

Faith Connection

August 2010

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...

I wouldn't give a fig for simplicity on this side of complexity, but I'd give my life for simplicity on the other side of complexity. –Oliver Wendell Holmes

This past weekend Gerald and I were at the St. John's Abbey for the annual conference of Bridgefolk, a grassroots gathering of "peace-minded Catholics and sacramentally-minded Mennonites" who have been getting together since 1999 to build bridges of friendship and understanding. While out for an early morning walk one day, I listened to a podcast of Krista Tippett's recent *Speaking-of-Faith* interview with Mennonite John Paul Lederach. Lederach is a 25-year veteran and pioneer in the field of international mediation and conflict resolution, whom Gerald and I got to know in Central America in the early 1980s. I was so moved by the podcast that I listened to it a second time the following morning.

Lederach shared the Oliver Wendell Holmes quote about simplicity and complexity as he talked about the multifaceted nature of conflict resolution. Over many years he has begun to listen for poetry during difficult negotiation sessions. He has noticed that often, in the midst of complicated conversations, someone will speak in an almost Haiku-like way. The simple wisdom they capture emerges from countless hours—sometimes years—of struggle to forge relationships of respect among individuals and groups with deep divisions. This work begins without a clear outcome in view, yet people commit themselves to a process—to enter the complexity—because they desire peace.

While Lederach has worked in places like Nepal, Nicaragua, and Colombia, with decades-old conflicts that encompass culture, religion and control of land and productive resources, his insights resonated with the experience Gerald and I have had with ecumenical

dialogue. Time and again, tired of the pain of misunderstanding and division around issues such as why Mennonites and Catholics cannot jointly celebrate communion, I have been tempted to want quick resolution (simplicity on this side of complexity). Such simplicity generally means wanting the other to see and do things *my way*. But remaining in relationship has surprising outcomes: together we find new ways that neither side had imagined. This year's surprise was that we could spend a full weekend exploring the meaning and practice of footwashing (you'll hear more about this come Lent 2011!).

Our Bridgefolk experience and Lederach's words have given me a new perspective on what occurred at our Central Plains Conference Annual Meeting in June with regard to the recommendation from the Unity Task Group (in which Katie Hochstedler and I participated). Those of us on the Task Group had the privilege of entering the complexity together, where we began forging genuine relationships despite differences. The resulting proposal was really quite simple. Yet the feedback from the delegate body suggested that many were confused by the simplicity. They had not had the same opportunity to enter the complexity or to forge the relationships that build trust.

While my initial reaction was pain, regret and a frustration that *they* couldn't get it, I sense the Spirit calling me to a renewed commitment to keep rowing in the cross-currents of complexity. I was reminded this past weekend that Jesus kneeled and washed the feet of Judas, just as Judas was about to betray him. Jesus bids us to do the same and he promises to be present as we do so. With the Spirit's power I want to keep seeking "simplicity on the other side of complexity."

--Joetta Schlabach

What's happening at FMC...

Five From FMC Attend Central Plains Conference Annual Meeting in June

Faith Mennonite Church had a robust presence at the CPMC Annual Meeting June 24-27 in Mountain Lake. Jerry Janzen, Matthew Kinney, Leslie Minkler, and Joetta Schlabach were official delegates. Katie Hochstetler participated as a member of the Unity Task Group. Scott Neil served as parliamentarian for the business meetings. Matthew led a workshop on dramatic Scripture presentations and Joetta co-led a workshop on praying through music.

The theme for this year's annual meeting "Mission at the Center of our Story: Going where Jesus intends us to go." David Boshart, pastor at West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa, who will become the new CPMC Executive Conference Minister in September, was the featured speaker. In three presentations—one of which was interrupted by a tornado warning that sent us to sheltered areas within the school where we met—Dave provided stimulating input, followed by case studies for table groups to discuss.

There were several major agenda issues for delegates to consider this year:

1. Conference Restructuring. CPMC is now ten years old, having formed from two previous conferences (Iowa-Nebraska and Northern District, plus several congregations from the Central District). The structure that was created at that time has worked fairly well but some structural gaps have appeared. Delegates gave approval to experiment for a three-year period with a new administrative structure. The new structure has staff positions designed around conference mission goals, with staff members rather than volunteers charged with carrying responsibility for the vision and direction of the conference. Most standing committees will be replaced by short-term task groups, formed to respond to specific needs.
2. Unity Proposal. Because of ongoing conflict surrounding understanding of homosexuality and divergent practice around welcome of glbt persons (and the ongoing provisional status of St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship), the Conference Council last year appointed a Unity Task Group to work on a recommendation on

how the Conference might proceed in unity even when there is not full agreement. (The content of this proposal was shared in a previous FMC newsletter.) The discussion of the proposal was done around tables, using the same Circle Process that the Unity Task Group had used in its meetings and work. While many people expressed appreciation for this process (and many said they hoped to begin using it in their home congregations), and while a great deal of honest communication took place, the feedback from the table conversations revealed that there was not sufficient consensus to move forward with a vote. A summary of conference leadership understanding of what occurred, and what they recommend as we move forward, is available on the CPMC website: centralplains.mennonite.net.

3. Allegiance and the national anthem. As a result of Goshen College's decision earlier this year to begin playing an instrumental version of the national anthem before athletic events for the first time in its history, there has been a great deal of conversation and concern among GC alumni and supporting congregations who believe this action violates Mennonite commitments to peacemaking and separation of church and state. A workshop was provided for people to learn more about the issues that led Goshen to make this decision and also to hear counter perspectives. One delegate session was dedicated to conversations in table groups about peoples' experiences and understandings of how Mennonites do or do not participate in actions such as the Pledge of Allegiance and/or singing the national anthem.

Leslie Minkler, a first-time participant at a CPMC annual meeting, found similarities and differences from the Mennonite Church USA Assembly she attended in Columbus last summer. "Central Plains was more intimate (i.e., much smaller) than the national meeting with a similar meeting style that included prayers and singing with each session. The set up was the same with circular tables and assigned seating. Also, just like Mennonite USA, the people at my table had different views on the topics at hand but we respected each other. I liked the use of the Circle Process talking piece at the tables at Central Plains as it allowed everyone to have a chance to speak without being interrupted."

--Joetta Schlabach

Congratulations & Farewell

Natalija Zacharova-Nausede will be completing her MA program in Comparative and International Development Education at the University of Minnesota and returning to Lithuania in mid-August. Natalija arrived last August as a Fulbright scholar and a Delta Kappa Gamma Society International fellow. She immediately became a regular and engaged participant at FMC. We will miss her as she returns home and we pray for success as she returns to her job as Director of Study Abroad at LCC International University. We will keep her family in prayer as they continue to grieve the sudden death of her father in early summer.

Comings & Goings

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently visited or begun attending worship this summer:

Aryn Baxter, returning from two years in Rwanda
Steven Cress, recent Goshen College graduate doing a summer internship in St. Paul
Jim Kuebelbeck, former organist at this church when it was Ebenezer Lutheran Church
Andy Martinson, *Alisa Bardo-Martinson*, and *Phoebe*, returning from a year in Washington, DC
Sam, *Heather*, *Lucy* and *Mimi Reinert*, Seward neighbors
Kristi, *Tyler*, *Joy* and *Luke Zabriskie*, moved from Pasadena, California, at beginning of summer

We bid farewell to:

Steve Cayford, who moved to Portland, Oregon, at the beginning of June
Tom LoBello, who has decided to seek another place of fellowship

Library Corner

“Let those December winds bellow ‘n’ blow, I’m as warm as a July tomato... You can taste a little of the summer, my grandma’s put it all in jars” – Greg Brown, Canned Goods

As an urban/suburban dweller, I didn’t grow up with home-canned foods. Though my grandmas didn’t put it all in jars, I have recently come to appreciate the wonder of enjoying the fruits of my summer labors in the midst of winter. (Particularly after participating in the FMC strawberry picking last month!) Now Herald Press, the Mennonite publishing house that brought us the *More With Less Cookbook*, *Extending the Table*, and *Simply*

in Season, has published a wonderful guide for those who want to freeze, can, pickle, or dry “almost anything”.

Saving the Seasons was released in May and is a beautiful addition to the world of cookbooks. With beautiful photographs illustrating clear, step-by-step instructions, it’s a wonderful book for beginners. It is also a great resource for seasoned locavores looking for a new recipe or method for preserving local foods to brighten up a winter meal. There’s a copy of *Saving the Seasons* in our church library, along with several other titles related to food and faith. Stop by the library display at the back of the church, and look on the library shelves under “M”.

--*Cynthia Miller*

Shalom Readers’ Club

Shalom Readers Club has been a ministry of Central Plains Mennonite Conference from its beginning. Its purpose is to nurture children in the Jesus’ way of love, peace, and justice by reading carefully selected, age appropriate literature. Jesus modeled shalom and often taught by telling stories both simple and profound that reached into the hearts of those who listened. Stories still speak, teach, and nurture, even in the 21st century! This club is for ages 4 through 8th grade and will begin this September. More information to follow in the mailboxes of families with kids. If you have any questions, please contact Marcia Siggelkow, maflyer@gmail.com.

--*Marcia Siggelkow*

July Berry Picking

On Thursday, July 1, a group of about 25 people took a rented school bus up to Natura Farms to pick strawberries. The group consisted of Faith Mennonite folks and friends. For the third year in a row the Missions and Service committee organized the trip to the farm located in Marine on St. Croix. With the weather acting strange this year it was a bit difficult to know when the strawberry season would start and end, so scheduling a trip in advance was a bit of a crapshoot. Our scheduled day to go picking ended up landing on a beautiful warm evening on one of the last days of the strawberry season and, unlike last year, we had to *work* for our berries this time! Despite this, I think everyone left with more berries than they probably knew what to do with—I know we did! Natura Farms had much more

than just strawberries this time and, although our time was limited, I noticed that some managed to take home some tasty red and black currants. All in all, we had a great berry pickin' time!

--Ry Siggelkow



August Birthday Brunch

If you or a family member has a birthday in August, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on August 14. (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.

Saturday,
August
14
9:30-11:30
a.m.

Message from a Summer Visitor

Hello friends at Faith Mennonite, I wanted to write and thank you for your warm welcome and inspirational service last week (July 4). We had met some of your members at conference in Mountain Lake and happened to be in Minneapolis last weekend visiting my brother. It was nice having the extra day so we were not so rushed for time and could visit your church last weekend. Everything fell into place for us and I really felt we were supposed to be there for that service. There were several things that really struck me in the short time we were there.

One was a note in the bulletin about a family that was going to be stripping wall paper and invited anyone that wanted to come join in the fun. Is that not what the Church is about? Another was the singing. It was a fairly small group but they weren't timid in praising the Lord in song. Also the man that shared really hit the

mark when he mentioned that he appreciated that he had a group of people he could study the scriptures with and find what it has to say to them and how it can be put into practice.

I really got a sense of Church when I was there. People enjoyed seeing each other and were genuinely interested in what they each had going on. Thanks for sharing yourselves,

--Brian Herschberger (Kalona, Iowa)

Meet Your Fellow FMCers

The community of FMC welcomes back Alisa Bardo-Martinson and Andy and Phoebe Martinson after their year-long stay in the Washington, DC, area. While there, Alisa had a fellowship in palliative care medicine, and Andy was the stay-at-home dad. When they left here, they weren't sure if they would return or move to New England where Alisa grew up and her parents and sister still live. But the pull of friends and community in Minnesota proved strong enough. A visit to their Virginia home this past January by good friends John Ratigan and Matthew Hendricks added a thumb to the scale as Andy and Alisa weighed their decision. They have purchased a Seward neighborhood fixer-upper home seven blocks from Faith and a block off the river and have been working to update it while they live with Matthew and Shelly Hendricks. They plan to move in to the first floor near the beginning of August and continue to work on the second floor.

Andy will return to his job at White Bear Lake H.S., teaching math to ninth and tenth graders. In November Alisa will begin working part time for Health Partners at North Memorial Hospital in Robbinsdale as a palliative care specialist. This means she will be coordinating symptom management for patients who are in treatment or in hospice care.

Alisa grew up in Maine, the daughter of a general surgeon. Her parents had moved to Maine from Wyoming (her dad) and British Columbia (her mother), so Alisa assumed you leave your native state for college. She elected St. Olaf in Minnesota, knowing of its reputation as an excellent music school. Although she did play clarinet in the St. Olaf band for a couple years, she did not make music her career. Instead, after three years in the D.C. area following college, she began medical school in Atlanta at Emory University. She returned to Minnesota for her residency in internal medicine at HCMC. Her sister Leslie was living here at

that time, but now lives in Maine with husband Ben Geissinger and their sons. Leslie's search for a peace church had led her to FMC, and so Alisa also began attending.

It was people from Faith who brought Alisa and Andy together. Andy had attended college at Moorhead State in Minnesota with John Ratigan and Kristin Green. Andy was living and teaching in the metro area when he was invited to John's 30th birthday party. Alisa was also invited. They had a brief conversation at the party, but it was a later email contact that began their relationship. Kristin asked Alisa if she could pass on Alisa's email address to Andy, Alisa said yes, and so began a relationship that led to marriage in August 2006 and to Phoebe in 2008.

Andy grew up in Minot, North Dakota, and came to Minnesota for college (Moorhead), studying math and economics. A couple of summers with Upward Bound convinced him he wanted to be a teacher, so he graduated with math and math education degrees. He had taught three years before becoming a Fulbright exchange teacher in Nottingham, England, where he felt the system was too restrictive. He became more convinced that the U. S. system was a good place to teach. He taught in middle school before moving to the high school level. Andy grew up Roman Catholic and remains so today, usually attending Saturday mass so he can attend FMC Sunday morning with his family. He was allowed a special dispensation by the Catholic Church to be allowed to marry in a Mennonite Church. Andy and Alisa chose to dedicate Phoebe at Faith because they see FMC as their family church.

Alisa grew up Methodist, but while living in the D.C. area, they attended a Catholic Church in Arlington, Virginia, close to their apartment. Although now predominantly Caucasian, it had been historically black and still has an emphasis on peace and social justice. It had no nursery, and both Alisa and Andy are happy for the one provided during services at Faith. Phoebe is too young to understand about whispering in church. At twenty months, she is highly verbal, liking to name whatever is in her environment. Andy calls her "the identifier."

We wish them joy as they re-enter life and work in Minnesota.

--Arlene Holdeman

Spirituality Journal

We have attended Faith Mennonite since 2001, and throughout that time have felt embraced and nurtured by this vibrant community. We have also found community in hosting guests in our home, sometimes for days, sometimes for months. Through Mennonite Your Way, we host travelers from other cities looking for a place to stay in Minneapolis, which has been a consistently good experience. We have also hosted people for several months from time to time, including several medical students on rotation in the Twin Cities, and Shelly's cousin Katie. All of these experiences have been rewarding, helping us learn more about the world and ourselves.

About two years ago, we started talking with Katie and her husband John about the idea of living together, and after several conversations, we decided to look for a duplex. Since those first discussions, Katie and John welcomed their son Bjorn into their family, and we welcomed Micaiah into ours. We also went through the process of fixing up and selling our home of seven years. Through this process, we felt again the incredible support of the Faith Mennonite community, as people helped us paint and clean out the house we sold, put all of our belongings into an 8x8x20 shipping crate, and then helped us unpack that crate again at the new place six months later.

During the six months between the sale of our prior home and moving into the new place, we lived with some friends, the Smiths. Their house wasn't too far from Noelle's preschool and Micaiah's day care, which helped provide some continuity for the kids. We had a wonderful time with the Smiths, watching their garden produce abundantly and enjoying meals and conversations. We also learned that hospitality is a gift we found easier to give than to receive. It was humbling to feel welcomed in another home. Being dependent on someone else, even temporarily, wasn't always easy.

After a few setbacks and several lucky breaks, we feel very fortunate to be living in a duplex with Katie, John, and Bjorn today. One of the luckiest breaks is that we found a new home just one block from the church. We trade child care, eat together at least once each week, and share gardening and bike tools. We moved into the new place last November, and over the months the sense of community has grown. At the moment, we are also hosting Andy, Alisa, and Phoebe, who are staying with us for a few weeks as they get their house ready to live in.

Sharing space day-to-day means that other people get to see us not only at our best, but also at our worst. Everyone has their moments of fatigue or frustration, and we certainly have our share of these moments. I would guess that witnessing these times isn't always pleasant, though they can provide for some good humor after the fact. What's most encouraging is that people who have seen us at our worst continue to speak with us, and seem to think we're o.k. overall. This continued inclusion and friendship feels like an extension of God's grace, and this grace is a tangible and valuable gift of community.

--Matthew Hendricks, shared at the July 18th joint worship with Bethany Lutheran

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting June 9th, 2010 @ FMC

Present: Scott Neal, Moderator; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service; Shelly Hendricks, Education; Gregg Richardson, Worship.

Absent: Secretary, Moderator-elect; Fellowship commission representative.

Marriage policy. Katie asked three pastors for feedback about their experiences with conference discipline regarding LGBT welcoming. Also obtained copy of Brethren and Mennonite Council for LGBT issues guideline on congregational processes related to LGBT justice. Hermann asks what are marriage policies at those three churches? Katie said they don't have policies, their pastors have done covenant ceremonies, some have lost their credentials, others haven't. Joetta feels that process is really FMC's question right now, suggests that she, Katie and Scott talk to the conference pastoral leadership committee and one of the conference pastors at the Central Plains Mennonite Conference meeting, get their feedback, then come back to church council to discussion of a congregational process. If we're asked not to "rock the boat" right now, we may begin a different kind of congregational process. We'll need to think creatively, not adversarially. Hermann says we need to make sure to frame it as a pastoral issue. Shelly suggests that in the worst case scenario, we could still choose to keep our pastor. Katie says the denomination goes after pastors to avoid censuring whole congregations. Joetta says usually conference leaders don't really want to discipline, but other congregations push them. Katie suggests that a congregational discussion be in the context of all marriages, not just LGBT, also to

designate "listeners," to listen as "LGBT ears." Jerry has concerns that this may raise ripples with CPMC, and he hates to re-open a potential controversy. Katie, Joetta and Glenn feel that conference leadership will be supportive of our discussions. Scott feels that asking for their feedback, vs. just informing them of our decision will be safe.

Unity task group. Joetta says the task force has produced a statement of four principles of unity and acknowledgement of diversity, but agreeing to work together. They recommend eliminating the variance policy, unless the unity policy itself is violated. Jerry asks if this will be voted on? Joetta says yes, theoretically, but only as a whole.

Treasurer's report. Congregational giving is running substantially under budget as of May. January through April giving was the lowest since 2004. Shelly asks whether people really understand what giving is for, especially newer attenders? Joetta asks if individuals are giving less, or fewer people are giving in general? Jerry says he doesn't look at individual giving. Shelly suggests including information in the newsletter and bulletin. Gregg notes that he has been including giving info in the newsletter. Jerry asks whether we can do a special fund drive for redoing the sanctuary. Scott says capital campaigns can frequently take away from operating budgets. Shelly says we need to educate people about purpose of giving. Jerry will do some analysis to see what is leading to the decline. Scott suggests that the Moderator speak about this to the congregation.

Pastor's report. Joetta hands out a copy of her summer schedule. She says four attended the first Bible study organized by Bob Brown.

Commission reports.

Deacons. No report.

Missions and Service. Katie says they have met with representatives of a local immigration and civil rights group, that Ry Siggelkow has connections with. They may do a joint event with them. Donna Minter continues to work on the STAR training workshop. There have been some contributions toward scholarships, some of which will go to members of the Somali community. The Seward garage sale raised \$400 for Community Emergency Services. Six from FMC and Missio Dei, and 15-20 others participated in an immigration vigil. Strawberry picking is scheduled for July 21, and a trip to the protest at the School of the Americas is planned for November. If interested, contact Melissa Hochstetler.

Worship. Gregg says summer worship will be on the theme “Stories of God’s People,” and individual members of the congregation will be asked to share stories of God’s calling, in addition to the sermons.

Trustees. Glenn says the 28th St. door is finished. The fire inspection turned up ten items that need to be addressed, especially the need to clear the exit stairways of stored items. Bid for the sanctuary repainting came in at \$900. A brief discussion of apparent confusion regarding what is FMC’s actual 50th anniversary year (coming up soon, whenever it is). Mpls Parks Dept will replace the boulevard tree. Mark Kauffman is looking for alternatives to Waste Management as trash hauler.

Education. Shelly says they will be recruiting teachers for next year, and will have rotating council representatives. *[Acting secretary hopes they don’t get dizzy].*

--Gregg Richardson, Acting Secretary

	April	May	June
Total expenses	\$14,193	\$9,718	\$9,073
Total income	\$9,431	\$10,703	\$8071
Monthly budget	\$12,775	\$12,775	\$12,775

What's happening here and there...

Mennonite Church USA Responds to Arizona Immigration Law

Several leaders of Central Plains Mennonite Conference (Diane Zaerr Brenneman, Ramiro Hernandez, and Tim Detweiler) have forwarded a letter from MCUSA Executive Director Ervin Stutzman, concerning our response to the new Arizona Immigration Law – SB 1070. Stutzman’s letter asks for prayer and council as leaders gather at a leaders forum in Pittsburg in September to discern whether or not to withdraw our contract to hold our biennial convention in Phoenix, Arizona in 2013. Our conference leaders are asking each congregation to:

- Make this a matter of prayer in our congregation from now through September. Pray for the upcoming Leaders Forum in Pittsburgh. Pray for the churches in Arizona as they seek to give witness to God’s Kingdom that knows no borders and to God’s call to

welcome the alien and foreigners in our midst. Pray for MC USA that we can stand as one voice in solidarity with our Latino brothers and sisters.

- Be informed about what the Arizona bill says. You can Google search it and read it online.
- Check out the immigration resources posted on CPMC website and at mennoniteusa.org.
- Send your reflective questions and comments to Diane Zaerr Brenneman by Aug. 26. Diane will attend the Leaders Forum in Pittsburg and can share your feedback.

On Saturday, July 10, the Hispanic pastor’s cluster of CPMC met and discussed Ervin’s letter. Their counsel is to ask MCUSA to withdraw from holding the convention in Arizona for the following reasons:

- An Arizona convention would limit those who would attend; our Latino brothers and sisters would likely not go as a way of showing solidarity to the larger Latino community.
- The wording in the Arizona law highlights the “Alien who is unlawfully present”. “Alien” is an inclusive term for all nationalities. It feels like a misuse of the term in SB1070 since the targeted people appear to be Hispanic. This feels like racial profiling.
- The bill attempts to address the problem of drugs and violence, which makes it too easy to conclude that all Hispanics are somehow related to the drug cartel and to violence.

At the same time, they recognized that the one upside for holding the convention in Arizona would be to make a positive witness for peace and justice and the need for immigration reform. They further recognized the need for a forum that would help our conference address this issue of immigration more fully, with a focus on interpreting scripture and inviting informed persons to guide our thinking and reflection on this matter.

Following is Ervin Stutzman’s letter to conference leaders:

You have likely been hearing pieces of the national response to the new Arizona immigration law—Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (known before its enactment as Arizona Senate Bill 1070). Our nation is divided on the question of immigration policy; neither are the members of our church of one mind on this matter. The new Arizona law has two very direct affects for Mennonite Church USA. First of all, it creates fear among people in some of

our congregations, especially our Hispanic churches. The bill has created widespread fear of racial profiling and unjust enforcement of the law. Secondly, it causes us to reconsider our plans to hold our biennial convention in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2013.

I am writing to invite your prayers and counsel in this matter, as we discern whether or not to withdraw from our contracts in Phoenix. People have offered good reasons for staying as well as leaving. Our Latino churches definitely want us to withdraw from Phoenix, and the local Phoenix area Mennonite pastors are also leaning that way. On the other hand, some believe we would give a stronger witness with our presence in Phoenix, especially if we plan the convention activities towards that end. Because 13 other states are considering similar measures as Arizona, it may be difficult to find another venue.

We believe that it will be best for us to take several months to decide on this matter, since we can withdraw from our contracts without additional penalties until December 30, 2010. This is an ideal opportunity for us to:

- Study the scriptures that teach us how to relate to the foreigners in our midst.
- Stand with our Latino brothers and sisters during a difficult time.
- Hear the testimonies of those who regularly work with immigrants.
- Learn about the difficulties that have led to this new law.
- Listen to each other and the voice of God's Spirit.
- Learn to discern God's will among us.

In September, Mennonite Church USA will sponsor a Leaders Forum in Pittsburgh. This will bring together our Executive Board, conference leaders, and Racial/Ethnic constituency leaders, along with board and staff from our churchwide agencies. We intend to engage in a time of communal discernment on the matter of our 2013 convention location. – Ervin Stutzman

Quilters', Scrapbookers', Creators' Retreat at Wilderness Wind

Let your laughter join that of the loons as we quilt, create and bask in the in the spectacular colors of fall. Our days will be rich and fluid with time for creative expression, good conversation and opportunities to soak in the beauty of fall at Wilderness Wind, September 23-26.

Activities include:

- being creative with your own project
- quilt a throw that will be donated to an MCC sale
- visit local shops including quilt and knitting shops and galleries
- hike at Bear Head Lake State Park or Bass Lake Falls
- canoe or kayak on Armstrong Lake
- other – as you so desire

Price includes: housing , meals, canoes, kayaks, lifejackets, paddles, possible day trip to Bass Lake Falls/Bear Head State Park, and all local taxes. Blankets, quilts, pillows are included. Linens are not provided but are available upon request at \$6/packet. (Packet includes: 1 set of sheets, pillow case, 1 bath towel and 1 wash cloth. Cost is \$176 per person. For more information, contact:

Email: kathy@wildernesswind.org

Phone: 218-365-5873 or 316-217-1129

The deadline for September newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, August 25^h.

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.