

Faith Connection

August 2009

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

Faith Mennonite Church is a Christ-centered community which seeks to be a place of welcome and nurture for all. Our lives are guided by the life of Jesus and the historic peace position of the Mennonite Church. Our members are people from varied religious backgrounds, and diverse cultures, gay and straight, young and old. We invite you to join us in being a sign of God's healing and hope in our community and world.

Pastoral Musings...

Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation may spring up, and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also; I the Lord have created it.

Isaiah 45:8

While some parts of the country have been receiving an excess of rain this summer, here in the Twin Cities we've experienced drought. As I've diligently watered my garden and young trees so they don't get overly stressed, I've thought about times of spiritual drought and how much they parallel what we experience in the natural environment.

A drought can begin at any time. I have often found that after a time of "showers of blessings" when I've experienced a strong sense of God's presence in my family, community, church, or particular events, things suddenly become dry. I find it hard to pray or to feel inspired by what I read. It would be very easy to simply wilt and stop making an effort, but persisting in spiritual disciplines during these dry times is much like watering our depleted gardens. Things don't grow as quickly as with a soaking rain, but the watering does keep them alive and it keeps the soil receptive so that when the downpour finally comes, it doesn't just run off a hard and crusted surface.

When we're in the midst of a spiritually dry time we sometimes need a change of scenery. Last week Gerald and I drove to Grand Marais, Michigan, to visit my mother and attend the 80th anniversary of the K-12 school I attended. Driving across Wisconsin, we feasted on verdant vistas of lush agricultural land. While we were in a Grand Marais a bank of fog moved in and settled over the town, receding only momentarily to give us fleeting views of Lake Superior. After four days of damp, foggy weather, dry didn't seem so bad after all. Visiting the new Adult Learning Center that the Pan-

African Community Organization opened in early July and listening to Aryn Baxter talk of the challenges of rebuilding trust in Rwanda following the genocide have both served as recent "change-of-scenery" experiences that helped me focus on God's Spirit at work outside of my personal landscape.

Although talk about the weather won't bring rain, talking with friends about our spiritual droughts (and blessings) does indeed help brighten the forecast. We are never alone and others can shower us with affirmations and new perspectives that help us feel refreshed.

--Joetta Schlabach

"The world is too dangerous for anything but truth and too small for anything but love."

--William Sloane Coffin

What's happening at FMC...

Car Sabbath – August 30

The Missions & Service Commission invites the congregation to take part in another Car Sabbath on the last Sunday of August. Most of the feedback from the first Car Sabbath in May was positive. A number of people reported that it was easier to get to church without a car than they anticipated and several people forged new friendships along the Midtown Greenway. However, the treasurer reported a low offering day, so we need to remember that it's fine to carry greenbacks when we're going green!

The purpose of Car Sabbath is to challenge ourselves to occasionally let our cars rest for an entire day. While

this may not be possible for folks who live at greater distances, we encourage those who can to walk, bike, take transit, carpool, or explore other creative modes of transportation!

Back to School Sundays, August 30 and September 6

As the time of year approaches when families are buying school supplies, we encourage families and other individuals to buy extra supplies for School Kits for Mennonite Central Committee. MCC reports that School kits are their most requested item. They are given primarily to refugee and displaced children, helping students and teachers add some normalcy to disrupted lives. Areas that experienced natural disasters also receive them with joy. MCC sends school kits to places such as Bosnia, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Liberia, Nicaragua, North Korea, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine and to poorly funded schools in Canada and the United States. In 2008 MCC shipped over 120,000 school kits.

We will collect school kits on August 30 and September 6. A complete school kit includes (all new):

- 4 spiral or perforated notebooks (about 21.5cm x 27cm / 8.5" x 10.5" and 70 sheets
- 4 unsharpened pencils
- 1 ruler flat, flexible plastic; indicating both 30cm and 12")
- 12 colored pencils (in packaging)
- large pencil eraser

Kits can be brought in plastic bags or in double drawstring cloth bags (28 cm x 40.6 cm / 11 in x 16 in). Directions for making the bags are found at mcc.org/kits/kitbags/. A few cloth bags are available at church. We also invite school age children to bring their personal backpack on either of these Sundays. During children's time we will offer a "Backpack Blessing" for children as they return to school.

Faith and Community

In early July, Joetta, Joan Kreider, and I took a tour of the new Pan-African Community Organization (PACO) Learning Center. Earlier this year, many of you helped make this center possible—through helping with the fundraising meal in March, providing feedback, and through a direct contribution from the church. I know that starting a new adult education program to teach ESL, computers, and civics was ambitious. I confess that at times I was skeptical that it would really come together. But on our tour, I was grateful for Faith Mennonite's role in making this center possible.

When we were there we saw about a dozen East African adults learning how to maximize and minimize windows on a computer screen. We also heard from their enthusiastic and dedicated program coordinator, Reid Olsen. We heard about the many individuals who were very grateful that there was a center open, which they trusted, and could learn English. Reid and PACO's director, Dukassa Lemu, also told us about their plans for sustaining the funding and management of the center, which I also found encouraging.

Susan Weinlick has started volunteering at the center, and several others from Faith have been in contact with Reid about starting to volunteer. They are in need of additional volunteers, especially volunteers who are able to take a 12 hour course with the Minnesota Literacy Council so they can help with teaching ESL classes. They also are in need of tutors and people to help in other ways. If you are interested, contact Reid at reidolsen@gmail.com or 503-896-1186.

In July, Haven Schrock and I have also had a lot of fun making silly movies with kids at the Seward Towers. About ten Somali kids from each of the two Towers brainstormed ideas for movies, which ended up both being about attacks on the White House. The kids acted out the stories, and we'll show the movies in the final week of July, with an audience of others from FMC. After one of the movie making time, one of the older kids was very curious about how to edit movies on computers, so Haven found a computer and showed him a couple of things. If you missed seeing the movies, ask Haven or me about some of the highlights. I hope that this experience leads to other connections between FMC and the Seward Towers. Many at the Towers are eager for more connections with the surrounding neighborhood. If you have inspirations for how you would like to connect with the Towers, let me know.

-- Michael Bischoff

Pink Menno at MCUSA

Mennonite Church USA Conference attendees from FMC also participated in activities of the Pink Menno Campaign. The grassroots movement began early in 2009 with several young adults wanting to create a large positive visible presence at the Mennonite conference calling on the denomination to be welcoming of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Mennonites. Pink Menno spread the word through web based social networking as well as at many local Mennonite Churches. Pink Menno sold pink t-shirts, bandanas, bracelets and gave away many pink items so supporters could be very visible throughout the

week. Pink Menno also collaborated with the Open Letter to the Mennonite Church group, Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, and MennoNeighbors at the conference in Columbus. The groups hosted a Hospitality Room in a hotel near the convention center where movie screenings, seminars, and meetings were held.

While the room was difficult for many to find, many people came through every day of the conference to get Pink items, information, fellowship, and chat in a safe environment. The collaborating groups also held worship services and hymn sings throughout the week around the convention center and held a witness and press conference attended by over 100 supporters as well as local, national (AP), and denominational media. The positive presence of Pink Menno and its allies was a powerful witness to support for increased dialogue and welcome in the Mennonite Church USA. Some at the conference found the Pink Menno message and presence threatening and offensive. There were some who wanted to argue with people in pink and tell them they were wrong. The backlash was relatively small and was visibly negative in light of the powerful positive witness of Pink Menno and its allies.

The Pink Menno movement has grown and continues after the conference in Columbus as plans for continued organizing in the church and at the upcoming conference in Pittsburgh in 2011 are underway.

--Katie Hochstedler

Moved by the Spirit

Having little experience and understanding of the Holy Spirit left me feeling a bit clueless about the theme of the Mennonite Church USA convention 2009, "Breathe and be Filled." In the months leading up to the convention I really couldn't imagine how this ethereal idea would work in a very concrete setting. The biblical reference is John 20:21-22.

After reading this passage and listening to thoughts expressed by many of the presenters, especially the worship leaders and speakers, I found the flavor to be decidedly evangelical. While this made me slightly uncomfortable, I found myself being drawn in as the Holy Spirit was at work both in the delegate sessions and in the rest of the convention. I wasn't always in touch with It but It was there, in me and others; between us and among us. As one worship leader asked, the Spirit is in us, can you feel it?

Of course the main focus was the delegate sessions where old business was completed, new business and on-going initiatives discussed, and three resolutions presented and passed. One resolution was a statement against human trafficking and modern day slavery, one a call for access to healthcare for all, and the last asked to keep the discussion open on the treatment of GLBTQ people in the Church and the Church's position on homosexuality. The statement against human trafficking was unanimously passed due to the abhorrence of this type of mistreatment of other people. The Health care statement also passed. It did not endorse any particular resolution to the current state of healthcare but explained what a biblically ethical system should be like. The last resolution passed with a strong majority especially after some careful editing. I'm not sure that everyone understood the changes to be a step toward a more inclusive atmosphere but I could feel the change in the room (and in me) when the word affirm was replaced by the word acknowledge in reference to "the statements by Mennonite Church USA on Human Sexuality which have been previously passed and are currently in place". People on both sides of the issue voted for the resolution. The Spirit manifests in such incredible ways.

We usually began day with worship, which was filled with hymn singing. Session times would be interspersed with moving personal stories that verged on the miraculous and hymn singing. Out in the main hall, I joined Pink Menno hymn sings on several occasions. Evening events included even more hymn singing, with one evening devoted specifically to the singing of hymns. The Spirit soars in us when hymns are sung from the heart.

Strong emotions would fill the spaces in people, among people and around where people met. The delegate assembly hall, the Nationwide Arena (scene of meetings for youth, and a combined and adult worship, and the hymn sing), the main hall with temporary circles of Pink Menno's, the Pink Menno hospitality suite, the corner of the Exhibition Hall where the institutions of higher learning were squeezed together, all vying for the hearts and minds of throngs of young adults and high school juniors and seniors and vice versa, and the activity area beyond the exhibits where basketball and other sports were enthusiastically played. The Spirit moves in such activities.

Did I mention singing?

--Leslie Minkler

Comings and Goings

We welcome those who have recently visited or begun attending worship. If you haven't yet met these folks, please say hello and look for an opportunity to get better acquainted.

- Travis Lusk
- Andrea Northwood
- Ben and Lauren

FMC Provides A Resting Place For Two Winnipeg Youth Groups

On Saturday evening, July 24, a group of youth and sponsors from the Sterling Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg spent the night at Faith Mennonite Church before continuing on their way to Kentucky for a week of service with the MCC SWAP (Serving with Appalachian People) program. On Monday evening, July 27, the youth and sponsors from Ft. Garry Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, bedded down in the church on their return trip from New Orleans where they had worked with Mennonite Disaster Service. Both groups expressed thanks to the church for this hospitality.

The Ft. Garry group left a peace candle with the following explanation: "In 1985, the Rev. Blair R. Monie, pastor of 1st Presbyterian Church in York, PA, visited the Soviet Union. In the small town of Vorenezh, an old woman approached him and pressed a small sum of money into his hand and asked that he do something for world peace. He recognized a deep desire and strong devotion in her eyes and voice and determined that he would do something special when he returned to his congregation.

What could he do with three rubles? After much thought he purchased a small votive candle, placed it on the communion table and lit it. After hearing his story, the congregation agreed to make it a permanent accessory of the chancel and purchased a supply of votive candles so they could make a "Peace Candle" available to any visitor to take back to his/her sanctuary.

When we see the glow of our peace candle burning, we offer our prayers for peace. The small, non-threatening symbol of peace helps us to be a praying people and to play our part as peacemakers, as Jesus called us to do. Today, these candles burn in the United States, England, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Kuwait, South Africa, Denmark, and other countries.

Our candle came to us from First Mennonite Church in

Leamington, Ontario. Please accept this candle for your congregation with our prayers for peace. It is our hope that your congregation will join us in spreading this reminder of peace by making candles available for visitors to take back to their churches."

– Ft. Garry Mennonite Fellowship

Joetta's August Schedule

Our family will travel to Malaysia August 3-17 to be present at Gabriel and Valerie's wedding on August 15. I will be back August 18-21 before traveling to Laurelville Mennonite Center in Pennsylvania for the annual Mennonite-Catholic Bridgefolk gathering, August 21-24. During these absences, please contact a deacon in case of an emergency or for spiritual care needs. I invite your prayers as we travel and celebrate.

--Joetta Schlabach

Missions and Service Report

Missions and Services Commission met June 17 at 7:00 pm. Michael Bischoff, Donna Minter, Joetta Schlabach, Melissa Hochstetler, and Katie Hochstedler were in attendance. The first items discussed were reporting on the Alternatives to Violence Workshop and the Car Sabbath. Both events were seen as generally positive. Next was reporting on the education time with Families Moving Forward and fundraising connected to that. We were really pleased by the response and want to think about ways to do more collective donations like this for other organizations we support. Katie reported that over \$800 was raised at the Pink Menno Fundraising Dinner and the event was a great success. Due to the low cost of travel to Louisiana for the MDS group, the M&S committee decided to reimburse for hotel expenses as well.

After reporting, we looked at events coming up. We are beginning to plan a community meal in the Fall titled Who are the Mennonites? October 24 is the tentative date. Michael, Donna, and Melissa will form a subcommittee to plan this event and will be looking for others interested in helping to plan. We will not need to help with weeding the Peace Garden on July 5 as was tentatively planned but we will ask attendees to help do some weeding and outdoor upkeep around the FMC church building after the potluck July 5 instead. The Strawberry Picking event is scheduled for Wednesday, July 1. Marcia Siggelkow is getting flyers out and taking reservations for the bus. Katie is organizing a Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Women's

Community Potluck and Social for July 18. We will be specially inviting lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer women from nearby faith communities and the surrounding community.

Michael reported on his community work and summer projects. He's looking for ways to get more corporate engagement in the projects and events he's working on to create some sustainability in the congregation. Michael is interested in working on having more time for sharing stories in church time of reflection. He will also be making movies with youth from Seward Towers and want people from the congregation to come show support for movies and youth. PACO seems to be set to get started in July with the learning center, Michael would like to get group from FMC to visit/connect with them when it is up and going. Joetta reported that she met with the pastor of the Oromo congregation across the corner from FMC. She feels it is still early in the relationship and wants to work to get more acquainted with the congregation.

--Katie Hochstedler

Strawberry Picking at Natura Farms

On the warm, sunny evening of Wednesday, July 1, a group of 34 people went strawberry picking at Natura Farms, located southeast of Forest Lake in Marine on St. Croix. The group was a mixture of the Faith Mennonite community and its neighbors. At \$16 per 5 quarts of berries, everyone had a fun time picking the big, juicy jewel strawberries off of the plants. Our buckets filled up fast even though we sampled while we picked. Paul, at Natura Farms, encouraged us to try the berries before we picked and once our buckets were full.

Natura Farms does not use any type of herbicide; instead, they mulch the ground well with thick, soft straw. Not only is this great for the berries, but it makes for some comfortable picking accommodations! This isn't the only thing that Natura Farms does to take care of its berries (and in turn it's customers). Paul told us that he takes a particular interest in the soil; since the soil is the life source for all that he grows, he makes sure that it is the healthiest and richest that it possibly can be. He claims this is one of the reasons that his berries are so tasty – and as an eater of his berries, I can vouch for the fact that his berries are superior to other berries I've tried!

If you missed this strawberry picking trip, perhaps you'll want to go check out the farm some time. There are greenhouses full of herbs and tomatoes, as well as

rows of currants (red, white and black) and apples. There are a couple different varieties of raspberries so that there is a longer raspberry season. There is no shortage of amazing produce available for your picking at Natura Farms (for more information regarding what is in season, and for directions: www.naturafarms.com).

--Marcia Siggelkow

Meet Your Fellow FMCers

There is comfort in our church routine. We enjoy the familiarity and regularity of coming to the same building on the same day of the week. We look forward to growing our relationships with familiar people and meeting new ones. Many of us enjoy “old-standby” hymns and Scripture sometimes memorized from childhood. And for many of us, this Sunday morning routine starts by coming into church and seeing Teresa Wasick, one of our ever-cheerful and seemingly always present ushers. It may surprise some that behind that cheerful smile beats the heart of an avid NASCAR fan.

Teresa is a Twin Cities native, growing up in Richfield. Aside from a brief stint in North Carolina, Minneapolis has been home for most of her life. Like many at FMC, Teresa grew up Catholic and attended Catholic school through 6th grade. Unlike our small, intimate congregation, Teresa's childhood parish had over 1,000 members. She doesn't get back to her Catholic roots often (“Only for weddings and funerals,” she says) and mentions that she misses nothing about her Catholic roots.

Teresa started attending FMC around 1987. She was attending a night class at the U when she met another woman who was attending Faith. She admits it took a little a while to visit (“[the acquaintance] met her husband, got married and had a child”) but once she did visit, she liked what she found. “I liked the small congregation. When I first attended the services were not too structured and I really appreciated that,” she said. She became involved with Loaves and Fishes and the precursor to Ten Thousand Villages, the Jubilee Shop. Although she left quickly after services, she says it was hard to hide from Myron Schrag (then the pastor at FMC) and Patricia Mack. Teresa has been an usher since 1994, providing 15 years of smiles and service.

Outside of church, Teresa works in commercial insurance (the company insures construction related companies). She received a two-year certificate in accounting from Minneapolis Vo-Tech, though she never did much with it. After working at Dayton's for seven years in operations and a three year stint in North

Carolina, she moved back to Minneapolis and began working in insurance in 1985. In her free time, Teresa enjoys yoga, hiking, biking, camping in the BWCA and canoeing “almost anywhere.” The long Minnesota winters still find Teresa outside where she regularly cross country skis and ice skates. Teresa also enjoys gardening, although her laments about gardening are all too familiar to those of us who try our hands growing flowers or vegetables: “I don’t have enough time, talent or money,” she says. Amen.

Teresa lives close to church in the Seward neighborhood. “I really love living in Minneapolis,” she says. “It has everything!” She loves the wide variety of jobs, the bluffs, the open spaces including rivers, lakes and parks. Teresa also appreciates the diversity of the city and how much richness that offers to our community.

And NASCAR? She started following the circuit in 2003, although only from TV. When asked if she attends races in person, she admits that she doesn’t. “Too noisy and dirty,” she notes. She is a Jeff Gordon fan (“He is, of course, the best,” she adds) although she really has no favorite. “They all seem to be decent guys,” she says. “I cheer most of them on.”

--Adam Nafziger

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting June 15th, 2009 @ FMC

Present: Joan Kreider, Moderator; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect; Jenny Wandersee, Worship; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service; Rhonda Martin, guest (conference delegate); Leslie Minkler, guest (conference delegate).

Absent: Education representative, Fellowship representative, Pastor-Parish representative.

Affirmations. Joetta affirms Leslie and Minke for weeding, and the trustees for running the pigeons out of the attic. Rhonda affirms all the kids in the nursery. Hermann affirms Sophie, who signed the hymnals for graduates with her favorite song, Come and See. Joan affirms those who have been sharing their stories in worship. Joetta especially affirms them for saying “yes” right away.

Treasurer’s report. Jerry says May was uneventful, despite losing most of one Sunday’s giving due to the car sabbath. We still took in \$3000 more than we spent.

Commission reports.

Trustees. Glenn says they’re moving ahead with the square opening in the sidewalk, will be grinding out the stump and planting flowers. Bernie Waibel will be redoing the exterior front doors. Joetta asks whether this will include weatherstripping? They also cleared pigeons out of the attic, and closed it up. Their next agenda will be guidelines on use of the building.

Missions and Service. Katie reports not much new this time. The date for strawberry picking is scheduled.

Worship. Jenny says they’re currently planning summer services.

Education. Joetta says they’re still looking for a children’s education commissioner.

Deacons. Hermann says they’re planning an in-town deacons’ retreat for early fall.

Pastor. Joetta will be traveling quite a bit this summer.

She will be an observer for MCUSA of the National Council of Churches annual meeting in November in Minneapolis. Teresa Wasick is organizing an MMA Stewardship University here in the spring. Possible also a stewardship Sunday this fall. MCUSA is trying to establish a “Corinthian Plan” to provide health care for all pastors and denominational staff. Cost to FMC would be \$2300 minus a waiver fee (since Joetta is already covered through Gerald), plus \$10 per regular attendee. This would be our contribution to the pool for uninsured pastors. The program needs 80% participation to be viable. We need to decide by October 1.

Old business.

Handbook. The office is collecting documents for this.

Hermann notes that many of these are just “photos” of how we look today, but may change. Glenn suggests dating the descriptions in the handbook. Joan suggests that they should be reviewed at the retreat of the new church council every year. The office will collate and distribute, and post on the member section of the website.

New business.

Preparation for MCUSA conference. Joan describes the identity statement for the church as primarily a peace church. Our delegates should tell the story of our church. Gregg notes that half of FMC is not from a Mennonite background. Hermann notes that we’re a welcoming congregation and are attracting young families (not “destroying families,” as GLBT opponents might say). And we still work with Emmanuel MC, despite our differences. Joetta says this congregation was active in the anti-war movement in the 60s, and we’re still addressing current issues. People who are attracted to that approach help us grow. Scott says

members still value the “adult decision” character of Anabaptists. Gregg notes that unlike some other more liberal congregations, we’re politically engaged, but still explicitly Christian. Joetta says Arlene Holdeman has written a history of the congregation that she will give to our delegates Leslie and Rhonda. Katie will be participating in the “pink Menno” initiative. They want a critical mass of pink. Their message is that the church should be GLBT welcoming, should stop disciplining, discriminating. They’re trying to engage people in positive conversation. Hermann asks whether they’ll be able to have a table? Katie says probably not. Menno Neighbors will have a table, although they’re a little wishy-washy on the issue. They have also secured some space next to the conference for seminars.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Several documents are distributed. The Open Letter to MCUSA on LGBT concerns, Joetta’s letter in response, a supportive resolution from John Zimmerman, to restore St Paul Mennonite Fellowship, and Ed Kaufman’s letter to the conference asking for respectful discussion. Council discusses potential responses by FMC delegates.

--*Gregg Richardson, Secretary*

Deadline for September newsletter items is noon, Thursday, August 27th.

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 on 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*