

Faith Connection

January 2013

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...

*...and they left for their own country by another road.
--Matthew 22:12b*

The Gospel of Matthew is the only gospel that records the visit of the magi following Jesus' birth. The writer of Matthew was concerned to highlight the kingly nature of Jesus, that he was a direct descendent of King David. Christian tradition uses this story as the focus of Epiphany, which means "manifestation." The star was a manifestation that led the magi to Jesus. The presence of the magi was a manifestation of the importance of Jesus' birth for all the nations.

This year I'm most intrigued with the end of the story: "And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road" (Matthew 22:12). As we begin a new year, most of us turn our attention to the road ahead. Do we continue down the same path—the well-marked path that is long familiar and has worked for us in the past—or do we feel a pull to seek another route?

Sometimes it's a hard choice. Charting a new road can be risky and it can take a lot of energy. Other times circumstances change, or we may be changed by an event, and the only choice ahead is a new route. Such was the experience of the magi.

As we begin 2013, the deacons have decided to launch a weekly community meal. This idea came together in a rather serendipitous way with an inquiry from Mark VanSteenwyk of the Mennonite Worker who was interested in cooking a weekly meal and in search of a venue and help with paying for ingredients. Beginning a weekly meal is not an entirely new path; it is a variation on the theme of the weekly Soup Groups we began in 2011, to provide additional opportunity for community connection between Sundays. But having a consistent

night and venue does chart a new path and new possibilities, especially for inviting friends and neighbors to join us. Lots of things could happen on Wednesday nights following dinner: commission meetings, youth group, children's activities, choir practice, maybe a children's choir, discussion circles. Already Donna Minter and Kristi Zabriskie are planning a film viewing and discussion on the fourth Wednesday of the month. But we are not approaching this in the manner of light-rail construction: laying down all the track before the initial launch. We're launching and then finding our way!

Many of us are keenly aware of new routes needed at the national level. Following the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, in December, there may be an opening for legislation to curtail the proliferation of guns in our society. Religious coalitions on the local and national level are beginning to mobilize a communication campaign in the new year. We can join this effort to call on legislators to examine our gun culture and inadequate mental health services and to seek answers grounded in building safe, healthy communities.

Most of us also have some area in our personal life where we desire, or at least recognize the need for, a new path. This might be a problematic personal habit, a difficult relationship, a frustrating employment situation, or simply a quiet but nagging notion that all is not well. Whether we're taking a new path in our communal FMC life, our national life, or our personal life, the magi are good traveling companions. They remind us that embarking on something new is always easiest if we have traveling companions (even if we won't agree at every turn!). It's good to stop and ask directions, seeking the received wisdom of others. And it's good to rest, sleep, and dream so that we're open to hearing God's still, small voice. Happy New Year!

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry staff update...

We've had two youth events recently. On December 1, Hannah Dirks and Sophia Harder Kouay sold fresh-baked cookies and hot cider in the church foyer as people came through on Saturday afternoon for the Seward Art Crawl. This raised some money for this year's Christmas Sunday School project. Then on December 19 we had a big crew of five for a fun evening outing to the roller skating rink in St. Louis Park. Hannah Okerstrom, John Mayou, Hannah Dirks., Sophia Harder Kouay, and Abdissa Effa all put in a good two hours sharpening their skills on the skating floor.

We've welcomed Walker Community United Methodist Church to our building this month for several rehearsals and then a production of their Christmas Eve program. They had a big turnout and a festive atmosphere in the sanctuary and basement on the 24th. In December we also welcomed the Oromo Kushite Seventh-Day Adventist congregation to begin using the sanctuary on Saturday mornings (they had been meeting in the chapel). They have agreed to provide custodial service in lieu of rent. This will free up our regular custodian, Brett Taylor, to work with the trustees on some larger maintenance tasks.

I'm looking forward to our Wednesday meals here at FMC starting on January 9. I'm hoping that we can do some additional programming for the 7 p.m. (after the potluck) time slots.

In the church office, I have recently completed a new update of the office manual. This is going to come in handy because Karen Peterson is going to be the office assistant in January. For the next few weeks I'm going to be teaching an "Introduction to Justice and Peace Studies" course at the University of St. Thomas and a "Theology and Spirituality of Nonviolence" course at United Theological Seminary.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Weekly Community Meal Begins January 9

On Wednesday, January 9, FMC will hold its first weekly Wednesday evening meal and fellowship time in the fellowship hall. The meal will begin at 6 p.m., and we will provide child care from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The food

will most often be prepared by Mark Van Steenwyk from the Mennonite Worker, and donations will be accepted to help cover costs of the meal and childcare.

Holding weekly meals offers an opportunity for people to invite friends who might not necessarily come to worship. It also offers the possibility of a regularly scheduled time for commission meetings, children's or youth activities, choir practice and discussion groups, and. Donna Minter and Kristi Zabriskie are making plans to host a film showing and discussion on the fourth Wednesday of each month, following the meal. Anyone with an idea they'd like to explore for our Wednesday nights should speak with Shelly Hendricks.

--The Deacons

The Twelve Scriptures Project : January Education Hour

As a people of God, biblical scripture is an important way God speaks to us and shapes our identity. Which scripture we focus on profoundly influences what we hear God saying. In the last generation biblical literacy has declined significantly. MCUSA has made engagement in bible study one of its key areas of focus for this biennium. One tool for congregations is called the "twelve scriptures project".

We will work through this process during the education hour in the last three Sundays of January. We will identify first all the scriptures that we remember and think are important at all. Secondly, we will identify the most formative to us personally. Thirdly, we will move towards a congregational consensus.

We encourage everyone to participate in this exciting project-- from those who are new to the bible or feel their knowledge is lacking, to those who have extensive biblical education and knowledge. We will use the chosen scriptures to help plan worship themes for the next year. See you there!

--The Worship Commission

Gifts Discernment Update

The Gifts Discernment Committee is pleased to say that most church positions for the 2013 slate have been filled, and we will be presenting the slate at our February annual meeting. However, we still need to fill the moderator-elect position, so we ask you to prayerfully consider whether you feel called to serve the

church in this capacity. The moderator-elect/moderator is a two-year position, with the first year focusing primarily on observing/learning from the current moderator. If you have specific questions about the moderator-elect/moderator responsibilities, please feel free to ask those of Matthew Hendricks (moderator until February 2013) or Karen Wiebe (moderator beginning February 2013). We are also still looking for Adult and Children's Education commissioners. Please let a member of the Gifts Discernment Committee (Kristin Green, Shelly Hendricks, Gregg Richardson, Joetta Schlabach) know if you are willing to serve in any of these positions. Thank you for your prayers!

--*The Gifts Discernment Committee*

Twin Cities Mennonite Gathering

As a way to build community among the Mennonite Churches of the Twin Cities, Rochester, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, we are having a joint hymn sing and potluck on Sunday, January 27, from 5-7 p.m. This will be held at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, 725 E. 25th Street, Minneapolis. Each church will take a turn providing special music and/or leading the group in hymns/songs of their choice. We will take our *River of Gladness* songbooks by Bret Hesla and share songs from our 50th Anniversary.

Annual Meeting February 3

Each commission chair is responsible to submit an annual report to the church office by January 9. Please submit your report as an email attachment to: faithmc@faithmennonite.org.

For reference, copies of last year's annual reports can be found on the FMC website under the "Members" drop-down menu: choose "Annual Meeting." The annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 3. On that day, we will not have education classes. A brunch will follow worship, and then the Annual Meeting will occur. Childcare will be provided.

Meals for Gerbers

The deacons are beginning to arrange two meals each month for Dan and Terry Gerber so that they have regular connection with FMC friends even if they can't always make it to church. We have created an on-line sign-up tool for ease in scheduling. (Details and the web link were distributed in the Midweek Update email. If you did not receive this and would like to participate,

please contact the church office. Individuals may sign up for a two-week period (first two weeks of the month or last two weeks of the month) and then 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.

--*The Deacons*

Potluck Hosting Schedule

The 2013 Potluck Hosting Schedule was distributed by email in December and is posted on the FMC website in the "Fellowship" area under the "Members" drop-down menu. (You must login as a member; for directions please contact the church office). Several paper copies of the schedule are available at the back of the sanctuary.

Save the Date: Council and Commissions Retreat, Saturday, February 9

The Church Council has set the date for a half-day, morning retreat in early February for the Church Council and all Commission members. This is an opportunity for our church leadership to begin the new year with time for joint reflection and direction-setting for the coming year. We hope that continuing and new council and commission members will mark their calendars and plan to attend. This will *replace* the February Council meeting. More details to come.

 <p>If you or a family member has a birthday in January, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on January 12th. (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.</p>	<p><i>January Birthday Brunch</i></p> <p><i>Saturday, January 12 9:30-11 a.m.</i></p>
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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:

Teresa Wiens and Andrew Bonifas

Thank You to Susan Weinlick...

...who for the past several years has volunteered a couple of hours each week to copy and fold the bulletin, distribute mail, and help with other office-related support tasks as needed. Her help has been deeply appreciated. She is now ready to seek other volunteer opportunities and we send her with our blessing and gratitude for her generous service. Please join us in thanking Susan. And, if you would have a couple of hours to contribute to the church office, please let us know.

--Phil Stoltzfus and Joetta Schlabach

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

Note: On December 16, Church Council Moderator Matthew Hendricks communicated that we were running slightly behind on congregational giving as we neared the end of the fiscal year. We are grateful that giving in December totaled \$25,375 ensuring that we ended the year able to cover all of our budgeted expenses. The detailed 2012 Financial Report will be distributed on January 20 along with other annual reports.

	Sept	Oct	Nov	YTD
Total Giving	\$9,269	\$9,197	\$8731	\$110,416
Total Budgeted Income*	\$13,920	\$14,181	\$13,547	\$148,561
Budget Target	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$154,000
All Expenses	\$11,395	\$11,375	\$23,347	\$157,842

*Includes rental and investment income

Parent-Child Dedications

On December 16 three families participated in a Parent-Child Dedication ceremony during morning worship.

Brooke and Jason Derrickson dedicated Caleb Lawrence, who joined siblings Elissa and Zachary in September 2011. Corey and Kerensa Mamchuk dedicated Annika Macy, born in September 2012. Leah Otto has agreed to be a parenting partner for Corey and Kerensa as they begin their venture of family life. Alisa Bardo-Martinson and Andy Martinson dedicated Peter Joseph who joined big sister Phoebe in October 2012. We give thanks for these families and for the opportunity to support them in their commitment to raise their children.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Update

The following letter was sent to all of the persons who participated in the regional conference meetings that took place in fall 2012. FMC participants were Arlene and Glenn Geissinger, Orv Gingerich, Matthew Hendricks, Katie Hochstedler, Jerry Janzen, Joan Kreider, Donna Minter, Phil Stoltzfus, Joetta Schlabach, and Karen Wiebe.

Thank you for your participation in the regional meetings this fall regarding the policy on marriage adopted by Faith Mennonite Church. This series of meetings concluded on December 15. We were very pleased with the high level of participation from our conference congregations. All but five congregations participated in these meetings. We are grateful for the careful discernment of our congregations in choosing whom to send to these meetings. It was evident to us that the participants in these meetings brought a very high level of spiritual maturity to this process.

The feedback on the evaluations was quite positive, for which we are grateful. We are hearing that, whatever the outcome of this process, participants hope we will use a similar process for biblical and spiritual discernment on matters of faith and life in the future. We are learning that we need to exercise our discernment muscles proactively in our common life as a conference.

The Conference Board has appointed a subcommittee consisting of Blaine Friesen, Susan Janzen, Sherilyn Ortman, Seth McCoy, Nathan Luitjens, and David Boshart to summarize and analyze the feedback that participants provided. This group will meet in January. The Conference Board will meet on February 9 to determine next steps, and plans to offer a response to the whole conference on this matter in late winter or early spring.

Please continue to keep the Conference Board, the Pastoral Leadership Committee, and Faith Mennonite

Church in your prayers as we continue to discern what the Spirit is saying to the church. May you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Shalom,
--Blaine Friesen, Conference Moderator and David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister

Appointing Delegates for Regional and National Summer Conferences

The Church Council is in the process of appointing delegates to the Central Plains Conference annual meeting and the Mennonite Church USA biannual Assembly which will occur one week apart this summer. The Central Plains annual meeting is scheduled for June 20-23 in Ashland, Montana, and the MCUSA Assembly will be in Phoenix July 1-5. Kathleen Harder, Donna Stucky and Joetta Schlabach are confirmed to attend the CPMC gathering in Montana and Donna Minter is confirmed to attend the Phoenix Assembly. We have one additional delegate position to fill at each conference and would like to hear from members who might like to participate in this way. According to our church policy, the church covers one third of travel/conference expenses, delegates cover one-third, and one-third can be raised through church-supported fund-raising activities. Please speak with Joetta Schlabach or Karen Wiebe, moderator-elect, if you have interest in participating in this way.

This is an excellent way to learn more about and contribute to the life of our broader church. The CPMC annual meeting will include learning tours to various Northern Cheyenne religious and cultural sites. The Phoenix Assembly will offer learning and witness activities related to immigration.

--The Church Council

Yes Sunday So

we're still expected to get dirty
tennis shoes on with dresses
taking care of the baby in diapers no matter what day it is.
They say we've got secrets. The baby can't understand me
or anyone and my sister and I won't teach him.
If he knows already
has to be the smartest not to say anything.

On the last day of the week
even though we get a big dinner at the end everyone is more afraid than
when we started.
Then the dresses get washed
and for six whole days the same clothes all over.

There's nowhere to play except on the earth
and under the earth where it's coolest.
You end up there. I've seen people put there.
It didn't seem like
giving up to me.

When your home is on the flats you play in the wind.
The older ones dresses down.
We let ours cover our faces in parachute.
The baby doesn't notice because he's still eating dirt
which he's supposed to do.
That's what my sister and I say
whispering into each other's ears.

--Travis Lusk

Deadline for February newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, January 30th.

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.