

Faith Connection

February 2014

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.

Ministry Staff Report...

In January I had a very enriching time teaching “Global Encounters at our Doorstep,” a globalization course at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. The following are some observations about a few of the “encounters” we had not far from FMC’s neighborhood:

We went to tour the Karmel Square Somali Mall on Pillsbury, just north of Lake St. It’s been described as “Minneapolis’s own slice of Mogadishu.” Many of the shops are run by women, and sell similar sorts of very affordable scarves, fabrics, rugs, jewelry, and household items. The reason for the similarity, so I take it, is that each booth caters to a particular set of extended families. At one point the call to prayer rings out over the loudspeakers and the men go upstairs to pray. Not your typical American business arrangement!

Mercado Central at Lake and Bloomington is an example of an ethnic mall run on a different model. In the food court, there are multiple vendors to choose from selling excellent Central American fare, and you can brush up on your Spanish to place your order, since that is what everyone is speaking. Each small business specializes in its own thing, yet they all work together as a cooperative “just like in a village in Mexico,” said one business owner. After church on Sunday they often have live music in the food court.

These are just two of the ways that the world has come to South Minneapolis. And two ways in which, as we learned, there are economic experiments right in our midst that can serve as alternatives to our current system of corporate globalization.

Speaking of alternatives to corporate globalization—the class met with Mark Van Steenwyk to talk to him about his new book, *The UnKingdom of God*. We caught up with him at the Simone Weil House—the new community house project of the Mennonite Worker just

a few blocks north of Lake St.’s Midtown Global Market. Renovations at the house have been under way since December, and right before we came over to hold class there one snowy morning, Mark had finished setting up the front room and putting out a new handmade wooden sign over the front entrance.

We were challenged by Mark to consider non-imperialist ways of thinking about the Christian faith. Then we heard from Cat Salonek, who shared about her experience in the Occupy movement and building the Occupy Homes MN organization, which works with Twin Cities homeowners faced with foreclosure. To wrap up the morning we had a discussion with Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer on linkages between corporate globalization and militarization.

This week Mark sent out an update about activities at the Simone Weil House: “My hope is that we’ll be able to have a housewarming party in early March...and then officially open the downstairs level (which we are calling the Gene Stoltzfus Center for Creative Peacemaking) for morning drop-ins (offering coffee, snacks, and a place to shower for folks) and some initial programming in the p.m.”

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Faith Mennonite Goes To Haiti

On March 14 Cynthia Miller, Darrell Martin, David Ries and David’s father Dennis (also a physician) will be going to Haiti to take part in mobile medical clinics. This is somewhat of a reunion trip in several aspects. It is Cynthia’s fourth trip to Haiti in the past two years and so she will be meeting up again not only with doctors and dentists from the states but also with several Haitian counterparts who accompany each visit to the rural clinics. Darrell and the Ries family lived on the same

tiny mission station in the Congo (then Zaire) when David and Sarah were small children and Dennis was the primary doctor for miles around. They never would have suspected that the next time they would go together to a hot, humid, French-speaking country it would be almost on the other side of the world!

A few years ago Cynthia became acquainted with Dr. Dianne Pizey who attends St John's Episcopal Church in Linden Hills. As is true for the rest of Haiti, the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti suffers from a major shortage of resources. For this reason, and also to forge relationships between the Diocese of Haiti and the rest of Episcopal Church USA, a partnership program was formed about twenty years ago. Through this program, parishes in the U.S. are partnered with parishes in Haiti. Partnerships take on many different forms, but generally they become a source of mutual friendship and sharing, and the American partners try to alleviate some of the financial hardship of their Haitian partner parishes.

St. John's Haitian partner is St. Philippe et St. Jacques, a "preaching station" in Gressier-Collin, a small village just east of the town of Leogane, on Haiti's southern peninsula. In January, 2010, the new church building was almost completed, and dedication was planned for May 1, the feast of St. Philippe et St. Jacques. Tragically, on January 12, the devastating earthquake completely destroyed the church, along with the school. Miraculously, there was no loss of life in the community. An outpouring of generosity from St. John's provided food for the community, and initial clean-up operations.

For almost a year, school and church were held in a large tent on the foundation of the church. Then the Finnish Lutheran Church built a temporary school and dug a new well. Today, the FINN organization is beginning work on a new permanent school. St. John's continues to support the teachers' salaries and a school lunch program. Last year, a group from Minneapolis spent a week in Gressier-Collin building new benches for the school. In 2008 Dr. Pizey began organizing mobile medical clinics for the rural parishes in this area. Since then she has returned with a team every 6 months to visit the same villages. The clinics are staffed by American physicians, nurses and non-medical volunteers working together with Haitian physicians, dentists, nurses and nursing students. In addition, St John's has raised money to support a Haitian nurse to make visits monthly to provide medical support between the doctor visits.

Each time Dr. Pizey's team visits these communities, basic health assessments are provided for more than seven hundred people. In addition to seeing a nurse and doctor, each person receives a cloth bag with vitamins and anti-parasitic medicine. People with infections, or chronic problems like hypertension or diabetes, receive a three month supply of appropriate medication. When possible, the medications are purchased in Haiti as a way of supporting the local economy. One item that isn't available locally is children's vitamins, and so the team travels from the U.S. with large suitcases brimming with donated vitamins. If you would like to contribute vitamins for the upcoming trip, the need is for bottles of 300 tablets or less of children's chewable vitamins *with iron* (this is very important for undernourished children). No gummy vitamins, please, as they don't do well in the tropical heat! There will be a vitamin collection box at the back of the church during February.

--Darrell and Cynthia Martin

"What is This Place?" Part Two

I just finished reading Peter Steinke's *A Door Set Open*. Steinke sees good reason for hope in the future, even in light of all the evidence indicating that the church has fallen from its "perch on the societal ladder". He notes that our culture is increasingly demonstrating a reluctance to subsidize and support churches.

Steinke calls on churches to quit acting like they are in the 1950s and instead begin living in the reality of our super-charged technological world. The old model, "parishioners coming to a place, consuming the spiritual goods, and serving as patrons to meet the budget," provided stability for an entirely different era. Steinke points to the critical need for churches to begin redefining and redirecting their mission in light of each church's unique expression of itself within and outside its walls.

There is no question in my mind that Faith Mennonite Church has a unique role to play, but what I'm not sure of is our awareness and ownership of that role. I stress ownership because it is the driver that sustains our vision and mission.

Today the church exists in a whirlwind of astonishing change, moving at an electrifying pace. At times I'm overwhelmed at the thought and find myself feeling relieved that I am sixty-nine. But do I want to live my faith in God with my head in the sand? No!

Part Two of “What is This Place?” builds on Part One’s exploration of what we look to and need from our faith community. Part two asks the question, “What is our mission and are we currently organized in a manner that effectively moves us forward in carrying out our mission?” More importantly, what does our mission look like when it is acted out?

A more detailed agenda of this second session will soon be available. Attendance at the first session is not required in order to participate in Part Two. This series is mainly an effort to get the conversation going. It carries with it no expectation that out of this effort will come a proposal. I sought permission from the church council to host these sessions because I wanted to be a part of a dialogue outside the context of a council or committee structure. I wanted to informally gather with those of us who care deeply about our church’s future. Stay tuned. More details to be announced.

--Rudy Okerlund

“men who hang out”
fall of 2013



“men who drum”
winter of 2014

“men who cook”
spring of 2014

“men who bike & camp”
summer of 2014

Details to come

The “men who...” series is designed to allow the men of our church an opportunity to “hang-out” together doing creative and fun activities. The series kicked off in September with eighteen guys in Rudy’s backyard, eating, listening to great music, playing games and hanging out.

“Men who drum” takes “hanging out” to a creative level of engagement. “Men who drum” is a three-part series, hands-on drumming opportunity. The outcome is to learn basic drumming skills within a spiritual context.

Those who choose session one will make their own hand drum. Session two will be a three-hour workshop on learning basic drumming skills while experiencing how drumming can be a spiritual happening. We will have drums available for those who choose to not make their own. We are currently working on bringing in a drummer who applies a spiritual dimension to his drumming sessions. Part three will be a Sunday morning demo/performance during the church service. You can participate in one, two or all three sessions. Men in our church with drumming experience are invited to participate as a demonstration of solidarity with the guys.

You do not need to know how to read music to enjoy these sessions. Everything we do will take a “play and respond” approach. There is a possibility that some of us may choose to continue on in a drumming support group. We’ll explore this option after the series. “The men who...” series provides an opportunity for men in the church to discover the joy and benefits of being a part of something bigger than oneself. There will be a per-person cost for this event and we are currently working at making it possible for those needing assistance to be able to participate.

Questions? Talk to or email Mike Okerstrom or Rudy Okerlund. Specific dates and times to be announced. We are looking at late February or early March. More to come!!!!

--Mike Okerstrom and Rudy Okerlund

MDS Report

During the first week of November 2013 I spent four days at Mennonite Disaster Service headquarters (MDS US) participating in the organization’s leadership training seminar with 35 other attendees from across the US and Canada. What an enriching experience those days proved to be. Not ever having served with MDS on a cleanup or rebuilding project, I was uncertain about MDS and my potential involvement in the organization. The staff packed the days with history, philosophy, mission, organization, goals, roles, communication, investigation, and some great hands-on, how-to experiences.

A couple of highlights included a presentation by Paul Unruh, disaster response social worker on how to communicate sensitively with disaster clients; wow, what great insights and helpful hints on effective ways to open and broaden one's listening skills in a disaster's wake. Another highlight was a simulated disaster role play in which each of us was assigned a specific role with a bit of background info to help us be grounded in our roles and specific tasks to be carried out as effectively as we were able. I was a bit overwhelmed by the sense of chaos that typically occurs immediately after a disaster when multiple organizations, public figures, contractors, aid groups and victims are all trying to bring a sense of order into a totally chaotic environment. Those four days were an education and inspiration to get involved in MDS' disaster response work locally now and perhaps nationally in the future.

As FMC's designated church contact person for MDS, I returned excited about the possibility of getting our congregation involved at the "local" level and the results have been very gratifying. January 6-10, Donna Minter, Bruce Brunner, their Duluth friends Steve and Mary, Mike Okerstrom, Thaine Dirks and I spent quality time working together in the Duluth area building two new houses for local individuals and families who had lost their homes in the flood of June 2012. MDSers who volunteer on this project are housed and fed in the "Old School Lives" in Cotton, Minnesota north of Duluth and transported by MDS staff to each day's work site. We insulated, polyed and sheet-rocked two houses working under the direction and assistance of our two crew leaders. Thaine and Mike also helped shingle the roof of the second house. What a great community building experience we had as we transformed those two houses from framed shells to houses that will soon be occupied by their owners. I had the privilege of talking with one homeowner for half an hour and was blessed by his response to our efforts. We experienced a highly organized, well-coordinated organization that is doing God's hope-building work in our world.

Next week (February 3-7) Teresa Wasick, Dick Westby, Hermann Weinlick, Joan Kreider, Tom Johnson, Joetta Schlabach, Melissa Hochstetler, Sarah Ries, Mark Kaufman, Arlene and I will be heading north for another week of finish work on these two houses and two more that are in process. We simply ask for your support and encourage you to talk with any of our church participants about their experiences.

--Glenn Geissinger, MDS contact at FMC, 952-297-4081

What's happening here and there...

Thank You, Thank You...

Each year our congregation contributes funds to a number of organizations. The following are some responses we have received:

Dear Friends, Thank you for your recent contribution of \$200 for the core ministries of Mennonite World Conference. MWC builds community among Anabaptist-related national churches around the world, each member learning from each other, supporting each other, and collaborating with each other.

This year, the Commissions of MWC have created meaningful interactions amongst our members. The Faith and Life Commission is reflecting on the meaning of adult baptism, or baptism on confession of faith, representing MWC in an unprecedented trilateral conversation on baptism with the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, and is carrying out a major survey of demographics, beliefs and practices of our global body, with 25 member churches participating in the MWC Global Anabaptist Profile. The Peace Commission has worked on developing guidelines for MWC for engaging in political advocacy on behalf of its members, and is working on a way of encouraging deep-seated trauma and conflict within the MWC membership to be engaged so that reconciliation can happen. The Deacons Commission sent a delegation to visit the 20,000 Mennonites in Angola and later another to visit India to listen to, encourage and assure church members that they are part of the global Anabaptist family. The Mission Commission is working at building collaboration amongst the 70 members in 36 countries of the Global Mission Fellowship, and the 51 members in 25 countries in the Global Anabaptist Service network.

National church members relate to each other in many ways, such as sister church relationships, regional networks, and regular prayers for each other. We know that our growth and witness is dependent on breaking down the walls that normally divide us, divisions too often based on wealth, race, ethnicity, and history. As Paul says to the church at Ephesus: *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household...with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.* Thank you for partnering with us in building God's household around the world.

--Lyn Roth, North American Representative for MWC

What a nice surprise. It was fun opening up the mail from you and seeing the check for almost \$100. Wow! Thank you! How thoughtful of you to think of the families in need here at Seward Montessori. We will use every penny of it to help others. Respectfully,

--Mary Delander, *Family Liaison, Seward Montessori*

I am writing on behalf of the Twin Cities Peace Campaign to thank you for your faith community's generous donation. We continue to do what we can to support an end to war and the elimination of the weapons of war. While it would be easy to become discouraged in the light of what is happening in the Middle East, South Sudan, and elsewhere, we believe our ongoing public witness on the Lake Street/Marshall Ave. bridge and at demonstrations, the office of our elected representative, public forums and the like does make a difference. Hope springs eternal! Thanks for all you do for peace and justice. Best Wishes,

--Marie Braun, *Twin Cities Peace Campaign*

This is to acknowledge your check in the amount of \$50 for the St. Paul Interfaith Network (SPIN). We deeply appreciate Faith Mennonite's support for SPIN as we work to improve interfaith relations for the good of our entire community. Thank you. Grace & Peace,

--Charles Curry, *on behalf of the SPIN Administrative Group*

Thank you for your congregation's gift of \$100 to the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches (GMCC). Your congregation's gift helps us meet the rising demand for services to the people who need them most. Our programs provide struggling families with the tools and resources they need to be strong and self-reliant. Thanks to the hard work of our dedicated volunteers and generous support from donors and congregations like yours, we continue to expand our outreach and enhance our services.

Please express our sincere appreciation to all at FMC who supported this gift. We appreciate your generosity, and promise to use your gift wisely. Sincerely,

--Noya Woodrich, *MSW, LISW, President, Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches*

Thank you for your donation that helps to plant the seeds of peacemaking! As you read information from Christian Peacemaker Teams you are not just looking in

on CPT's garden of peacemaking. Your hands are in the soil of change. The warm sun of nonviolence shines on your shoulders. The work of transformation is ours together. Do you pray as your eyes walk the rows of CPT's newsletter or website pages? Do you pick a ripe story and share it with your community? Will you dig into the action and advocate for our partners? We are grateful that you have planted seeds of growth through your donation! Every gift is essential and treasured.

--Carol Rose, *CPT Director*

Today I write to tell you how much your congregation's generous gift of financial support means to the Minnesota Council of Churches, as well as your very significant volunteering of your time and expertise. You make a tremendous difference to our important work.

Thank you on behalf of the Minnesota Council of Churches. Your commitment of \$100 is being utilized to build empathy and respect in our communities through the Respectful Conversations Project, and it's transforming Minnesota churches into Congregations of Care. Your gift also helps us to build upon internationally recognized programs like *Tapestry* and to foster Muslim-Christian dialogues in our communities you help us carry out innovative, effective work rooted in faith to meet the needs for people throughout Minnesota.

As I write this letter of thanks, I am reminded now of these words from the book of Galatians: *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* Thank you again for your continuing support of our joint mission to deepen faith and build the common good! Sincerely,

--Rev. Peg Chamberlin, *Executive Director*

Today, we want to take a moment to celebrate the gift of your support in the past year. Our records show that your congregation has donated \$1022 in funds and 222 pounds of food and/or household items.

This year, your gifts have made it possible for us to offer God's welcome to over 70,000 people. Among them have been our own modern day travelers from the East, immigrants from East Africa. In this past year, CES' service to Somali immigrants alone has doubled, and more families are waiting. We have met people like Sahra, who has been in the US for 18 years and is fluent in seven languages. She translates for us in our Home Delivery program. And Fadumo, who had to leave three

of her children behind in Somalia when she came as a refugee. What challenges they face! Yet they greet us with the beautiful Arabic greeting: "Asalaama Aleikum" (Peace be with you). And we have learned to respond: "Aleikum Asalaama" (And with you, Peace). Together we are blessed.

We look forward to teaming up with you in this year's March FoodShare Campaign, to fight hunger here in the neighborhood! God's Peace be with you,

--Mike Lloyd, Executive Director, Community Emergency Service

[Please see the Missions and Service bulletin board in the back of the sanctuary to read a story from CES that was recently included in previous letter from them.]

Thank you for ending homelessness by contributing \$200 to St. Stephen's Human Services. There are many troubles vying for our attention and care these days. It is a generous heart that makes time to alleviate other people's suffering. Support from community members, businesses, and churches, means we can continue to offer housing, employment, emergency services, and community engagement to end homelessness in our community. Your kindness puts us one step closer to this goal. Warmly,

--Margaret Miles, Interim Executive Director

Thank you for your donation of \$500 to the Seward Neighborhood Group in honor of the Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership. We are grateful for your ongoing support for restorative justice in Seward and Longfellow as we look forward to celebrating our 10th year.

We are at capacity for referrals and we are on target to meet our annual goal of 36 youth completing our program in 2013. Some of the teens we are working with now include a boy who stole a bike from Kmart, a boy who stole a cell phone from a church, two teens who stole a wallet, and a teen who shoplifted at Target. The restorative justice process provides a meaningful opportunity to repair harm – one of the kids currently in our program stole several bikes and he is giving back to the community by volunteering at SPOKES, the new bike and walk center in Seward.

We are grateful for a community that believes in the power of restorative justice! Your donation makes this work possible. Thank you! In gratitude,

--Michele Braley, Program Manager

Thank you for your \$150 gift to Friends for a NonViolent World. Your donation will be applied to our Alternatives to Violence Program. Peace,

--Patricia Van Cleve (volunteer)

We also received acknowledgements and thanks from Shalom Mennonite Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and Mennonite Mission Network on behalf of Wayne and Lois Hochstetler.

Lutheran Volunteer House Resists Eviction

As a part of Lutheran Volunteer Corps, the BMC Kaleidoscope Coordinator lives in an intentional community of seven Lutheran volunteers. The community, known as Winona, was thrown for a loop when a bright-orange eviction notice was taped to its door due to over-occupancy. Minneapolis Ordinance 546.50 reads that a house zoned as R2 "shall not exceed one family plus up to two unrelated persons living together as a permanent household." While an intention of the ordinance is to protect tenants from landlords, the ordinance makes it difficult for young people, intentional communities, immigrant communities and others to live affordably and collectively.

Dan Perucco of Winona House wrote a commentary in the *StarTribune* which garnered attention from community members and city officials alike. This stir resulted in an extension of Winona's eviction date as a more permanent legal solution is constructed. A story in the *City Pages* outlines the journey of Winona House and its expanding efforts to address social justice issues like affordable housing. Winona continues to be a beautiful, justice-seeking community for the Kaleidoscope Coordinator to call home.

--BMC NewsNet

The deadline for March newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, February 26th.

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.