

# Faith Connection

February 2013

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

On one of the recent near-zero days I decided to take the bus to church instead of getting into a frozen car. At the bus stop near my house I met a neighbor I hadn't seen since last summer. As we greeted each other she beamed with the news that she had had another child in December, the day after her own birthday. "Her name is Mahalia Blessing People," she said. I responded that I wished all children could begin life with such loving expectations.

As we got on the bus and parted ways the name kept ringing in my ears. Mahalia Blessing People. I didn't have a chance to ask how she had chosen the names so I was left to imagine. I know that my neighbor sings in her church so no doubt the music of Mahalia Jackson has been inspiring for her. Her other children are boys, so perhaps a girl came as a special blessing. But this mother was not thinking of her own blessing alone, she has high hopes that her child will bless others. I pray this will come to pass.

This encounter transpired just after my return from the state of Virginia where I had two very different experiences. The first was a day and a half with family friends who have a four-year-old boy and one-year-old twin girls. I was indeed blessed by the vibrancy of this family—the amazing interest of a four-year old in all things cosmic and planetary; the budding language and mobility skills of the twins, and the patient creativity of parents who nurture values of love, compassion and faith in these young lives. The second experience was the two-day School for Leadership Training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary entitled "Imagining the Church as Healing Space: To Hear, To Hold, To Hope." Here we heard stories of recovery from mental illness and how the church can be part of the healing process. As usual there were informational presentations and workshops to increase awareness of various aspects of mental health and illness. By far the most moving sessions were those that included personal stories, many of which

included traumatic times of separation from family and community during episodes of depression or mental "breaks." Some of the stories included abusive or chaotic childhood experiences. Others gave testimony to early memories of loving, secure environments. It was encouraging to hear stories of returning to health and finding the gift of some aspects of their conditions—creativity, insight, compassion.

The worlds of loving, nurturing homes and of alienating times of mental illness seem distant from each other. In reality the distance can be very close. Mental illness can visit any family. As a church we have the opportunity to support families when a member is in crisis, or perhaps over many years of chronic illness. We can also be a place of listening, holding, and hope for persons whose feel abandoned by family (and society). Accompanying people in pain, like parenting, is never risk-free. However, remembering that someone's name is always more important than a diagnosis, and that each person has gifts to share, will help us to be and become a healing space.

--Joetta Schlabach

## What's happening at FMC...

### Lent Worship Theme: "Ashamed No More"

We will begin the Christian season of Lent with a Taizé prayer service on Ash Wednesday, February 13. We mark ourselves with ashes in this service as a way to acknowledge our vulnerability, brokenness and ongoing need for forgiveness, healing, and growth. The worship theme during Lent, drawn from materials from Mennonite Church USA, is "Ashamed No More." Although we may speak of being "sinners saved by grace," in reality we often experience shame, feeling we must hide our weakness and failures. Lent offers us a season to be honest, to confess, and to find courage not because we are all saintly but because Jesus entered our "humble estate" and walks with us in our struggles. A

good entrée to this worship theme and the season of Lent is an article, “Be Imperfect,” by former FMC member Sara Dick (and sister to Anna Gambucci) in the most recent issue of *The Mennonite*. If you do not have a subscription, you can find a copy on the magazine rack in the fellowship area or find a copy of the article on line at [themennonite.org](http://themennonite.org) (you’ll find “Be Imperfect” under the “Column” section).

--Lent 2013 Worship Planning Committee: Katie Cuffey, Mike Okerstrom, Joetta Schlabach, Kristi Zabriskie.

## February-April Adult Education Classes

The following class options will be offered during the winter quarter. Come be part of a transformative conversation!

**The Gospel of John.** Ready for a fresh look at John? Using a fresh text written to transport us back into John’s world, we will examine the fourth gospel from a traditional perspective while encouraging fresh looks from feminist, gay, non-Western and other perspectives—even from the visual arts. Warning: you’ll never look at John the same way again! Coordinated by Steve Wall and Jim Kuebelbeck

**Living the Sermon on the Mount.** Following Jesus as disciples and practicing his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount is central to Mennonite faith. Yet if we are honest, we sometimes experience Jesus’ words as “hard sayings.” Just like other Christians, we sometimes wonder if his teachings are realistic and practical. They are! Glen Stassen’s breakthrough interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount will show us why. Gerald Schlabach will facilitate.

**Parenting Class.** The topic on February 10 will be “Talking to Children about Race.” Facilitated by Annette Semanchin Jones

## Church Membership Exploration

Anyone who has been attending worship or other FMC activities and would like to learn more about the congregation and Anabaptist/Mennonite belief/practice is invited to a three-session series. We will use this time to get better acquainted and learn about

- our various personal faith and church experiences
- the history of FMC and our connection to Mennonite Church USA, and
- the beliefs/practices of Anabaptist/Mennonite churches.

At the conclusion individuals may choose whether they would like to make a commitment of membership. Each session will be offered in two formats, on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, according to the following schedule. Persons may switch between formats to accommodate schedules, if needed.

**Session 1:** Sunday, February 17, 11-noon (education hour)

Wednesday, February 20, 6:45-8p.m. (after community meal)

**Session 2:** Sunday, March 24, 11-noon (education hour)  
Wednesday, April 3, 6:45-8p.m. (after community meal)

**Session 3:** Sunday, April 7, 11-noon (education hour)  
Wednesday, April 17, 6:45-8 p.m. (after community meal)

Current members interested in getting better acquainted with more recent comers and sharing from their experiences are welcome to participate.

—Joetta Schlabach and the Deacons

*Ash Wednesday*  
*Taizé Prayer Service*

*February 13, 2013*  
*7:00 pm Sanctuary*  
*Following Community Meal*

*“Remember that from dust you were made  
and to dust you will return.”*

## Council and Commissions Retreat Saturday, February 9

Everyone who will be serving on a Commission and/or the Church Council during the next year (both new and returning members) is invited to a half-day (9-noon) morning retreat on Saturday, February 9. This will replace the February Council meeting. The retreat will include a time of spiritual focus led by Cynthia Miller, a community-building exercise, consideration of how our current church life meshes with the “Purposeful Plan” of Mennonite Church USA, review of best practices for productive committee work and meetings, and a review of our budgeting/financial reporting process. And, of course, coffee and light refreshments! We look forward to beginning the new church year with time for joint reflection and direction-setting.

## Meals for Gerbers

The on-line tool for arranging two meals each month for Dan and Terry Gerber is working well. Dan and Terry appreciate this opportunity for regular connection with FMC friends even if they can't always make it to church. We will regularly include the web link in the Mid-Week Update for easy access. The schedule is arranged in two-week blocks (first two weeks of the month or last two weeks of the month). After signing up for a slot, individuals contact Dan and Terry to arrange a day/time within that timeframe. Terry and Dan would like for persons to stay and share the meal with them, whenever possible. This can be a family affair, as Terry enjoys children very much, and arranged at noon or evening, week days or weekends.

--The Deacons



If you or a family member has a birthday in February, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on January 12<sup>th</sup>. (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](mailto:jschlabach@faithmennonite.org).

February  
Birthday  
Brunch

Saturday,  
February 23  
9:30-11  
a.m.

## Wednesday Evening Fellowships

As of this writing, we have hosted three weekly Wednesday evening meals and fellowship time, drawing about 30 to 50 people at each meal. While the majority of attendees have been from the Faith Mennonite Church and Mennonite Worker communities, some neighborhood residents and others connected with one or both churches have attended as well. The number of children attending has also varied each week, but every week the children have enjoyed the activities planned by Gemma, Lydia and Annika, all from the Mennonite Worker community. Mark Van Steenwyk of the Mennonite Worker community has cooked fantastic food for all the meals, with last week's meal featuring an excellent lentil dish.

Every fourth Wednesday gathering of the month includes a film from the Peace and Justice film series, coordinated by Donna Minter and Kristi Zabriskie, and the first one was held on January 23 after the meal. Approximately 30 people watched the film "I AM," and 10 people stayed to participate in circle discussion afterwards. The next film will be on Wednesday, February 27, starting at 7 p.m.

We encourage everyone from Faith Mennonite Church to attend and to bring friends. Just as a reminder, the meal begins at 6 p.m., and the children's activities begin at 6:30 p.m. Donations are welcome to help cover the cost of food and child care. We hope to see you there!

--Shelly Hendricks

## How Can FMC Be Hospitable to Visitors?

What makes you feel welcome or unwelcome in a new setting? In the first adult Sunday School class of 2013 about 20 adults talked about how our church can be hospitable to visitors. The session was a follow-up to discussion of Christine Pohl's book *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* last fall and chosen because providing hospitality is a significant practice in our church community.

We shared stories of what experiences made us feel welcome and what kinds of actions made us feel unwelcome. Kristi and Tyler Zabriskie told of hospitality shown them by Pastor Joetta and other Faith Mennonite members when they visited the Twin Cities for the first time. Donna Minter related one of her friend's experiences of feeling very unwelcome in our midst. Each of us then shared our own stories and came up with ideas of how we can all be hospitable at Faith Mennonite, especially in light of our new Wednesday night community meals.

The Bible contains many examples of hospitality. Abram and Sarai entertained angels unaware and the gospels contain many stories of Jesus offering hospitality and eating with strangers to name a few. The Apostle Paul tells his fellow Christians, "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Rom. 15:7). Pohl reiterates this idea. "In hospitality, we respond to the welcome that God has offered and replicate that welcome in the world." (p. 159). She also suggests that showing hospitality is situated in the command to love our enemies and claims Hospitality is "a sign of hope that love is possible in a broken world." (p. 164).

We offer hospitality because we have good news to share. There are people who have never experienced or do not understand the possibility of hospitality in a world where offering sincere hospitality is counterculture. We offer hospitality knowing that strangers can teach us and because we want our church to be a place of mutual respect, where each person can share his/her stories and where we are all equal. Hospitality involves an attitude, a way of being. It taps into our deep desire and need to belong and to feel that we are worthwhile.

The list below captures some of the ideas mentioned that Sunday morning and hopefully invites your thoughts and ideas about hospitality at Faith Mennonite.

- Be aware of who's around. Notice visitors.
- Be attentive to them.
- Be vulnerable and a little more intentional.
- Introduce yourself.
- Introduce the visitor to another member of our community, particularly if you think they might have similar interests.
- Help visitors get a cup of coffee, or invite them to one of our activities: Sunday School, Wednesday night meals, other projects and programs.
- When learning to know visitors ask them questions such as how they learned about Faith Mennonite, what they like to do, or about their culture. In this economy it is a good idea to avoid asking what they do, or where they work because many people are out of work or having a difficult time economically. It was also suggested that we not ask people questions that encourage or require them to talk about traumatic experiences.
- Find some commonalities with the visitors: age of children/grandchildren, favorite music or hobbies, familiarity with a certain location or sports team, etc.
- Wear your name tag.
- Above all anticipate God's presence.

Being hospitable involves some risks. We are concerned for the safety of everyone in our community. We do not know the motives of people who come into our church. Some may take advantage of our hospitality and seem very insensitive. Some may object loudly to our beliefs.

Someone suggested that it is easiest to welcome others when we feel whole. Having designated persons to talk with visitors during fellowship time and after church and giving visitors and newcomers a loaf of bread were two other suggestions.

I like the last sentence of Pohl's book. "In the end," she says, "it is as simple and as complicated as 'loving those whom God has set beside us today.'"

--*Donna Stucky with help from Kristi Zabriskie and Donna Minter*

## 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:

**Aiden Baxter (nephew of Aryn Baxter)**  
**Carl & Jill Gerriets**  
**Fran Vavrus**

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

### Take Action to Prevent Gun Violence

Over the last month, there has been an outpouring of grief and resolve across the country to do something to change our culture of gun violence. The Sandy Hook tragedy has captured the conscience of our state and nation. It is incumbent upon us to act on behalf of all victims and the families that have been broken by gun violence. NOW is our moment, literally. There is no time like the present to change gun regulations in our state and nation, as part of our Christian and human calling to build more peaceful communities, free from violence. Following are a series of events that need our support. Come to one or many!

### **5 Events, 1 Written Advocacy Invitation - 3 Weeks - Let's go!**

Here are four ways you can push for change:

**1. Speak out!** Bills will be heard next week in the Minnesota House Public Safety Committee! Several bills will be introduced, including a bill requiring a background check for any sale of a pistol or assault weapon, extending the checks to private sales. This will close big gaps in current law that allow sales not through licensed dealers to be completed with no background check. This includes on-line and gun show sales. National polls show that three out of four NRA members supports background checks for all gun sales. Another bill goes after gun trafficking. It outlaws the practice of "straw purchasing," which is when a person with a clean criminal record buys a gun for a person prohibited by law from owning one. These bills have broad public support and are being advocated by the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association and the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association.

2. Attend a Minnesota House public hearing Feb 5, 6, and possibly 7, 10-11:30 a.m. (Families: feel free to bring your young children). Next week the Minnesota House "Public Safety and Finance Committee" will hear the first proposed legislation in our state since the tragedy at Sandy Hook.

- Tuesday, February 5, 10 a.m., State Office Building, 100 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd(across from the Capital) Hearing related to background checks for every gun sale.
- Wednesday, February 6th, 10 a.m., State Office Building, 100 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd(across from the Capital). Protect Minnesota bills dealing with assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Many say they want to wait and see what the US Congress does before pursuing action. We want action now!
- There may be a hearing on Thursday, February 7th at 10 a.m., as well. Stay tuned.

3. Monday, February 11, 6-8 p.m., "Firearms Effect" A community action-discussion to prevent gun violence Washington High School, 1495 Rice Street, St. Paul. Table activities for children. (Spearheaded by FMC member, parent, and St. Paul resident, Anna Gambucci.)

4. Monday, February 18, 3 p.m. - Presidents' Day Rally to Prevent Gun Violence. One week after Firearms Effect, the Minnesota Violence Prevention Coalition will pack the State Capitol Rotunda to show our Representatives and Minnesota that today is the day; the time to act is now! To accomplish this we will need you... and a friend.. and a friend of a friend. Every person counts, every life counts; everybody in, nobody out.

Thanks so much! Hope to see you at one or many of these events! If you need more information, please contact me at [annagambucci@yahoo.com](mailto:annagambucci@yahoo.com).

--Anna Gambucci, partnering with the non-profit, "Protect Minnesota: Working to End Gun Violence"

## Thank You, Thank You...

We have been privileged this year to host dozens of new friends. We met foot-sore travelers who shared their adventures with us. Some of our guests were recently homeless and needed respite from the harsh reality of living outdoors. In addition to sleeping quarters and food, we have been able to offer showers, clothes, or

just a place to hang out for awhile. We don't always have space available for long-term visits, so expanding the ways we offer hospitality has been helpful. Our guests have brought us music, food, knowledge, conversation, and so much more. We are grateful to have learned many lessons about the reality of inviting the stranger to share our lives.

To all of those who have so generously supported us over the past year, we would like to express our sincere gratitude. We deeply appreciate the on-going kindness of the family and friends who urge us on in this path to live out the love of Christ in the world.

If you are interested in receiving The Mennonite Worker's newsletter you can subscribe on the home page of our website: [www.mennoniteworker.com](http://www.mennoniteworker.com)

--with love and gratitude, *The Mennonite Worker*

I am writing to thank you for sponsoring the Candlelight Service for the Children of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and Other Child Victims of War, which took place on December 28. We had a good turnout and many of the participants spoke about how meaningful this service has been for them over the years. I also want to take this opportunity to let you know about an upcoming presentation and book signing with investigative journalist Greg Barrett. His book, *The Gospel of Rutba: War, Peace and the Good Samaritan Story in Iraq* tells the story of members of a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in 2003 who were injured in a car accident as they were fleeing during the "shock and awe" bombing. They were taken to the closest city, Rutba, which had just been bombed by the United States, leaving the hospital in ruins. What happened next, and also when the delegation returned to Rutba seven years later, is the topic of the book. Thursday, February 21, 7 p.m., in hospitality hall at St. Joan of Arc Church, 4537 3rd Ave. S, Minneapolis. For more info, call 612-522-1861.

--Peace and best wishes for 2013, Marie Braun for the Twin Cities Peace Campaign

**The deadline for March newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>.**

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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.