

# Faith Connection

December 2012

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...

On November 13 Donna Minter, Heather Wengerd and I walked the final leg of the week-long, 150-mile Dakota Commemorative Walk from Mankato to Ft. Snelling that Dakota descendants were walking in memory of the forced march of their ancestors—mostly elders, women and children—150 years ago. Kristi and Luke Zabriskie, Candace Lauth, and Jan Weber were also present at the closing ceremony and Joan Kreider had joined the walk on Sunday. Each of us experienced and took away different emotions from the walk. Following are a few reflections I wrote the following day.

*Time and speed.* Committing a “work” day to a commemorative walk was something I thought was important. However, when I arrived at the designated start area at 8 a.m. and learned we probably wouldn’t begin walking until 9:30, my efficiency-oriented reflex kicked in and I was tempted to return to the long list of things that needed attention back in the office. But I fought the reflex and took refuge inside a nearby Subway (it was a cold morning) and made some phone calls and created a to-do list. Later, after the walk began, as we crossed the I-494 bridge with cars whizzing by, several of us commented on how walking gives us a better perspective of speed than when we’re inside a car. So much of our lives is oriented to clocks and lists and vehicular speeds. Stepping outside of those bounds was refreshing.

*Human-nature relationship.* Walking along the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers that day, reminded me of the distinct ways that different cultures view and use water. Native peoples had a high regard for water. Although they navigated on it, fished and harvested wild rice, they also held it sacred. European settlers, and especially industrialists, viewed water primarily as a resource for transportation and power generation. Thus they built factories and warehouses along the

riverbanks. Today the river’s beauty contrasts with these utilitarian, and often ugly, aging structures.

*Things.* When I set off by bus that morning to meet up with the walkers, I put a container with a warm drink in the bag I was carrying, thinking it was well sealed. It wasn’t and before long I realized my bag was wet. It took me longer to remember that my iPod was at the bottom of the bag. By the time I removed it, it had gotten quite wet and wouldn’t turn on. On any other day I probably would have been disappointed, but in the face of the memory of a community force-marched with only that which they could carry (a reality that continues today in Syria, Congo, and so many other parts of the world), the iPod seemed frivolous and unimportant.

*Drumming and song.* At various points along the walk, a drumming circle formed and four men sang Dakota songs and drummed. The strong drumbeats and shrill-to-my-ear tone of the call and response songs is a penetrating, whole-body experience. I am aware that these songs and drums were largely silenced as Native communities were forced onto reservations and into boarding schools. It is hard to imagine a spiritual community surviving without the freedom to sing and I am not surprised to learn that drumming and song have been important components of healing and health within Native communities.

We are entering the season of Advent—a season of waiting and longing for the fullness of God’s kingdom. Yesterday morning as our weekly Sunday text group met to discuss scriptures for the coming week, we tried to hear the readings from the perspective of persons living on reservations or in refugee camps. In a consumption-saturated society, where the dominant message of the Christmas season is Buy! Buy! Buy! we are privileged to listen to, and to sing, another message: Be alert! Watch for the coming of Christ! O come, O come, Emmanuel! To us a child of hope is born!

--Joetta Schlabach

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

### **Flood of Mercy – Advent Worship**

The scriptures for the season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany include various water images. In the Bible, water usually means two opposite things: destruction and life. One of the oldest stories in the Bible is of a flood that destroys the earth. The final image in Revelation is of a River of Life flowing through the city of God. The theme “Flood of Mercy” captures the way that God both disturbs and comforts. All of us have known times when our lives are flooded with goodness, overwhelmed by God’s love and the gifts of community. We have also known times of destructive flooding, whether it’s been water in a basement, downed trees and loss of electricity in a storm, or a tragic event that leaves us gasping for air.

Advent is a time of holding these two images and experiences together. Some of us need the call to let go of things or hurts that are keeping us from drawing closer to God and others; we need the flood. Others of us may feel that we have a very tenuous hold on life right now and need the merciful comfort of a gentle, steady rain after a long drought, or a strong hand to pull us out of the storm surge. All of these are expressions of God’s mercy, God’s love entering the place of our deepest need.

As we worship in the coming weeks, may each of us allow the words of Scripture to run over us like cleansing water and carry us like a river. May we be reminded that what God is doing in Jesus is what God has been doing all along: loving the whole world.

Special thanks to the Advent worship planning team: Chris Jones, Joan Kreider, Dan Leisen, Casey Englund-Helmeke, and Joetta Schlabach. They are assisted by Kristin Borntrager, Cleta Roth Gingerich, and Heather Reinert who have created the visual environment.

### **Christmas Program and Cookie Social**

We will continue our recent tradition of holding an evening Christmas program on the third Sunday of Advent. We will gather in the sanctuary at 4:30 p.m. on December 16 for a time of singing and participation by the children’s education department. Following the service, which will conclude in candle-light, we will enjoy a time of fellowship with an assortment of Christmas cookies. Everyone is invited to bring a plate of cookies to share. Friends and relatives are welcome!

### **Wednesday Meal Night**

The FMC deacons are excited to announce that beginning on Wednesday, January 9, we will have a weekly Wednesday evening meal and fellowship time at church. The meal will begin at 6 p.m., and we will provide child care from 6:30 to 8 p.m.; as this gathering time evolves, we hope more formal children’s and youth activities, commission meetings and other church-related gatherings (such as choir practice) will meet on Wednesday nights at church.

The weekly meal will most often be prepared by Mark Van Steenwyk from The Mennonite Worker of Minneapolis (formerly Missio Dei), and donations will be accepted to help cover the cost of the meals. Additionally, each week we will provide a sign-up sheet for individuals to help with various kitchen tasks, such as dishwashing and sweeping floors.

It is the deacons’ hope that this weekly gathering will foster a stronger sense of community and belonging, both within the current church community as well as within the Seward neighborhood and beyond. We encourage you to invite strangers and friends who you believe would enjoy a well-cooked meal in the company of church family.

If you have any questions or thoughts regarding this new initiative, please talk with one of the church deacons: Cleta Roth Gingerich, Shelly Hendricks, Donna Minter, Adam Nafziger or Neil Okerlund. We hope to see you there!

*--Shelly Hendricks*

### **Central Plains Conference Discussion Update**

On November 17, Matthew Hendricks, Donna Minter, Joetta Schlabach, and Karen Wiebe were in Seward, Nebraska, to take part in the third regional listening session on the matter of congregational and conference response to differences that challenge our unity such as understandings of sexuality and same-sex marriage. Eight of the nine Nebraska congregations had members present. Once again the spirit of the gathering was respectful and we received comments of appreciation for our congregation’s presentation. During the discussion time, our members participated at an observer table with members of the conference board and pastoral leadership committee. One of the rich outcomes of the discussion was hearing the variety of

scriptures that people shared that have helped inform their discernment. One person raised the question/dilemma of how we work through theological differences not just in the conference but within the global church. Following the morning session about half of those present went to a local pizza place and had lunch together, an important opportunity for getting better acquainted. In the afternoon our group drove back as far as Manson, in north-central Iowa and spent the night in two Mennonite homes. On Sunday morning we attended worship and then took part in their annual Thanksgiving meal, which was open to the larger community. With fifteen hours of driving over the course of the weekend, the four of us had lots of lively conversation.

In two weeks, on December 15, Katie Hochstedler, Donna Minter, Joetta Schlabach and Phil Stoltzfus will participate in the final conversation in Washington, Iowa. Please continue to keep this process and the participants in your prayers.

--Joetta Schlabach

### FMC Monthly Budget Summary

|                               | July     | August   | Sept     | YTD       |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Total Giving</b>           | \$11,211 | \$9,269  | \$9,197  | \$101,685 |
| <b>Total Budgeted Income*</b> | \$13,439 | \$13,920 | \$14,181 | \$135,014 |
| <b>Budget Target</b>          | \$14,000 | \$14,000 | \$14,000 | \$140,000 |
| <b>All Expenses</b>           | \$14,366 | \$11,395 | \$11,375 | \$135,044 |

\*Includes rental and investment income

### Comings and Goings...

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently begun attending worship and hope you will take time to get acquainted with them:

**Joel and Katie Cuffey**

**Peter Joseph Martinson**, born on October 24

From the **Blackwell Kinneys**: "We have decided to explore other church options for our family at this time. We will always treasure our time at Faith and the relationships we made there, and we plan to keep connected in a variety of ways. Blessings on you all."

### Thanksgiving With the Mennonite Worker

About thirteen Faith Mennonite-related folks joined with equal numbers of Mennonite Worker members and folks from the community to share a potluck dinner on Thanksgiving Day. Most of the classic elements of traditional Thanksgiving fare were present: turkey and dressing, sweet potatoes, cranberry salads, and pumpkin pies. Some not-so-traditional items rounded out the meal, ensuring food for all. Some folks ate and departed fairly quickly, others lingered for conversation. It was nice to have this opportunity to collaborate with the Mennonite Worker community and to provide a community meal for some people who might have otherwise been alone.

### Thank You...

Thanks for your help putting on the And Justice For All concert! It was a big success, thanks in large part to people like you! One Voice could not survive without the many people who help make our concerts run so well. Your hard work enables One Voice to continue to spread our mission of building community and creating social change by raising our voices in song. Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you at our future concerts!

--Jane Miller

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

#### Advent Evening Prayer at Sabbath House

Sabbath House, a ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, offers a time of readings, quiet, and music on three Mondays of Advent: December 3, 10 and 17 from 7-8 p.m.. This year's theme is: "There is a crack in everything; that's how the Light gets in" (Leonard Cohen). Sabbath House is located at 3228 Portland Avenue South in Minneapolis. All are welcome.

**The deadline for January newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

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.