

Faith Connection

February 2007

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...

Several months ago in my pastoral musings I wrote about trust. In that column I recounted my return from voluntary service in 1993 and how I felt the hand of God in the way things came together for me. I used this experience to encourage trust among the people of Faith Mennonite as we reconfigured the pastoral team. In this column I want to share how I have seen the faithfulness of God in supplying the needs of our congregation. I begin with the Biblical story which surfaces for me as I consider the transitions of the last month.

Exodus 16 recounts the first days of the Hebrews' journey through the wilderness toward their new home. They are hungry and suggest they were better off still in Egyptian bondage. Despite this saucy attitude, God provides them manna and quail. The people are not to stockpile any of the manna, but they do. This frustrates God. The stockpiled manna rots. God is frustrated by a people who do not trust that God will provide the daily bread. Yet, Yahweh continues to supply what they need. It is a story of God's faithfulness irregardless of a people who are far from mature in their trust.

This is a personal story for me. I have trusted God in this transition, and at times I have been privately worried. I have been most concerned as my job applications failed to garner interviews. None of these potential employers expressed the reasons for declining an interview. In my worst moments I found myself pining for times past which were adequate but not right. It has been a spiritual discipline to temper such thoughts with trust. God has been gracious and provided an employment opportunity for me. My experiences in Saskatchewan and our household devotions on the day of my interview have confirmed that my new labor is good labor for me right now. I will be working part time in a group home with developmentally disabled adults. When I add the income from this work with my

existing pastoral care salary we have enough to pay our bills with Patty free to pursue her writing. There is not extra manna to store up, but we have enough for today.

This is also a congregational story. A number of people have raised concerns that Patty and Patrick will not be able to survive financially, or that the budget is out of whack, or that the multiple staff will flounder in communication. I am so grateful for the ministry gifts Joetta has brought to our church staff. She has already been able to provide exceptional ministry in areas where Patty and I could provide only average care. Since my health care will be provided by my new employer, the additional financial burden to the congregation is minimal. And while it will take time for the staff to develop comfort in our team ministry all indications are that we can talk honestly with each other and support each other in our common desire to serve God among the people of Faith Mennonite. God's faithfulness to Faith Mennonite, or Patrick, or any of us exists whether we are able to trust or not. Our journey to the Promised Land is one in which we learn to trust and give thanks when God's faithfulness appears to sustain us.

This is the Good News.

--Patrick Preheim

"When Statesmen gravely say 'We must be realistic' The chances are they're weak and, therefore, pacifistic But when they speak of Principles, look out: perhaps Their generals are already poring over maps."

--W. H. Auden

What's happening at FMC...

Looking Forward to Lent

Christmas is over; we are in the midst of Epiphany. Can Easter be far off? Actually the Lent season begins soon—on February 21, Ash Wednesday. This year we will follow the theme of "Blessed hunger; holy feast" during the Sundays of Lent. During Holy Week, we will observe Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday (soup supper followed by scriptures, prayers and communion), and Easter Sunday.

Please mark your calendar for the Ash Wednesday service, a candle-light Taizé service of music, meditation, and blessing of ashes—a symbol of repentance. This will be a fitting way to enter into the forty days of Lent.

--Sandra Westby, *Worship Committee*

New Sunday Morning Adult Education Series

Beginning February 4, Adult Education will be facilitating a topical overview of the Bible, book-by-book. We will survey the Old Testament through the end of the Spring followed by the New Testament in the Fall. Rather than a teacher/class format, a fast-paced participatory discussion will be facilitated with handout material provided. Please come to share, come to listen or come to learn. Bring a Bible if you can or there are church copies available for the sessions. Sundays 9:30 in the Library. Week 1: Genesis and Exodus.

-John Ratigan

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting December 4, 2006 @ FMC

Present: Alisa Bardo, Moderator; Neil Okerlund, Moderator-elect; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Sandra Westby, Worship; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Erin Geiser, Deacons; Minke Sundseth, Missions & Service; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Joan Kreider, Fellowship Commission.

Absent: Patty Friesen, Pastor; Christian Education representative.

Minutes. Minutes of October 16 approved with corrections.

Treasurer's report. September and October report includes retreat costs, appears on two different lines, 68

and 28 under Fellowship. Because of receipts, needed only ¼ of the amount budgeted. Have paid over half of Conference support, but need to pay the remaining \$7500, plus about \$4000 for Missions & Service contributions to local organizations, usually paid at the end of the year. This will leave us about \$3500 short for the rest of the year, estimating projected giving. We could reduce M & S contributions (they only spent about 60% of their budget last year), or dip into our Calvert funds. Neil asks if giving is down? Jerry says no, this is due to our final \$16,000 payment for the elevator project, which we chose not to borrow, and Calvert interest has been down, although it gained \$1000 in one month recently. Or we could hold M & S donations until next year. Joan suggests another option is to give some of M & S funds to Conference obligations. We should avoid shifting costs to next year. Erin asks whether any of the organizations know what we are committing for the year? Jerry, no. Joan suggests appealing to the congregation for designated funds for M & S. Patrick suggests giving 60% to M & S, and the remaining Conference payments. He points out that M & S giving is mainly to local organizations. Erin suggests explaining situation to the congregation and saying we want to pay 100% of what we've budgeted for these items. Jerry cautions being careful about too many appeals for money. He will put an item in the newsletter, and someone from M & S will announce at worship announcements.

Proposed 2007 budget. Jerry passes out proposed budget. Includes no specific line to fund tuition support fund; this has usually been supported by designated offerings. Patrick says the Hmong church is being encouraged to become self-supporting soon, and we may reduce that contribution. Also does not include a line for Nursery Care Coordinator; what line should it go under? Decision to put it under Deacons for now. Not necessary to contribute to funds for World Conference or pastoral sabbatical every year. Projected local giving to increase \$3000. We're giving probably double to Conference support and M & S compared to five years ago. Erin questions only \$5000 for building maintenance; should the Trustees do an assessment this year for what priorities may arise?

Commission Reports

Trustees. Buying two new water fountains. There are concerns about potential break-ins in some tenant offices; there was evidence of tampering to some interior doors. Will be doing something to improve security.

Worship. Paid for Christmas tree, and tuning piano. The three pastors want a half-day planning session in

January. Should we do a local relief contribution, like mittens under the tree? M & S will discuss. Gregg also suggests putting foodshelf contributions under the tree.

Fellowship. There will be two baby showers coming up and a cookie social after the Christmas program.

Childcare committee. Mike Okerstrom as Deacon and one of the Pastors will be meeting with Martha on December 17.

Missions and Service. Patrick discussed results of the AMBS listening project. Met with community members to gather information about community perceptions of FMC. Patrick believes we need to be clearer about what our values are, and try to be more welcoming to visitors, with maps, signs, a more inviting exterior, etc. M & S discussed an outdoor kiosk for use of FMC, tenants and community. Will discuss again in January meeting.

Gifts discernment. Patty is ill tonight and can't be present to report. They are currently vetting names for some positions, will have names for next Council meeting.

Deacons. Deacons propose dedicating one Sunday a month for small group meetings. Have checked with Cynthia to get response on potentially using Sunday school hour. It makes Sunday a more of a "church day." Minke suggests possibly organizing them around a specific time, perhaps one on Sunday, and one on another day.

Pastors. Currently redoing office space to accommodate Joetta. Also want to upgrade office hardware. May try to get in on Minneapolis Wi-Fi. Also need private mailboxes for each pastor. Currently using ISAIAH's photocopier at a rate of \$.05 per page. Neil says pastor parish will begin meeting monthly next year.

New business

Written committee annual reports Try to make committee reports this year not just an accounting of activities, but some sense of the vision of the committee's work. Will look in the future at ways to make them more transparent. Reports should be to Chris Jones by January 7.

Annual meeting. Annual congregational meeting will be January 28. Will see whether Martha will be available to do childcare during meeting.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

Ched Myers Economics Presentations Available

Friends, I was able to make copies of Ched Myers' 4 Bible Studies and his presentation on Community Investing that took place at Faith Mennonite, Holy

Trinity Lutheran, and Luther Seminary November 1-4, 2006. They are burned on a CD-ROM to be played on a computer which has speakers. If you would like a copy of them to hear presentations you missed or to review some of the principles of "Sabbath Economics," please contact me to get a copy. I'd prefer that you pick them up from my house but I'm also willing to mail it to you after I get some mailer envelopes designed for CDs. There is no charge for it -however, I'm including Ched's address with the instruction sheet so you can consider making a donation for his work if you are able.

If you'd like a copy, please reply by e-mail or call me and let me know if you can pick it up or need it mailed to you. If the latter, please give me your address as well. I can be contacted at:

Phone: 612-724-3255

E-mail: steveclemens@msn.com

--Steve Clemens

What's happening here and there...

Christian Peace Witness for Iraq

Join thousands of Christian lay people and clergy in Washington, D.C., March 16, 2007, to voice your support for creating real security and peace in Iraq. Worship together, vigil together. (www.christianpeacewitness.org)

The day begins with ecumenical worship at 7 p.m. on Friday night, March 16, at the National Cathedral. This worship will be the heart of our Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, for we know that worship builds up the entire body of Christ so that we might make a difference in the world because of who Jesus calls us to be. The liturgy will intentionally embrace the rich variety of worship experiences available to us across our religious traditions. Following our time of worship, there will be a procession down Massachusetts Avenue to the White House. The walk is approximately two and a half miles, and bus transportation will be provided for those who desire it. (Approximate time: 9 to 10:30 p.m.)

There will be a late-night gathering and Christian Witness in Lafayette Park in front of the White House. Plans are underway, and more information will follow. Come dressed for the weather (whatever it is) and plan to be with thousands of other Christians like you who also long for a chance to publicly affirm the core values of our faith. For more information, contact: Christianpeacewitness@gmail.com

In review...

Patty's Picks

A Yellow Raft in Blue Water, by Michael Dorris, has been on my bookshelf since it came out in 1987 because I knew I would want to read it again. It is worth a second and third read, at least one read a decade. A beautiful portrait of three generations of women, their relationship to each other and the Montana reservation on which they live.

Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World, by Scott Russell Sanders, reminds me of the spiritual discipline of commitment to land and family and self. One of the best essays I've ever read is "Settling Down." "I cannot have a spiritual center without having a geographical one; I cannot live a grounded life without being grounded in a place."

An operatic adaptation of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, with music by Ricky Ian Gordon and libretto by Michael Korie, will be being staged at the Minnesota Opera during February. I haven't even seen it yet but have been part of the literary/musical discussions happening around the city. It is a homegrown creation of the Minnesota Opera and a timely reminder about the myth of the American dream.

"Marie Antoinette," directed by Sophia Coppola, is an interesting biography of a controversial historical figure. It is a visual banquet of decadence with a modern musical score and interestingly little dialogue. It made me go to the library to study up on the roots of the French Revolution.

--Patty Friesen

Deadline for March newsletter items is noon, February 22nd.

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.

The Sabbath

Waking on the Seventh Day of Creation,
They cautiously sniffed the air:
The most fastidious nostril among them admitted
That fellow was no longer there.

Herbivore, parasite, predator scouted,
Migrants flew fast and far—
Not a trace of his presence: holes in the earth,
Beaches covered with tar,

Ruins and metallic rubbish in plenty
Were all that was left of him
Whose birth on the Sixth had made of that day
An unnecessary interim.

Well, that fellow had never really smelled
Like a creature who would survive:
No grace, address or faculty like those
Born on the First Five.

Back, then, at last on a natural economy,
Now His Impudence was gone,
Looking exactly like what it was,
The Seventh Day went on,

Beautiful, happy, perfectly pointless....
A rifle's ringing crack
Split their Arcadia wide open, cut
Their Sabbath nonsense short.

For whom did they think they had been created?
That fellow was back,
More bloody-minded than they remembered,
More god-like than they thought.

--W. H. Auden