricks--into the streets below), trying to claim land. Apparently they've done it in the past and the army has taken it down, so we're hoping it goes down in a couple days.

Also recently in At-Tuwani, the village we're going to soon, settlers threw stones at CPTers and children going to school in the morning, and one CPTer was hit in the leg, couldn't run, and so was beat up by masked settlers. Luckily no head trauma. We're going there Saturday morning to accompany the kids.

It is a real challenge to find a way to confront this violence, to get in the way, peacefully and with love rather than a challenge and aggression.

It is time for morning worship, so I will leave you all with that. It's been a great experience so far, and now is when the stories become real.

--*Hannah Breckbill*

## **Saving Money on Groceries During Tough Economic Times**

WIC (Women, Infants, Children) provides vouchers for specific nutritious foods for eligible families with children under age five (income limit for a family of four with 2 kids under five is roughly \$54,000). WIC is a nutrition program that helps eligible pregnant women, new mothers, babies and young children eat well, learn about nutrition, and stay healthy. WIC also provides nutrition education and counseling and referrals to health and other social services. The Seward Co-op accepts WIC, and carries local WIC-eligible eggs, milk, and cheese as well as all other standard WIC items. Farmer's Market checks for locally grown items are also given out in summer.

Hennepin County WIC:

(612) 348-6100

St. Paul/Ramsey County WIC:

(651) 266-1300

Or call 1-800-WIC-4030

Fare For All: Big savings every month on fresh, high quality, nutritious groceries. As food prices continue to rise, more Minnesotans are experiencing significant difficulties affording basic expenses each month. Fare For All is open to anyone who wants to save money on their groceries. Participants have the opportunity to save 40-50% off their monthly food budgets and access fresh fruits and veggies, frozen meats of all kinds, and a variety of non-perishable staple items.

Participating in Fare For All is simple. Participants register and prepay for their food packages either at a local distribution site or through the Fare For All main office. Packages are distributed once a month, generally the third Saturday of the month, at distribution sites in communities across the state.

The Minnesota Emergency Food Network makes this program possible by utilizing its bulk-purchasing power to buy high quality food at prices up to 50% below retail and pass the savings directly on to participants. The more participants that sign up each month, the bigger the savings EFN is able to achieve. There are no income limits on this program.

Anyone who is interested in reducing his or her monthly food expenses qualifies. For more information on how to participate in the Fare For All Program, call 763-450-3880 or go to [www.emergencyfoodshelf.org](http://www.emergencyfoodshelf.org) and click on "Fare For All".

*--Minke Sundseth*

## **Strawberry Harvest and the Love of God**

To write about strawberry harvest is to tell the story of God's training program in love and diversity. Considering the daunting subject matter of becoming aware of God's infinite love to create a peace-filled planet, we might become frustrated and say that most of humanity is still in the first weeks of kindergarten. But for me, participating in strawberry harvest on July 2 at Natura Farm was a very hope-filled experience.

Many people helped organize the school bus trip that we took out to the farm. I posted flyers, talked to people in the park, returned phone calls, and took phone reservations. Dick helped to spread word about strawberry harvest to Carol Greenwood who emailed many Seward residents. Candace collected emails and figured out what to do when the list of registrations exceeded the capacity of the bus. I picked up Lori and Simone, and they helped me assemble whole wheat

bread, cream cheese, and grape jam sandwiches. Then on cue 50+ people showed up at 5:15 pm. Some people had canceled, some did not show up or arrived late, and some showed up without a reservation. Toddlers were buckled into car seats and we scrambled to find a seat for everyone and their stuff. Grace prevailed and by 5:30, with every seat filled, we were heading out to Natura Farm near Hugo, Minnesota. We passed food around the bus, talked, and observed the tornado and storm damage still visible as we passed through Hugo.

Strawberry pickers ranged in age from toddlers to seniors, with last names that represented ethnic identities from around the globe. The group knowledge of harvesting strawberries varied widely. Some were seasoned by a childhood of many harvests and an adult desire to have a home-processed winter store of strawberries, while others had never harvested berries at all. For several individuals, this was their first visit to a farm.

The time was short—only 1 ½ hours to find strawberries and fill containers. Multi-tasking harvesters picked strawberries while conversing with others. The more contemplative ones worked independently, focusing mindfully on their task. Cindy Bjork sat in her walker holding baby Elias at the side of the strawberry field and sang to him. Terry Gerber in a wheelchair also joined in by watching the busy strawberry pickers and soaking in the peaceful farm atmosphere and gentle breeze off the lake. Adults patiently guided children in the art of not stepping on berries and pulling back leaves to find berries. They were challenged with digressions that ranged from admiring a lacy winged insect to reminders that only red berries should be picked.

People were encouraged to bring their own containers or buy a plastic bucket for \$1 from the farm. Most people had ice cream buckets, cake pans, or plastic food bins. I noticed fancy little plastic containers from the grocery store being refilled, while two college students simply used recycled paper grocery bags. Someone brought two coolers for transport of their berries. Another person, in order to make sure the berries would not be crushed, brought metal oven broiler pans. There wasn't time at the farm to collect payments for the berries so Candace and I collected money back in the city as people exited the bus. The various shapes and sizes of containers made it a challenge to determine payment. Again, creative and pragmatic resolutions came into being—probably the result of energy gained by strawberry sampling while harvesting!

The chartered school bus driver said he didn't like strawberries. He drove with his horn in rush hour traffic and didn't know the shortest route. By return trip to the city he had found a more direct route and traffic was much lighter. At the end, we couldn't find the bag for storing seatbelts, and he wasn't too thrilled with straw from the field and food crumbs left behind on the floor of the bus. Just as he was ready to depart, I ran up and I handed him a tip as a gesture of our appreciation. I doubt that school bus drivers receive gratuity very often for their work—his demeanor lightened, he smiled, and his tone of voice was warm and kind.

Pictures of the harvest are available on the bulletin board in the back of the FMC worship space. I'm sure there are many stories to tell, with each participant's viewpoint a little bit different. Diversity will be celebrated in the storytelling about strawberry harvest.

In the book of the universe I believe we created one short chapter called the FMC Strawberry Harvest. If participants continue to invest the energy of strawberries to shape the paradigms of our minds, color the emotions of our hearts, release the creativity of our spirits, and physically embody God's love—then the earth will surely be a better place. The FMC strawberry harvest is one awesome lesson of diversity in the divine school of Love.

--Carol Harder (assisted by Phil Stoltzfus)

## **Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting June 9, 2008 @ FMC**

**Present:** Neil Okerlund, Moderator; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Mike Okerstrom, Deacons; Shelly Hendricks, Education; Melissa Hochstetler, Missions & Service; Alisa Bardo, Worship.

**Absent:** Fellowship representative, Moderator-elect, Treasurer.

**Treasurer's report.** Jerry is out of town. Glenn has seen the report, and weekly congregational giving is still down, which raises some concerns for him. Neil asks whether we should discuss at the next meeting? Glenn says Jerry will be gone for 8 weeks. Shelly asks whether Jerry can report whether people are giving less, or fewer people are giving? Neil will ask for that report next month.

## **Commission reports.**

**Trustees.** Glenn says the renters have left the parsonage, but Trustees are not moving on their spending until we get the check for the lease buy-out, probably at the end of June. All the paperwork is ready. Neil says the plaster work in the sanctuary looks very good. Glenn wants to form an interior decorating committee of four for the sanctuary, to create some drawings and color ideas for congregational feedback. Darrell also met with a heating and cooling contractor and are waiting for an estimate on alternative heating for the building. Nothing further on the kiosk.

**Missions & Service.** Melissa says that the committee met with Carol Harder and Candace Lutt on the Simply in Season project. It is being revised, with less money for foodships, more for transportation, including some buses. The GLBT Pride Parade is in June. Looking for a coordinator for the CROP Walk. A committee of Joetta, Katie Hochstetler, Arlene Geissinger, and hopefully a member of Community of St. Martin, will be working on the kiosk and signage. Joetta is taking pictures of signs around town. She talked to BMC and ISIAAH, who don't need kiosk space, but would like identifying signs. Mennonite World Conference will be preceded by the Global Youth Conference. Committee discussed a fundraiser for sending a youth from the global south. Neil asks if there is a new draft of the proposals policy? Not yet, we will bring back at a future meeting.

**Education.** Shelly says they reviewed the past year. The children's singing time was successful. The youth class is the biggest challenge, due to small, irregular attendance. They discussed the worship survey, and are considering having a 30 minute fellowship time and starting adult Sunday school at 11:15. Will be meeting again to plan for fall.

**Deacons.** Mike said Martha Mayou has resigned from the Deacons, feeling too over-extended. She did agree to write people profiles for the newsletter. Deacons were pleased with the worship survey results. The neighborhood small groups do not meet often enough for some members. Alisa asks whether they are searching for a new deacon? Mike says they have asked Gifts Discernment Committee.

**Worship.** Alisa passes out the compilation of the worship survey results. The numbers are positive, where the comments tended to be more negative, possibly because positive feelings tend to not elicit as many comments? They will distribute the results and add 15 minutes to the fellowship time, with adult Sunday school beginning at 11:15, and children's singing still at 11am.

**Visioning.** Each of the commissions and the pastor have reported on the areas of congregational life to which they give priority, and this information was placed in a chart. The Council then identified areas that may need further attention in the future.

**Other business.** Joetta distributes draft resolutions for Central Plains Conference. Does Council support Joetta voting in approval of these? Yes, in general. There are some issues with wording and rationale. She will distribute these via the Mid-Week Update for congregational review.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

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

#### **A Walk for Life**

It was afternoon in the Arizona desert and the temperature was well over 90° (F). Huddling under a tarp with 65 other people, I searched for some shade. After walking about 13 miles, I felt hot, dirty and tired. I began to wonder if I would survive the next five days as a participant on this year's Migrant Trail, a 75 mile solidarity walk from Sasabe, Mexico to Tucson, Arizona to raise awareness of migrant deaths in the borderlands.

I cannot help but think that the migrants were already absolutely desperate before their journey through the desert. My thoughts of frustration were interrupted by two migrant men approaching us. My heart skipped a beat. I remembered the words of our team leader, "migrants will only come to us if they are absolutely desperate."

We learned that the men had been separated from their coyote (smuggler) when a U.S. Border Patrol helicopter flew over them the day before. Two groups of ten migrants scattered to hide. Without their coyote, they were lost in the middle of a foreign and unforgiving desert. The men found two other women who were soon unable to walk any further. Their water and food supplies were depleted.

Having seen us walking the day before, the men climbed up a mountain high enough to spot our blue tarps and sought us out for help. Our team leaders went to assess the migrant women's health, but unfortunately the women were no longer where the men had left them. We still don't know what happened to them. Humanitarian aid is not a crime, so we gave them food

and water. We were humbly reminded why we were walking, and glad to help people who really needed it.

At the same time, due to strict immigration laws and government policies, there was only so much we could do. We could not provide them with council or advice - except to provide general information such as "Mexico is 20 miles south." We could have made a phone call for them - but not to family or friends, only to the U.S. Border Patrol. (Alternatively, we could have simply waved down a Border Patrol vehicle that passed by every few minutes).

Many Mexicans are forced to leave their families and risk their lives in the desert in hopes of getting a job across the border to feed their families. I cannot help but think that the migrants were already absolutely desperate before their journey through the desert. As I have learned from the migrants I met at the border, and from those already in the United States, they come not because they want to, but because they need to.

Instead of militarizing the U.S.-Mexico border in the name of national security, and dehumanizing our neighbors, policy makers should thoughtfully ask why migrants continue to daily cross the border. Addressing the root causes of migration (like severe poverty and political instability) would serve as an appropriate step forward in decreasing deaths on the borders and creating just and humane immigration laws.

Note: To read more about the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office's daily reflections on the Migrant Trail, please visit [www.washingtonmemo.org](http://www.washingtonmemo.org)

--Valerie Ong, MCC-Washington DC office (colleague of Gabe Schlabach)

#### **A Word To My Mennonite Friends: Cherish Your Treasure!**

About eight months ago I spoke at a conference at Hesston college on faith and politics. While at this conference I sensed very strongly God telling me there was some sort of relationship I (and possibly the church I pastor) was to have with the Mennonites. More specifically, at the end of the conference I received a very clear and burning message I *knew* I was to share with the Mennonites. Whatever else this "relationship" entailed, I knew it included sharing this message. Yet, I had no idea when or how this message was to be shared.

Then about two months ago I received an invitation to

speak at an historic gathering of Mennonite leaders in Columbus, Ohio. When the Executive Director of the Mennonite denomination (Jim Schrag) explained to me what he hoped my talk would accomplish I got goose bumps because it was *exactly* what God had put on my heart at Hesston seven months earlier. I have rarely been part of something that was so obviously providential. I was humbled and delighted to be given this important assignment. My message was -- and is -- basically this.

There is a beautiful and powerful grassroots Kingdom movement arising all over the globe that Mennonites in particular need to notice. Millions of people are abandoning the Christendom paradigm of the traditional Christian faith in order to become more authentic followers of Jesus. From the Emergent Church movement to the Urban Monastic Movement to a thousand other independent groups and movements, people are waking up to the truth that the Kingdom of God looks like Jesus and that the heart of Christianity is simply imitating him. Millions are waking up to the truth that followers of Jesus are called to love the unlovable, serve the oppressed, live in solidarity with the poor, proclaim Good News to the lost and be willing to lay down our life for our enemies. Multitudes are waking up to the truth that the distinctive mark of the Kingdom is the complete rejection of all hatred and violence and the complete reliance on love and service of others, including our worst enemies. Masses of people are waking up to the truth that followers of Jesus aren't called to try to win the world by acquiring power *over* others but by exercising power *under* others -- the power of self-sacrificial love.

What many who are being caught up in this movement lack is a sense of *tribal identity* and *historical rooting*, and many are looking for his. A central feature of post-modernity is the longing to "live in a story" that's bigger than oneself. Many, therefore, are looking for a tradition they can align with.

The only tradition that embodies what this rising breed of Kingdom radicals is looking for is the Anabaptist tradition (which the Mennonites are heir to). This is the only tradition that consistently refused political power and violence. This is the only tradition that made humble, self-sacrificial love the centerpiece of what it means to follow Jesus. It's the only tradition that isn't soaked in blood and the only tradition that looks remotely like Jesus. Many (in fact, *most*) of the early leaders of this movement in the 16th century paid for their non-compliance with the Christendom paradigm by being martyred. This tradition is a treasure to be

cherished. And it's a tradition whose time may have come, for this is precisely the vision of the Kingdom that millions today are waking up to.

The irony is that, just as millions like myself are running toward this treasure, many Mennonites are running away from it. In the name of becoming culturally relevant, the distinctive, radical aspects of the Anabaptist tradition are being downplayed by some as they become "mainstream" American Christians. For example, some Mennonite churches now allow national flags on their premises -- even in their sanctuaries! This was always taboo among Mennonites, for they have always (wisely) been keenly aware of the danger of mixing the Kingdom with nationalism. So too, some churches are now letting their Kingdom message get co-opted by politics -- some on "the right" and others on "the left," which in turn is beginning to create tensions in the church. And some churches have even begun to back off the centrality of their stance against violence.

So, my message to the Mennonites, in a nutshell, was (and is) this: *Cherish Your Treasure!* Not in a prideful way, of course, but simply as a precious gift God has given you and that God wants to give the world through you. Be daringly flexible on all matters that aren't central to the Kingdom (e.g. worship styles, dress, etc.), but be utterly uncompromising on all matters that are central to the Kingdom (viz. everything that pertains to living a Jesus-looking life). My Mennonite sisters and brothers, you have what multitudes in the rising Kingdom movement are longing for. You can provide a home to so many who right now are looking for one. If you hold fast to the faith you've been entrusted with (Jude 3), you may just find your fellowship exploding in the years to come. For, I believe, the Anabaptist vision of the Kingdom is a vision whose time has come.

I am deeply humbled and honored to have been invited to share this word with the leaders of the Mennonite Church last week. My prayer is that God uses it to prepare them to fulfill the vital role God has for them in the Kingdom movement he's inspiring in our day.

--Greg Boyd, Pastor, Woodland Hills Church (an evangelical megachurch in St. Paul)

## **"Grief" ...The Journey Through Loss**

The Bradshaw Grief Resource Center offers a five-week informational series that provides individuals and families information, insights, understanding and

support through the grief process. Various topics will be discussed such as:

- what is the grief process
- our emotions
- communication
- taking care of yourself
- goal setting
- rebuilding our lives

It is important that you attend all of the sessions. Please allow yourself four weeks after a death before attending this group. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting the group becomes closed to new attendees. Sessions are free. Mondays, 7 p.m., August 4, 11, 18, 25, and September 8 at Bradshaw-Minnehaha, 3131 Minnehaha Avenue S., Minneapolis, 612-724-3621.

**Deadline for August newsletter items is noon, August 28<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.

## Little Summer Poem Touching the Subject of Faith

Every summer  
I listen and look  
under the sun's brass and even  
into the moonlight, but I can't hear

anything, I can't see anything --  
not the pale roots digging down, nor the green  
stalks muscling up,  
nor the leaves  
deepening their damp pleats,

nor the tassels making,  
nor the shucks, nor the cobs.

And still,  
every day,

the leafy fields  
grow taller and thicker--  
green gowns lofting up in the night,  
showered with silk.

And so, every summer,  
I fail as a witness, seeing nothing--  
I am deaf too  
to the tick of the leaves,

the tapping of downwardness from the banyan feet--  
all of it  
happening  
beyond any seeable proof, or hearable hum.

And, therefore, let the immeasurable come.  
Let the unknowable touch the buckle of my spine.

Let the wind turn in the trees,  
and the mystery hidden in the dirt

swing through the air.  
How could I look at anything in this world  
and tremble, and grip my hands over my heart?  
What should I fear?

One morning  
in the leafy green ocean  
the honeycomb of the corn's beautiful body  
is sure to be there.

--Mary Oliver