

Faith Connection

December 2013

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church
2720 E. 22nd St. Minneapolis, MN 55406
Ph: (612) 375-9483
e-mail: faithmc@faithmennonite.org
web: www.faithmennonite.org

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 holiday season is upon us! This year Thanksgiving was a time of special celebration as we welcomed our son and wife, Gabriel and Valerie, who visited from California. They traveled with us to Madison, Wisconsin, where Gerald's father and siblings and their families gathered as a way to combine Thanksgiving with an 80th birthday celebration for Gerald's father. Their family spent five years in Madison when Gerald's father did his graduate studies at UW-Madison in the early 60s, so gathering there included a bit of nostalgia.

The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are times of celebration and challenge! For the retail and advertising industries these holidays are inter-linked with one single purpose—to sell as much merchandise as possible no matter if it is unneeded, unwanted, or unpleasing. Beneath all the tinsel and light shows, the wider culture loses sight of the fact that the origins of Thanksgiving lay in the sheer survival and dependence of early European settlers upon native American neighbors and the origins of Christmas in the story of incarnation, of God giving up everything to be born as a child into poverty in an occupied land.

Although some people and religious communities entirely shun all secular aspects of the holidays, many of us settle for some mix, enjoying the warmth of candle light, Christmas carols, holiday treats, modest gift giving, and celebrative gatherings. I am glad to be part of a worship community that celebrates Advent—the four weeks of quiet waiting and contemplation of the mystery of God's coming into the world. While the big box stores scream “buy, buy, buy!” I am glad to listen to the unsettling, yet hopeful words of the ancient prophets pointing out disturbing social disparities and proclaiming God's intention to come and level the playing field. I want to be attentive to the voices today that are calling out “O come, o come, Immanuel, and rescue captive Israel...” because it is in places of deep longing and deep need where the Messiah, the One for whom we have waited, is likely to show up.

This will be my final “Musings” until March since I will begin a two-month sabbatical on January 1. (See separate article, “Pastor Sabbatical Coverage Plans—January and February” on page 3.

I will spend most of January and February in Collegeville where Gerald is in residence this academic year at the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research. While he continues work on a book he is writing, I will rest, read, find a piano to play, cross-country ski (if we are blessed with snow) and join in the daily prayers of the monastic community of St. John's Abbey. In mid-January Gerald and I will participate in the Central Plains Conference Learning and Fellowship trip to Ecuador, along with others from Nebraska, Montana, and the Colombian Mennonite Church. In early February I look forward to several days of physical labor on the Mennonite Disaster Service project in Duluth/Cloquet.

“May God bless us one and all” as we move through the season of Advent and Christmas and into a new year.

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry staff report...

The FMC youth group has been busy since the last newsletter. On November 6 we did a service project at the Second Harvest Heartland facility in Golden Valley. Five youth worked on a Wednesday evening packaging mountains of carrots. Along with other groups working that evening we processed a total of over 10,000 pounds. The older kids had a particularly energetic time seeing who could assemble the most cardboard boxes. Afterwards, we watched a video showing how the organization uses food donations to provide direct assistance to low income individuals. Thanks to Paula Okerstrom for driving a second car that evening and working alongside the youth.

Then on November 16 Richard Westby's vision for an FMC Kids' Fair came to fruition. On a Saturday afternoon we set up skill games, team relays, and group activities for twenty-plus kids (FMC and beyond) in the church basement. Five of our FMC youth helped staff different stations, such as bowling, the ball toss, the Winnie-the-Pooh puzzles, clothespin drop, hula hoops, etc., and also helped with the relay and group games, such as the marble run and the giant Dutch Blitz game. Anna Gambucci led the group in some singing, and to round things off we had a snack time with popcorn, apples, and ice cream bars. Each child was sent home with a helium balloon. Thanks to Thaine Dirks and several other parents for helping in a variety of ways to make this event a success.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Advent Worship – “O the Mystery of God’s Dwelling!”

The season of Advent begins on December 1. This year our Advent worship planning team is made up of Carl and Jill Gerriets, Kathleen Harder, Joetta Schlabach, Donna Stucky, and Cynthia Villegas, with visuals assistance from Michael Okerstrom. Each liturgical season we draw on and adapt resources provided by Mennonite Church USA, which are produced by a regional team from some part of the U.S. This year's Advent worship resources were prepared by a group from Freeman, South Dakota. As they worked with and listened to the lectionary scriptures for the season, they noted two frequently recurring themes: “The first is the theme of a house or home as the place of God’s presence and of human security. The second is the theme of the wilderness (natural/physical as well as emotional/spiritual) as the place where God both meets and redeems us. The texts are replete with visions of the natural world, but in its early and universal manifestations” (*Leader*, Fall 2013, 24). As you move through Advent, you may wish to reflect upon the places where you have felt God’s presence and security, and the places of wilderness that have also been a meeting place with God.

Many resources for Advent meditation are available in bookstores and online. Some households choose to use Advent calendars and/or light Advent candles each day. There is an ancient Christian practice of meditating upon icons, visual depictions of a religious story or person. One of the members of the South Dakota

Advent resource development team is an artist who has studied iconography. She prepared an icon for our contemplation during this Advent season. Each household will receive a card-sized copy in their mailbox with the icon on one side and a translation of a Greek hymn on the other. Reflecting on an image may be a new practice for some of us, but we offer it as a new opportunity for spiritual reflection and growth.

--Worship Commission

Christmas Program and Cookie Social

Sunday, December 15th

4:30 p.m.



Invite extended family, neighbors and friends to this service of

Lessons and Carols

Bring a plate of cookies or snacks to share
Beverages provided by hosting committee,
the Skogerboe and Nafziger families

Holiday Giving Projects

Each year the primary Sunday School program chooses a giving project for the Christmas season. This year we have settled on two. The first is a gathering of funds for Seward Montessori School so they can provide food gift cards to families who do not have sufficient resources to provide healthy meals to their children during the two-week holiday break. Many children eat two meals each day at school. We will use the money collected in the children's offering this fall through December 15, which the Missions and Service Commission has agreed to match for this project.

The second project is a gathering of backpacks and school supplies for homeless and highly mobile students who attend Folwell and Sanford Middle Schools and South High School. This is a joint project of the Longfellow Faith Forum and Longfellow-area churches. The (new) items we will collect, through Epiphany when we celebrate the gifts of the magi, are:

- backpacks
- 3-ring 2" and 3" binders

- folders
- notebooks
- pencils
- pen cases
- clip-on reading lights
- alarm clocks (battery and electrical)

--*Christian Education Commission*

Comings and Goings...

We welcome several people who have recently begun attending worship and hope you will take the opportunity to get acquainted.

- **Scott Bates, Tonya Boschmann, Anise and Ian Bates**, who recently relocated to the Twin Cities from Boulder, Colorado.
- **Kimberlee Hunter and Cedar Keen**, who live in the neighborhood
- **Ted John**, a former Marine who desires to be part of a peace-oriented community
- **Abby Mueser**, friend of Nate Herr
- **Sarah Ries**, sister to David Ries, who recently moved to Minneapolis from Madison, Wisconsin
- **Devin Williams**, a Seward neighbor and South High senior
- **Scott Ziemer**, friend of Steve Wall and Jim Kuebelbeck

Pastor Sabbatical Coverage Plans for January and February

In October the Church Council approved an initial proposal from the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee for Joetta Schlabach to take a two-month sabbatical leave during January and February 2014, as allowed in her Memo of Understanding with the congregation. A Sabbatical Planning Committee comprised of Hermann Weinlick, Church Council, Gregg Richardson, Worship Commission, and Shelly Hendricks, Deacon Commission met with Joetta to plan the coverage of pastoral responsibilities during her absence. The weekly hours of Phil Stoltzfus, office coordinator and ministry staff person, will be increased, and Donna Stucky, who provided pastoral care during Joetta's previous sabbatical in early 2012, will again be contracted on a part-time basis to provide pastoral care and worship coordination. Worship commission members will take responsibility for and lead worship on each of the Sundays in January and February. A combination of persons from within and outside the congregation will be invited to preach.

Faith Mennonite Church provides sabbatical opportunities for our pastor(s) in keeping with the encouraged guidelines of Mennonite Church USA: "Sabbatical, study and service leaves for pastors are good for the pastor, good for the congregation, and good for the church. Pastors stay longer and serve with greater enthusiasm if their ministry includes opportunities to learn and exposure to other ministries. They experience spiritual refreshment, new vision, strengthened skills and wider perspectives. Congregations benefit from a chance to exercise lay leadership gifts during the leave. The whole church benefits by having better leadership, cross-congregational sharing of perspectives and ideas, and greater satisfaction in ministry for those in whom the church has invested time, money and energy in training for leadership."

Persons who have questions about our pastor sabbatical policy may speak with members of the Sabbatical Planning Committee or the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (Kristin Green, Shelly Hendricks, Noah Skogerboe, chair, and Hermann Weinlick).

--*Noah Skogerboe*

November Church Council Highlights

Treasurer's Report: We are heading into the last two months of the year, when we typically receive 25-30% of local budget for the year. For next year's budget, Jerry will add the expense of the roof to Maintenance/Supplies, which will be about \$35,000 total. This may affect how much we give for conference support.

Trustees/Stewardship: We need to keep the kitchen clean in order to keep mice away.

Education: They are brainstorming options for adult education in January and May, when the adults will have joint sessions. Possible topics include homelessness, autism and Native American themes.

Joetta's sabbatical: To cover pastoral responsibilities during Joetta's 8-week sabbatical, the sabbatical committee proposed adding 7 to 9 administrative hours per week to the current ministry and office staff support person and hiring a pastoral care/worship coordinator support staff person to work up to eight hours per week. Various individuals within and outside FMC would provide the sermon for the eight Sundays that need coverage. The total requested budgeted amount for the sabbatical is \$2,660. The motion was passed.

--*Jenny Wandersee, Secretary*

January-October Financial Statement

Income	Year to Date
Offerings	\$105,735
Rent	29,360
Investments	8,963
Total Income	\$144,058
Expenses	
Conference support	\$17,000
Deacons	3,305
Education	4,842
FICA	1,551
Fellowship	1,496
Missions and Service	1,638
Office	3,914
Pastor/Ministry Staff	69,501
Trustees/bldg expenses	28,266
Worship	1,147
Mortgage	4,990
Total Expenses	\$137,650
Income minus expenses	\$6,408
YTD budgeted offerings	\$118,750
Actual offerings	\$105,735
Shortfall	(-\$13,015)

"What is This Place?" First Session Report

It was evident from the outset of the first discussion session on November 8, how much Faith Mennonite Church meant to everyone in the room. The evening started with each of us finishing the sentence, "Faith Mennonite is a place where I..." The summary (posted on the FMC webpage) provides insights into the depth of this sharing. The remainder of our time was spent on the two questions noted in the summary. Session one provided an opportunity for those present to pull together a picture of what each of us longs for from our church. This was a time for personal sharing with little time spent delving into the thoughts of others.

Session two, which will be held in January (watch for an announcement in December) will invite us to begin taking a closer look at how we "do church." What are we currently doing well that we need to do more of? What might we consider letting go of? Is there something out there that we can turn more of our attention to?

One of the responses in the first meeting to the question, "What tires me?" that calls for deeper exploration in the coming sessions was the comment, "Talking: lots of

intellectual engagement, but I'm drawn to churches that *do*." Are we a church that emphasizes and organizes church responses to issues surrounding our community?

Are we a church consisting of individuals committed either through their work or involved in organizations focused on service related to social justice issues who view church as a place to gather strength to carry on their work? As we work closer to an understanding of "What is this place?" what implications will this have on the community around us?

Drawing on sessions one and two, session three will revisit the question of how we "do church" in light of our vision. Are we set up to position ourselves for a fruitful journey into the future? Participation in sessions two and three does not require first-session attendance—everyone is welcome!

--Rudy Okerlund



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 7th. (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.

*December
Birthday
Brunch*

*Saturday,
December
7th
9:30-11
a.m.*

Faith Artists Want To Show You Their Work

Three of the artists at Faith Church have been putting in some long hours creating works that they would very much like to have you take a look at. Even if it isn't in your budget this year to make a purchase, these artists really appreciate having the opportunity to show folks what they've been doing and talk about their work.

This year we are excited that Kristin Green is joining the group of resident artists along with Mike Okerstrom and Dan Leisen. Kristin has some wonderful paintings and drawings to show you and from these works she has created beautiful jewelry, notecards and other colorful

items including miniatures of her works that will add a lively element to your fridge, as magnets. Kristin's work is fun and magical, and a must see.

Dan Leisen has added lots and lots of new images to his collection of nature and landscape photography. There are several large prints of sunrises and sunsets on Hawaiian beaches bathed in golden light as well as images of the first light breaking in across the frozen ice of a Lake Superior morning in winter. Dan will have what will probably be the most extensive exhibition of his work seen anywhere. In addition to two sizes of matted and/or framed prints, Dan will have a large selection of photo notecards.

Mike Okerstrom, is returning to show us what he's been doing over the past couple of years with works in new directions. This year Mike will have a huge hand-carved drum to show you as well as several large sculptures that will excite your imagination. Mike will also have his paintings on display.

In addition to our own artists, Faith Church will be a host site to several other artisans, as part of the Seward Neighborhood's Art Crawl. Karen Franzmeier's sewn and knit work, Leann Johnson, ceramic tile and jewelry, Eric Wiger, blown glass, Carol Witte, jewelry and cards, and the Midtown Art Shoppe collective with works in several medias.

The Art Crawl is a big deal in the Seward Neighborhood and includes sixty artists throughout the neighborhood and is supported financially by many of the local businesses. Be sure to get your copy of the map so you can see the magnitude of this wonderful event, and take a look at what other artists in our neighborhood are doing.

In your gift shopping this year, if you are looking for something unique and an alternative to the big store crush, you may find what you're looking for at this event, and you'll be supporting the local art community too.

The Art Crawl is Saturday, December 7, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday December 8, noon to 5 p.m. You can pick up the map/brochure at the back of the sanctuary at Faith, or go to: sewardarts.org/ for more info on several activities related to the Art Crawl including an Art Car Parade.

--Dan Leisen

What's happening here and there...

Advent Evening Prayer

Creator of the stars of night, come! Mondays of Advent: December 2, 9 and 16, 7-8 p.m. Simple program of seasonal readings, quiet, and music with local musicians. All are welcome. Sabbath House, 3228 Portland Avenue S, Minneapolis.

Thank You, Thank You...

Dear friends at FMC, thank you so much for your recent gift to MCC's Where Needed Most fund. It is because of congregations like you that MCC and our partners can keep working in the areas of relief, development and peace all in the name of Christ. We are so grateful for your support to us over the years. We appreciate you!

--*Blessings, Anna Yoder and Maynard Knepp, Donor Relations Team, MCC Central States*

We are grateful for the contribution of \$500 in January that helped us grow our vision of a community that responds to harm with honest conversation with those impacted and meaningful opportunities to repair harm. With your generosity, the Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice partnership is able to have conversations with youth that lead to important life lessons. Teen participants discover the consequences of their actions and how to repair the harm they have caused. To date, 138 youth have completed the program resulting in 169 apologies to those harmed, almost 900 hours of volunteer service to the community and \$5,700 in financial restitution to victims. Thank you for making the work of transforming your community possible, we hope we can rely on your continued support.

--*Michele Bradley, Program Manager, Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership*

The deadline for January newsletter items is noon, Monday, December 23rd.

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.