

Faith Connection

August 2011

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...

The theme of the biennial Mennonite Church USA national convention that Katie Hochstedler, Donna Minter and I attended in Pittsburgh, July 4-9, was "Bridges to (the) Cross," inspired by the more than 400 bridges that traverse two rivers that run through the city. At times it seems that there are at least as many bridges—or diversities—that need to be bridged in our denomination. Coming together as brothers and sisters from all over the US can be exhilarating and it can be painful. While our denomination is becoming enriched by greater multicultural diversity, it is also experiencing many of the same theological, political, and ideological divides that we observe in wider society.

Although the Roman Empire had begun building bridges at the time that our New Testament scriptures were written, none of the authors used this metaphor in their writing. The word bridge doesn't appear in the Bible. The Apostle Paul, who wrote most extensively about the reconciling work of the Cross of Christ, used other metaphors: dividing walls being removed and the church working as a body with many different members.

I've always felt an affinity to bridges, having grown up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, which is connected to the rest of the state by the Mackinac Bridge, completed the year I was born. I remember what a thrill (and a scare) it was, as a child, to cross that bridge, suspended so high above the waters of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. As a teenager my youth group would walk the bridge each Labor Day.

Since being at the Pittsburgh 2011 Convention, I've been thinking a lot about bridges and what we might learn from them. Following are a few random thoughts.

Bridges come in a wide diversity of shapes and sizes, from the mighty Mackinac to the humble, single-lane covered bridge on a narrow road in Pennsylvania. Here

in the Twin Cities, we have a range of designs in the bridges that cross the Mississippi. Different bridges are needed for different situations.

Bridges connect diverse terrains and territories. In St. Paul, the "high" Smith Avenue bridge connects the low land on the north side of the river with the limestone bluffs on the opposite side. The Ambassador Bridge connects Detroit, Michigan, with Windsor, Ontario. Bridges allow for communication and relationship between two distinct realities that remain distinct.

While bridges are built to transport people and goods *over* them, they also serve to protect animals and people who take shelter *below* them. People fish below bridges. Birds build nests in the trusses. And homeless people create communities in their cover. Within Mennonite Church USA, congregations that offer welcome and full inclusion to LGBT persons remain under the bridge. We haven't yet found a way to allow full passage on the bridge's surface.

But I remain hopeful. I see our denomination making slow but steady progress toward gender equality and multicultural transformation; in 2013 our moderator will be a Latina woman, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht. Moreover our congregation and numerous more are building bridges from our local settings to each other and to our conferences. The construction sometimes seems painfully slow, but with the Apostle Paul "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

--Joetta Schlabach

Note: If you missed the Convention report that Katie, Donna, and Joetta gave on July 17, you can find it on the FMC website: www.faithmennonite.org. It is archived under Worship/Sermons.

Outreach ministry update...

Welcome, Khadija and Suleiman!

It's been a busy summer for outreach at Faith Mennonite Church—and more opportunities to serve are coming up.

Khadija and Suleiman

A whole network of folks have continued to help Khadija and Suleiman get to doctors' appointments and English classes, begin to look for jobs, deal with bus and phone card limitations, and get acquainted with their new surroundings. And now, three additional family members are joining this brother and sister in their new home country. Their mother and two siblings arrived Wednesday night the 27th, and they'll all be living together in a big new apartment on 22nd and Elliot in Minneapolis. Stay tuned for opportunities to support them during this time of transition!

Good Neighbor Opportunities

There are sign-up sheets in the back of the sanctuary for those who want to participate in a service project on Saturday morning of our 50th anniversary weekend. These are kid and family-friendly opportunities to remove graffiti and pick up trash right here in Seward neighborhood. And during the remainder of the summer on Thursday nights, you can enjoy an evening stroll with the Seward Walkers and contribute to neighborhood safety. Contact Dick Westby if you'd like to participate.

Missio Dei

We will be holding a supplies drive for Missio Dei during the month of September. Please consult the board at the back of the sanctuary to see what kinds of things will be needed. Or, if you want to do something more active, sign up to help our young friends with fence repair, work in the bike shop and garden, or spend time with Missio Dei's guests. And remember that the most important work we can do to support this growing, faithful community is to join them for a community meal at one of their houses and get to know people personally.

On the Horizon...

The Missions and Service Commission is beginning to look at organizing a neighborhood based sustainability fair to be held in February 2012. If you're interested in participating in the planning for this event, contact Kathleen Remund at minstaff@faithmennonite.org.

--Kathleen Remund

What's happening at FMC...

Comings and Goings...

We extend a warm welcome to **Brent Godshalk**, who recently moved from North Carolina to work with Syngenta, an agri-business company headquartered in Minnetonka.

We bid farewell and very best wishes to:

Pierre Gingerich-Boberg, who is moving to Madison, Wisconsin, to begin medical school at the University of Wisconsin. Lori and Simone will remain in St. Paul at least during this first year. The family hopes for frequent weekend reunions.

Rachel and Brian Hoskins who moved to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in early summer. Rachel is preparing to open a Coffee Shop/Bakery and Brian has just begun a job with the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

Gabe & Valerie Schlabach, who will depart for Palo Alto, California in mid-August. Gabe will begin law school and Valerie will be employed in student life at Stanford University.

Shalom Readers Club Starting Up Again

This past year, a couple of Faith Mennonite's children participated in the Shalom Readers Club. It is a club sponsored by the Outreach and Service Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Being in this club means the child (age 4th to 8th grade) is given an age-appropriate book list and can choose books to read from the list. Once the child has read 7 books and has done a "book sharing" on 2 of those 7 books, he or she receives a free book of his/her choice! This past year, Noelle Hendricks and Owen Siggelkow each received a free book.

The Shalom Readers Club will be starting up again this coming year. This past year, Marcia Siggelkow coordinated the club for our church, and this coming school year, Cynthia Miller will continue to do so. Upon returning from Conference this summer, books that are on the Shalom Readers Club list were brought to our church library. This means there are more books from the reading list immediately available for children to read! So, if you have children who like to read, talk to Cynthia to have your child participate in this fun club. Also, visit the library downstairs to see the Shalom Readers Club book list and look through some new books.

--Marcia Siggelkow

Time for a Just Peace in the Land Called Holy: August 15 Presentation at FMC

Rev. Loren McGrail, who spoke on immigration at FMC several years ago, has recently returned from several months in Israel/Palestine where she served as an Ecumenical Accompanier with the World Council of Churches and Global Missions of the United Church of Christ. The Community of St. Martin is joining us in hosting a slide presentation that Loren will give about her experience. She uses a rights-based framework along with the Kairos Palestine Document to outline what a Just Peace would look like and what it requires from us. Monday, August 15, 7pm, basement fellowship hall.



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 27. (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.

*August
Birthday
Brunch*

*Saturday,
August 27
10:00-11:30
a.m.*

Greetings from Colorado!

Our names are Marcos and Jessica Stoltzfus, and we are planning to move to/near the Twin Cities at the end of August. Rhoda Miller Blough, Mountain States Mennonite Conference Moderator just happens to be in our church small group and was very excited to connect us with your congregation. We look forward to connecting to a new Mennonite community in Minnesota.

We are in the process of house hunting and would love any leads or help in finding housing in an area that is new for us. We are moving in order to get involved with a sustainable farming program, and so ideally (long-term) we'd like to be in the country, in a more

rural setting with our dog. As for the immediate, we would just be looking for a clean, dog-friendly place to live! We are hoping to rent a 1 or 2 bedroom home that is within commuting distance to Hamline University in St. Paul.

We would appreciate any help or ideas that you have, please contact Marcos at mstoltzfus@gmail.com or 303-842-1540, or Jess at jessroth137@gmail.com, or 303-990-4075.

--Thanks in advance! Marcos and Jessica Stoltzfus

What's happening here and there...

Workshop With Jo Comerford, Executive Director National Priorities Project.

The National Priorities Project is the nation's best resource on the impact of military spending priorities on our cities, state and nation. Executive director of NPP Jo Comerford will lead a workshop focused specifically on Minnesota. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer will also provide a brief update on the Arms Spending Alternatives Project (MNASAP).

The workshop is Thursday evening August 11 from 7-9pm at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church 2730 E. 31st Street in South Minneapolis (1 block south of East Lake Library). For more information on the National Priorities Project see: nationalpriorities.org/en/.

The deadline for September newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, August 24th.

Faith Mennonite Church publishes our official monthly newsletter Faith Connection. The purpose of this publication is to enhance communication about the various types of the ministry of our congregation among the members and also with the community. Due to the space limitation, the editor may edit, modify, and change the submitted documents.