

Faith Connection

August 2013

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'm writing from my hometown, Grand Marais, MI, where Gerald and I are on vacation this week. (Don't worry--I really did take vacation, as soon as this article was finished!) It's a nearly 500-mile trip to reach my particular part of the Lake Superior shoreline, so there's a lot of time for reading, listening to music and news, conversation, and singing as we drive. As I drove the final 45 miles, Gerald pulled out a harmonica (the musical instrument he takes to the Boundary Waters) and began to play old tunes. All at once a song came to mind that I hadn't sung or heard in years. It was a Medical Missions Sisters song from the 1970s:

*It's a long road to freedom
Winding steep and high.
But when you walk in love
With the wind on your wing
And cover the earth with the song you sing
The miles fly by.*

It's a long road to freedom...but when you walk in love...and sing... the miles fly by. The past several weeks have been filled with deep emotion of the long road to freedom. Following the verdict that found George Zimmerman innocent of the slaying of Trayvon Martin, we witnessed a surge of recognition across the country that racial injustice is still inscribed in laws, such as Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. On July 21, Gerald and I attended a forum at a downtown Minneapolis church that brought together a panel of black and white participants who honestly addressed the fact that our country remains a fearful and dangerous place for black men and boys. The church hosting the forum, First Covenant, has been doing the hard climbing of transforming themselves from a monocultural congregation to one that has greater racial and ethnic diversity. One of the panelists, a member of St. Olaf Catholic Church, told his personal story of overcoming racial prejudice. Now retired, he works on a

number of community initiatives to dismantle racism and its effects. It's a long road to freedom, but there are good companions on the road.

The leaders of Mennonite Church USA also encourage us on this road. Executive Director Ervin Stutzman and newly-affirmed Moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht wrote the following in a statement following the Zimmerman verdict:

In light of these events, as a church committed to the gospel of peace and reconciliation, we recommit ourselves to our denominational priority of undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation. In this moment, as an initial small step, we especially invite white members of our congregations to engage in conversation with at least one other person from another racial/ethnic group about the Zimmerman verdict and to listen deeply to understand their perspective and experience.

As stated in our Purposeful Plan, "as missional communities we will seek to dismantle individual and systemic racism in our church." We see this both as a matter of faithfulness to Jesus and as an important part of our witness in the world. This is not an easy or quick task, but as followers of Jesus, we trust that God is with us. We invite and encourage congregations and individuals in the Mennonite Church USA family to continue to be part of this journey of healing with us. (For the complete statement see www.mennoniteusa.org.)

At Faith Mennonite we have been walking another long road: of inclusion for gay and lesbian persons. That walk continues on August 17 when several FMC members and I will meet for conversation with the Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC) of Central Plains Mennonite Conference which has been tasked with reviewing my ministerial credentials. This review resulted from feedback received during the regional listening/discernment sessions in the conference last fall in response to our congregation's marriage guidelines.

I was energized for this conversation as I watched a live stream of the delegate session at the recent MCUSA Convention in Phoenix where Pink Menno witnessed by silently moving in and standing among the delegate tables. When recognized by the moderator, our very own Katie Hochstedler read a statement calling for confession and inclusion. Following the statement, Moderator Dick Thomas led a time of silence and offered a moving prayer. This heightened action by Pink Menno was preceded by two conventions (Columbus and Pittsburgh) where their primary public witness had been singing hymns outside of the delegate meeting rooms. Covering those spaces with prayerful, joyful singing led the way to the next step.

As we prepare for the August 17 meeting, I invite each of us to be singing and praying...for all of the places of steep climbing on the roads to freedom here at home and around the world. Walk in love...and sing.

--Joetta Schlabach



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 10th. (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 10th
9:30-11a.m.*

Ministry staff report...

This fall at FMC we are looking forward to starting up the Wednesday evening meals again. The Missions & Service Commission will be contributing from their program budget to support Mark Van Steenwyk's continuing planning and preparation of the community meal.

We're also going to continue our programming of events for after the meal. The first Wednesday of the month will be a program usually organized by Missions & Service. The second Wednesday, when FMC Church Council normally meets, will be unprogrammed. The third Wednesday will be open for possible programming

by Mennonite Worker, and on the fourth Wednesday we will continue to run the Peace & Justice film series.

Coming up the first Wednesday in September (the 7th) will be a report on Bread for the World by Hermann Weinlick. Other upcoming first Wednesday programming possibilities will be the asylum work of Advocates for Human Rights, and the home energy conservation work of the Center for Energy and Environment. See you there!

In other news—the FMC middle school youth group went on a tubing outing on July 27. Katie Hochstedler and I accompanied six of our kids to Welch Mill for a one-hour tubing trip down the Cannon River. It was a cool day with occasional drizzle, so we especially appreciated warming up by a fire afterwards, and sipping hot chocolate at the Trout Scream Cafe.

--Phil Stoltzfus

January-June Financial Statement

Income	Year to Date
Offerings	\$70,006
Rent	19,040
Investments	5,445
Total Income	\$94,491
Expenses	
Conference support	\$4,000
Deacons	2,607
Education	3,451
FICA	960
Fellowship	1,686
Missions and Service	638
Office	2,877
Pastor/Ministry Staff	41,202
Trustees/bldg expenses	20,801
Worship	540
Mortgage	2,967
Total Expenses	\$81,729
Income minus expenses	\$12,762
YTD budgeted offerings	\$71,250
Actual offerings	\$70,006
Shortfall	(\$1,244)

The deadline for September newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, August 28th.

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.