

Faith Connection

December 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...

The freezing rain that kept us home from church last Sunday, November 21, brought an unexpected surprise: a carefree Sunday morning at home to lounge, read the paper, and enjoy the family. This was better than the occasional retreat day I try to plan into my schedule. In some ways it was better than the whole week of vacation I took at the end of October. The surprise nature of the time—a pure gift over which I had no control—was renewing in a way I couldn't have anticipated.

While I was sorry that we wouldn't have our thanksgiving worship service (which a number of people had helped plan and prepare for), and I missed the chance to taste the plentiful feast of pies, and I felt for those who were caught on the highways when conditions became treacherous, the weather was actually a very good prelude to this year's theme for Advent: An unexpected hour.

Advent is a time of remembering the way the world longed for the coming of a Messiah before Jesus was born. It is also a time of waiting for the return of the Christ and the ushering in of the Reign of God in its fullness. The final chapters of the Gospel of Matthew describe these events as happening in an unexpected way, catching us by surprise. The message of these stories seems to be that the surprise is good for those who are prepared and not so good for the unprepared. But what exactly does that mean?

The ideas of time and of waiting are rich concepts we will explore during this season of Advent. According to the Advent worship resources from Mennonite Church USA, we north Americans live in a temporal drought, longing for more time the way much of the arid world thirsts for water. Time, of course, is a constant. What we choose to do within the limits of time is what determines our impression of its lack or abundance: Do more and we'll have less time; do less and we'll have more.

Advent invites us to protect spaces of time so we can be alert, watchful and waiting for the coming of Christ. I have encouraged commissions not to meet during December as one way to create this space. Our Advent worship services will incorporate times of silence as another way. What can you (and your family) do to fashion an open, waiting space in your Advent Season?

The Apostle Paul wrote: “[Y]ou know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near (Romans 13:11-12a). Let us wait in joyful hope!

--Joetta Schlabach

What's happening at FMC...

Giving Thanks

As we near Thanksgiving, I'm aware of how thankful I am for the new initiatives springing up here at Faith Mennonite, and for deepening relationships within and beyond this church community.

It has been lovely to witness the outpouring of energy and commitment so many have shown as we've prepared to welcome a refugee family. As Jenny Wandersee said recently, “I give thanks for the unexpected fringe benefit of community-building that getting ready to host our refugee family has brought. A number of people I hadn't met before have talked to Cynthia and me after church to tell us they had items to donate, or called or emailed us. We even got a donation of a small table from a young woman who has attended Faith only once! You know, sometimes it's hard to know how to initiate conversation with newcomers, but this project is helping build bridges between people.”

I experienced a different kind of bridge building at our potluck with Missio Dei last Wednesday evening. About 35 people—half from Missio Dei and half from Faith Mennonite—gathered in the basement fellowship hall

over a delicious spread of food. We ate together, visited over supper, and listened to the young people of Missio Dei talk about their three houses, resident community, and experiences of living out radical hospitality. There was clearly interest in continuing to get better acquainted and exploring ways to be in partnership.

Missio Dei member Aubrey Harding followed up our meal the next day with an expansive invitation. She wrote:

“First, thank you so much for coming Wednesday and expressing interest in being involved with Missio Dei. Second, I wanted to let you know the addresses of the [Missio Dei] houses and the nights the meals are at each...you are welcome to stop by for any meals or at any time. Third, I have attached a ‘needs’ list which a couple of us came up with. If you have anything you want to give, you can drop it off at any of the houses or if you let me know (by email or call 503-881-7029), someone can pick it up from you. Needless to say, everything is tax deductible and we have an in-kind donation form you will receive for tax purposes if you choose to. Feel free to pass the addresses to others as well as let others know of the needs. Also, we do send out a zine, so if you would like to receive it, just reply with your name and mailing address.”

Because there isn't room here in the newsletter to include her list of addresses and needs, *please email me at minstaff@faithmennonite.org for a full copy of the information.* Or you can contact Aubrey directly at aubreylharding@gmail.com.

--Kathleen Remund

Advent Worship

A committee composed of Chris Jones, Dan Leisen, Bob Mack, Adam Nafziger, Jenny Wandersee and Joetta Schlabach began laying the plans for Advent Worship in early October. They chose the theme, “An Unexpected Hour,” from resources provided by Mennonite Church USA. The visual elements, created by Dan Leisen, with assistance from Sandra Westby, will help us note the progression of time. A chime and times of silence will help us enter a space of waiting. Personal testimonies will provide examples of God at work in our midst. The worship commission thanks those who have helped plan the Advent worship series and each of the people who will participate.

Rehearsals begin November 28 for a mixed choir that will sing two Sundays in Advent, on December 12 and 19. The November 28 rehearsal will be immediately following worship and the December 5 rehearsal will be

during the education hour. Short warm-up rehearsals will be held at 9 a.m. on December 12 and 19. Please contact Neil Okerlund, director, with any questions.



December
Birthday
Brunch

If you or a family member has a birthday in December, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on December 18. (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,
December 18
9:30-11:30
a.m.

Comings and Goings...

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently visited and begun attending our worship:

- *Cynthia Villegas and Scott Guenthner* recently moved to St. Paul and are both teaching English at Century College.

'Tis the Season...

Joan Kreider will host the annual **Carol Sing-Along** at her home, 2162 Carroll Avenue in St Paul, on Sunday, **December 5, 7 p.m.** Everyone is welcome to come and sing (or just listen) to your favorite carols,--ancient and modern, aesthetically pleasing and tacky!

On **December 12** we will hold our 4th annual **evening Christmas program**, featuring a Christmas cantata by our elementary-aged children. The program will begin at 4:45 p.m., followed immediately by a cookie social. Everyone is invited to bring a plate of cookies to share. The hosting group for the cookie social is: Neil Okerlund, Kathleen Harder, and the Siggelkows. Following the program the **Nokomis Deacon Group** will meet at Adam & Nikki Nafziger's home (5221 27th Ave. S) for caroling and more snacks!

Wolf Bartel, who sings with the **South Metro Chorale**, invites everyone to their weekend performances of **Handel's Messiah**, with full orchestra, on **December 10-12**. Tickets are available online at: www.southmetrochorale.org/calendar.html.

Financial Update

At the November meeting of the Church Council treasurer Jerry Janzen reported that Sunday offerings have increased this fall. He projected remaining expenditures of \$24,000 through the rest of 2010, and anticipated giving of \$25,000. We should therefore meet our budgetary commitments.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference reports a more difficult position. According to a recent email: October income totaled \$18,666.45 with expenses totaling \$26,997.93. This is a net loss of \$8,331.48 and brings our total fiscal year deficit to \$52,947.79. We are half way through our conference fiscal year and giving is at 34% of budget (\$492,284). Expenses are at 45% of budget. After paying October payroll and expenses, there is only \$166.56 in the checking account. Over 90% of our income comes from the contributions of member congregations, and congregational contributions are needed now in order to meet November expenses. (Note: FMC has made its annual contribution to the conference. Individual contributions are also appreciated.)

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	August	September	October
Total expenses	\$8,499	\$7,854	\$13,858
Total income	\$11,561	\$16,363	\$14,388
Monthly budget	\$12,775	\$12,775	\$12,775

Thank You From MCC US

Thank you for your September 30 donation to MCC of 102 school kits and 6 relief kits (received from FMC and Donna Minter's 3F group) which will be used to help those who are suffering around the world. The material resources you donated are part of MCC's response to the basic human needs as we serve others in the name of Christ. This summer we shipped over 30,000 school kits, including 14,000 to Haiti. We also sent comforters to Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Nepal and relief kits to Kazakhstan and Nepal. MCC anticipates sending aid this fall to Pakistan in the form of comforters, blankets and relief kits. Canned meat was sent to North Korea, Kazakhstan, Haiti, Serbia and Ukraine.

--In peace, Stanley Kropf, MCC Great Lakes

What's happening here and there...

Advent Resource For Family Worship

Elsie Rempel of Mennonite Church Canada has written a devotional book for families to use at home from Advent through Epiphany. This book follows the texts and themes we will use in worship at FMC. This resource includes worship ideas, pondering questions, prayers and activities all suitable for the home. This book (and a supplement for families with very young children) can be accessed and printed at: www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/SelectDownloadFormat/2/12909.

--Shana Peachey Boshart, CPMC Minister for Christian Formation

Two Events to Honor World AIDS Day

FMC participant Greg Renstrom, a retired United Methodist minister, has been busy this fall laying the groundwork for the birth of a new Christian faith community, Wesley Church. The church will begin with Wednesday evening services during the month of December in the historic Wesley building at 101 E. Grant Street in Minneapolis which has been recently dormant. The first will be a **December 1 Service of Remembrance and Recommitment for World AIDS Day**. This event, featured in the December edition of *Lavender*, will begin with a social hour at 5:30, followed by a program featuring various speakers and musicians at 7:30 p.m. FMC participants are warmly welcomed.

United Theological Seminary will host a World AIDS Day photo exhibit and program on **Tuesday, November 30, "30 years/30 lives: Documenting a pandemic"** in Bigelow Chapel (3000 Fifth Street NW, New Brighton). The exhibit was created by Kimberly Vrudney, a UTS alumna and a theology instructor at the University of St. Thomas. The event will begin at 5:30 with a reception, followed by an artist's talk at 6:30 and a program including contemporary music at 7:30.

--Kathleen Remund

The deadline for January newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, December 29th.

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.