

# Faith Connection

February 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...

During one of the worship sessions at the Central Plains Mennonite Conference leadership seminar, "Come, Let Us Reason Together," in early January, I shared a brief reflection on the image of the labyrinth. That seminar was intended to develop common understandings in the church for discerning our way through difficult issues (see related article on p. 3). Intellectual reasoning is one tool we use, but wisdom also comes to us through body knowledge and through the arts.

I shared the experience I had had in early December of attending a half-day Advent prayer retreat that incorporated walking prayer on a labyrinth. My prayer during that Advent retreat was focused on my participation on the Unity Task Group of conference as well as the upcoming January leadership seminar. I was praying that our conference and denomination might find unity.

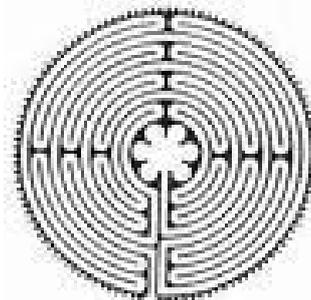
In the end I did not walk a labyrinth, due to the large number of participants and the crowded prayer paths. Instead I choose to simply trace the path with my finger on a small image of a labyrinth. The "answer" that the labyrinth experience provided that morning was the awareness that as one walks toward the center, you constantly change directions—180 degrees—so that at one moment you are walking in the opposite direction of what you will be going in the next moment. If two people walk the labyrinth together, they will pass each other, going in opposite directions, yet still be on the same path to the center. This was a reassuring image: church unity may not mean that we all agree 100 percent on every issue, but if our aim is to walk toward the center (Christ), we can still be on the same path.

As we approach the beginning of Lent, we might consider the labyrinth as a tool for prayer in this penitential season. Our worship theme during Lent 2010 will be "Holding On, Letting Go." Discovering what we need to hold on to and what we need to let go of in our

walk with God is a life-long process. The frequent turns in the labyrinth path can remind us of the early Christian concept of repentance, or turning, *metanoia*. When John the Baptist and Jesus invited people to repent, they were asking them to not simply feel shame or remorse, but to change course, to move in a direction toward God and Life.

Let us be open to the ways God may be calling us to turn. Let us consider the things we need to hold on to and the things we need to let go of as we walk with Jesus toward the cross.

--Joetta Schlabach



"[No-one] knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means...only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is...[one] who gives into temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it."

--C.S.Lewis

## What's happening at FMC...

### Spring Christian Education Classes

The following four Adult Christian Education classes will be offered this winter/spring. Church Membership Exploration, offered as a mini-course, will meet on February 14, 21, and 28. The other three courses will meet on 10 Sundays from February 14 – April 25.

**Church Membership Exploration.** (February 14, 21, 28) This three-week series is intended for people who have been attending Faith Mennonite Church and would like to consider becoming a member. Participants will have a chance to share with each other the faith commitments that draw them into a faith community, learn more about the history of Faith Mennonite Church, and review the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. Led by Pastor Joetta and the deacons.

**Making the Connection: Parents and Children, Church and Home.** Parents, do you ever wonder what your child is learning in Sunday School? Do you spend a frustrating ride home from church trying to get her to share what her lesson was about? To strengthen the connection between church and home, we will be offering an adult education class that focuses on the same weekly theme and scripture passage that your child is covering. This will enable the possibility of having meaningful family faith conversations and at-home application of weekly biblical themes. The "Gather 'Round" curriculum is designed to nurture people of all ages, in order that they may become followers of Jesus. The *Gather 'Round Handbook* will be used as a resource; families are encouraged to get a copy. (Sign-up sheet for the handbook is located at the back of the church.) Kami Blackwell Kinney will lead the class.

**Speaking of Faith** will focus on questions and ideas regarding faith and belief. Why/how does our personal Christian belief system remain intact in a sea of other ideological systems? What can we learn from these other systems that will inform our Christian faith? Krista Tippet's book, *Speaking of Faith* (and other resources) will be used as a "springboard" for the discussions. (Class participants should sign-up for a personal copy of Tippet's book on the sheet located at the back of the church.) Joan Kreider will lead the class.

**Ways of Praying.** Author Anne LaMott writes that there are two basic prayers: "Help! Help!" and "Thank

you! Thank you!" While that may be true, 2,000 years of Christian practice have produced a number of different prayer forms through which we express these simple words. In this class we will explore a variety of prayer forms including silent contemplation, *lectio divina* (holy reading) with Scripture, the daily examen, labyrinth prayer and more. We will practice these prayer forms together in the class and then individually during the week. Each successive session will include time for feedback about our individual experiences during the week. Coordinated by Pastor Joetta, with the assistance of others.

--Kathleen Harder



### Ash Wednesday Service February 17, 7 p.m.

All are welcome to a contemplative service to mark the beginning of Lent. This year's service will include receiving of ashes and prayers of confession.

### Comings & Goings

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently visited or begun attending our worship. Some have attended for some time but haven't been listed previously in this column:

*Chris, Laura & Eliza Baker*

*Dick Christoph*

*Lis Wilson*

### Making Your Wishes Known

Given the youthful demographic of our congregation we have many more rituals concerning the beginning than the end of life. Most of us don't spend too much time considering our end, unless we have parents or grandparents who are nearing the end of life. During the adult education hour on January 17, Joan Kreider talked about the conversation that she and her siblings had with her parents about their end-of-life choices,

including their funeral arrangements. At the end of that conversation the entire family, including grandchildren, joined with their grandparents in singing the hymns they have chosen for their funeral. Joan said the grandchildren all commented on how special it was to do this.

It is never too early to think about the kind of health care decisions we would like to make as we near the end of life (or if we become disabled through an accident), or the ways that we would like our lives to be remembered and celebrated in a funeral or memorial service. It is estimated that 50% of our life-time healthcare dollars are spent during the final six months of life. Sometimes money is spent prolonging life through extraordinary means because the family does not know the wishes of their loved one. Early conversation is important.

Two sets of forms were distributed to church mailboxes prior to the January 17 session. One was a booklet, *Five Wishes*, to communicate advance directives for health care. The other was a 2-sided sheet to communicate elements that one would like included (hymns, scriptures, etc) in a funeral or memorial service. We hope that individuals and couples will work with these documents and turn in copies to be filed in the church office. If you have not had these conversations with your parents, you may wish to use these documents as a conversation starter. One resource that Joan Kreider recommended was the book *My Mother, Your Mother* by Dennis McCullough. The FMC library also has several AV resources on aging and end-of-life issues.

--Joetta Schlabach

### Restorative Justice Benefit

FMC is partnering with the Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership for a Benefit Concert.

**When:** Sunday, February 28, 2:00-4:00 pm.

**Where:** Faith Mennonite Church, 2720 E 22nd St. Minneapolis.

**Who:** Performances by fiddler Linda Breitag, folk singers Bret Hesla and Ray Makeever, bluegrass musician Chris Jones, jazz pianist Joel Sundseth and String Harmony, a classical quintet. This is a family-friendly concert with songs of peace and hope that will have you singing along.

**Why:** For a fun afternoon with family and neighbors to support a meaningful program in our neighborhood. Since 2004, Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership has provided an alternative to juvenile court for youth committing misdemeanor offenses in Seward and Greater Longfellow.

Your support for SLRJP during this difficult funding year is appreciated! Freewill donations will be gratefully accepted. For further information about the concert or SLRJP contact Michele Braley at SLRJP; 612-338-6205 x108 or michele@sng.org

--Donna Minter



February  
Birthday  
Brunch

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 February 13. (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).

Saturday,  
Feb. 13  
9:30-11:30  
a.m.

### Five From FMC Attend CPMC Leadership Seminar

Katie Hochstedler, Scott Neal, Candace Laultt, Phil Stoltzfus, and Joetta Schlabach all braved the sub-zero weather and traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, for the January 8-9 Central Plains Mennonite Conference Leadership Seminar, "Come, Let Us Reason Together: Developing Common Understandings for Discernment." About 125 pastors, elders, deacons and other congregational leaders from across our conference (Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Montana) gathered to hear three presentations and to engage in round-table conversation around the topic of interpretive frameworks for approaching scripture when we are divided on issues of faith and practice such as same-sex marriage.

The event began with a review of guidelines for respectful conversation. These guidelines set a tone of listening and respect as others spoke. Worship times emphasized our shared beliefs and commitments.

Copies of the three presentations are available on line on the CPMC website:  
[centralplains.mennonite.net/Events/Leaders\\_Seminar](http://centralplains.mennonite.net/Events/Leaders_Seminar).

While this event was not intended to produce a definitive outcome, those of us attending from FMC felt like it set an important tone for ongoing conversation. Conference leaders intended this seminar to complement the work of the Unity Task Group, which is charged with bringing a recommendation regarding the conference's current "Variance Policy" to the CPMC Annual Meeting in June. Katie Hochstedler and Joetta Schlabach are members of the Unity Task Group, which will have its next meeting February 5-6 in Manson, Iowa.

-- Joetta Schlabach.

## **Missions and Service Report**

The Missions and Service Commission met January 12 at FMC. Joetta Schlabach, Melissa Hochstedler, Donna Minter, Katie Hochstedler were present from M&S Commission as well as Eric Kasper. Eric Kasper gave a report of progress at the Pan African Community Organization (PACO) where Eric has been volunteering since October as an ESL instructor. The commission then reviewed the Christmas cookie baking class and decided to consider planning a similar event for next year. Also, another cooking class will be planned for late winter or spring by Katie Hochstedler and Gregg Richardson.

The Commission discussed a giving survey that will be distributed at the annual meeting along with any changes that need to be made to the draft such as including investments as well as donations and volunteering to the survey. The Seward-Longfellow Restorative Justice Program fundraising event and Peace Music Project event planning is under way for February 28 from 2-4 pm at Faith Mennonite Church. The event will include music, food and door prizes for a donation based raffle.

Members of the commission discussed the recent murders at Seward Market and how Faith Mennonite can respond. Members planned for an immediate response to include taking a special offering for the family memorial fund with a longer term response to include planning to offer two scholarships to the STAR conference in the summer. Donna Minter has been planning the STAR training in the Twin Cities.

Katie Hochstedler and Melissa Hochstedler are planning the Mennonite Disaster Service trip from FMC from March 29-April 3. There are currently six people from FMC planning to go to New Orleans for the trip. The group will fundraise for transportation costs by serving a soup and bread meal at the FMC Annual Meeting on February 7.

The commission also discussed the Stewardship University on May 1 from MMA. The next Missions and Service meeting will be February 16.

--Katie Hochstedler

## **FMC Volunteers Help PACO Literacy Initiative**

The Pan-African Community Organization (PACO) is getting ready to start its second round of Adult Education courses at the beginning of February. The classes are for African immigrants, and they are held in the evenings at the Lighthouse Academy of Nations in Seward. After successfully completing a pilot course in the fall which included ESL, computer literacy, and civics classes, PACO redesigned the curriculum to more effectively integrate job training and employment counseling. This curriculum redevelopment and course planning was carried out in large part by volunteers from Faith Mennonite Church. Eric Kasper, Susan Weinlick, Anne Ryan, and Cindy Bjork volunteer their time for PACO.

PACO is actively seeking to build partnerships with other service providers and community organizations. A collaboration with the Minnesota Literacy Council is in the works that would lead to more student referrals, and PACO is being considered for an IBM literacy software grant. Support from Faith and volunteer effort are helping PACO grow its Adult Education program and effectively serve the African immigrant community in the Seward, Phillips and Cedar-Riverside neighborhoods.

--Eric Kasper

## **Central Plains Conference Worship Arts Tour in the Twin Cities**

The Congregational Ministries Committee of Central Plains Conference is holding a Worship Arts Tour on March 12-13 in the Twin Cities. Joetta Schlabach, Mike Okerstrom, Cleta Roth Gingerich, and Sandra Westby are making local arrangements for the tour. Participants will visit a variety of churches to view their permanent and temporary visual elements. In the evening they will

discuss ideas for and challenges of creating visual elements in their home congregations. Martha Yoder, an artist and associate pastor of West Union Mennonite Church near Kalona, Iowa, will facilitate a discussion of how to visually translate biblical texts and themes. A link to the brochure and registration form can be found on the FMC website home page.

## **Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 @ FMC**

**Present:** Joan Kreider, Moderator; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service; Adam Nafziger, Worship; Kathleen Harder, Education; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect; Thaine Dirks, Pastor-Parish .

**Absent:** Fellowship representative; Treasurer.

**Affirmations.** Joetta affirms Adam, Chris Jones and others who planned the Christmas program. Gregg affirms the children who sang—most of them on pitch! Joetta affirms Dan Leisen for his design of the new church sign. Adam affirms Matthew Blackwell Kinney's scripture recitations. Joetta affirms Rachel for her baking class. Also Dan L. and Kami Blackwell Kinney for their directory photos.

**Treasurer's report.** Jerry not present, but left a report and budget. Hermann asks what is "Deacon's Program" line? Not sure, but \$1000 was spent for the year. Joan notes we're \$24,000 short on offerings. Thaine notes that budgeted expenses are \$3000 over budgeted income. Joetta says that Jerry was still optimistic enough about end-of-year budget to tell Missions & Service to go ahead and disburse their end-of-year contributions.

### **Commission reports.**

**Trustees.** Glenn says nothing new to report—interior committee will meet in January.

**Missions and Service.** Katie says the Seward-Longfellow Restorative Justice Program fundraiser will be hosted by FMC and Community of St Martin on February 28th. They worked on the congregational outside giving and contribution surveys. Joan suggests also surveying about investments? Donna Minter is working on the STAR seminar. There is some interest in an MDS trip, which will be open to Community of St Martin and other area Mennonites as well. There are applications for the new ministry position. M&S is also planning the Stewardship University, May 1st. Also planned their end-of-year contributions.

**Worship.** Adam says they met for January-February worship planning, currently only two active members. Have been working on the sound system, and will need to replace the soundboard. Bob Brown is doing a good job on this.

**Education.** Kathleen says adult ed classes are going well, and they're meeting this week to plan the next term. January is already planned, other ideas include health economics, conflict resolution. Joan suggests continuing the money class?

**Deacons.** Hermann says they are continuing to discuss their role as a commission.

Pastor. Attendance is strong, increasing from average of 77 to 85 this year, with 7 Sundays over 100. People are jumping in to get involved. Challenge to make deeper connections outside Sunday morning. Economy has not affected FMC as much as some other churches. Christmas program was repeated for its third year, originally Shelley Hendricks' idea. Question: any way we could designate fund for relief requests from outside FMC? Joan suggests Target or Rainbow gift cards. Hermann suggests using a percentage of deacons' fund, Joan suggests to use at the discretion of the deacons and pastor. Joetta would like a flat monthly amount available, like \$100 a month for next 6 months. Joetta asks whether she should consult someone each time? Gregg says it should be at her discretion. Council consensus that she should allow \$100 per month at her discretion, and report to the deacons. Participating in regular prayer meetings of Seward pastors. Organizing a CPMC worship and arts tour of Twin Cities churches in March. Vacation, January 4-8, AMBS pastors meeting January 25th-29th.

### **Old business.**

**Gifts discernment slate.** Joetta reviews proposed slate. We're augmenting some commissions with more members. Katie asks whether Supportive Congregations Network liaison relates to Missions & Service Commission? Gregg asks whether Mennonite Disaster Service and Families Moving Forward liaisons should, too? Not members of the commission, but some relationship?

**Ministry staff position.** There are two applications, still open to the end of the month, will interview 2nd week of January.

### **New business.**

**Proposed 2010 budget.** Joetta hands out Jerry's proposed budget. She notes that our income has been down this fall, and we're now participating in the Corinthian Plan which will increase our expenses, and expanding hours for the ministry staff position. Jerry

renegotiated the mortgage, so payments will decrease. Joan says we shouldn't cut expenses unless we have to. Glenn notes that if we redo the sanctuary, we'll need a budget line for this.

**Annual meeting planning.** Proposed agenda: Budget, new ministry staff position. Keep the same format. Gregg suggests keep the business meeting and general discussion time separate. Hermann suggests for discussion, let some new members describe what brings them to FMC. Commission reports will be due January 13th. New Council and commissions retreat will be February 20th.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

	October	November	December
<b>Budgeted expenses</b>	\$9,407	\$13,101	\$10,250
<b>Budgeted income</b>	\$7,534	\$13,176	\$30,544

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

**St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship**

The St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship asks for your support as we have been going through an intense period of struggle in the last year. We have been a fairly small community all along but find ourselves currently with seven active members--still more than the 2 or more required for the presence of Christ to be among us (Mt. 18:20), but small enough that having anyone away on a Sunday feels like a lack. For historical perspective, the Saint Paul Mennonite Fellowship was the first publicly affirming community in the Supportive Congregations Network, which supports GLBT people. We have gladly paid a price for our justice stand.

Most family units are also struggling with at least one major life issue--grieving a death, confronting a serious illness, caring for a declining parent, or changes in relationships, as well as trying to provide support for some former attendees who are close by and needing help, but not currently a part of our worshipping community.

We have also begun moving forward in the process of changing our conference affiliation from the Central Plains Conference to the Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church. Palm Sunday (March 28, 2010), we will be meeting and worshipping with representatives from the Central District Conference as part of the exploration around changing conferences.

As a lay-led congregation, we have recently simplified our Sunday afternoon worship. This has been working well and we plan to continue our new approach. We have been having deeply satisfying worship without large amounts of preparations straining already limited resources.

How can people at faith support us? Perhaps you could come worship with us--we meet at Cherokee Park United Church at 371 West Baker Street in St. Paul. Just come across the High Bridge and turn left on Baker Street after the SuperAmerica station. We meet at 4:00PM on Sunday afternoons, so there is no conflict with Faith Mennonite. You will see a big sign out on the sidewalk.

Even a card or letter would be welcome, letting us know that we are in your thoughts and we hope, prayers, and that it matters that we make it through this period of trial. It goes without saying that we also welcome your prayers.

Feel free to call and ask about specific Sundays. The phone number for SPMF is 612-388-5016 or you can call me at 612-341-3421. I know that in February Helen O'Brien is doing the service on Valentine's Day, and I will be providing the meditation the following week, the 21st. On the 28th, Frank Trnka will be in charge of the service. Our services of late have been simply amazing. If you ask me by phone or email: puffinwoman@hotmail.com, I will forward to you Karen Abshier's simply wonderful meditation from last week. We are truly blessed.

--Patricia Mack

**Alto Refugio**

Alto Refugio is the only center providing services for HIV/AIDS victims in Paraguay. It is run by Mennonites from Manitoba and is an amazing service of love. There are programs for children, visitation for patients in hospitals and dental services---the only place in Paraguay to offer dental services for AIDS sufferers.

You can read more about Alto Refugio at their website: [www.altorefugio.org](http://www.altorefugio.org). Unfortunately hackers have taken down the site twice in the last few months, replacing useful and informative content with offensive and violent graphics. Apparently Pay Pal does not work for Paraguay. Donations can be sent to Alto Refugio c/o HIV, PO Box 399, Irvine, CA 92650. Money is needed for basics like electricity, medications and travel to the Chaco where Alto Refugio provides AIDS/HIV education to indigenous people. No one else is doing this work. If you would like more information about my experience at Alto Refugio, please give me a call at 612-341-3421. One of my post Paraguay goals is to raise some money for this amazing ministry.

--*Patricia Mack*

**The deadline for March newsletter items is noon, Thursday, February 25<sup>h</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.

### **The Coming**

And God held in his hand  
A small globe. Look, he said.  
The son looked. Far off,  
As through water, he saw  
A scorched land of fierce  
Colour. The light burned  
There; crusted buildings  
Cast their shadows: a bright  
Serpent, a river  
Uncoiled itself, radiant  
With slime.

On a bare  
Hill a bare tree saddened  
The Sky. Many people  
Held out their thin arms  
To it, as though waiting  
For a vanished April  
To return to its crossed  
Boughs. The son watched  
Them. Let me go there, he said.

*R.S. Thomas*