

Faith Connection

January 2007

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church
2720 E. 22nd St. Minneapolis, MN 55406
Ph: (612) 375-9483
e-mail: faithmc@faithmennonite.org
web: 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...

As we enter this Epiphany season of Light and Baptism until Ash Wednesday, I found this delightful history of Epiphany.

The Epiphany is the Festival of Lights, the name given to it by St. Gregory Nazianzen as far back as the fourth century. The description of the Egyptian Coptic celebration given by Al-Mazrizi, ten centuries later, shows how faithfully these customs had been preserved. The origin of the feast is that he whom the Christians call John the Baptist, baptized the Christ, that is washed him in the lake of Jordan. And when the Christ emerged from the water, the Holy Spirit came down upon him. This is why the Christians immerse their children and themselves in water on that date. This ceremony always takes place at the coldest time of the year. The night of the Immersion was a very great feast for the inhabitants of old Cairo. No one went to bed that night. The sultan was in his palace built on an island surrounded by the Nile. He caused a thousand torches to be lit by the people of Misr. There were thousands of people there on the banks of the Nile that night, Moslems and Christians. Nothing that could make a show was omitted; food, drink, clothes, gold and silver musical instruments. It was the greatest night Cairo had ever seen, the night of most pleasure.

I'm grateful for this story of religious tolerance and celebration. I am anticipating this new year with my new pastoral configuration to allow time for following some of my artistic endeavors. I am looking forward to our congregation's official licensing of Joetta for ministry on January 28. I am looking forward to a youth service immersion weekend in early February and participating in a service project in New Orleans with a group of church people in later February. May God bless our growing and outreaching congregational life.

--Patty Friesen

"To be sure, our mental processes often go wrong, so that we imagine God to have gone away. What should be done then? Do exactly what you would do if you felt most secure. Learn to behave thus even in deepest distress and keep yourself that way in any and every estate of life. I can give you no better advice than to find God where you lost him"

--Meister Eckhart

What's happening at FMC...

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting October 16, 2006 @ FMC

Present: Alisa Bardo, Moderator; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; John Ratigan, Worship; Darrell Martin, Trustees; Erin Geiser, Deacons; Patty Friesen, Pastor; Minke Sundseth, Missions & Service; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Joan Kreider, Fellowship Commission, Cynthia Martin, Christian Education.

Absent: Neil Okerlund, Moderator-elect; Patrick Preheim, Pastor.

Minutes. Minutes of July 17 and September 11, 2006 approved with corrections.

Treasurer's report. Three quarters of the year finished, nice gain in giving in September. Much of the giving was designated for the retreat. The checking account is now at its healthiest this year. Jerry plans to pay conference support in November. Very good offering on October 15. There were some large Kinko's bills for copying in September, not sure what they were for. Patty will check on it.

Committee Reports

Education. Cynthia reports that there have been three adult education sessions on stewardship so far. Several commissioners have presented information about their commissions' budgets and spending. Following will be information from the trustees and the financial aspects of proposed pastoral reconfiguration. Next week will be a video from Lynn Miller on giving, but don't want to do a hard sell. Will also be doing four weeks on the Return to the Earth project with materials by Lawrence Hart.

Worship. Has not met.

Fellowship. Joan reports that there will be a Halloween party for children and adults. Also baby showers on December 10. Erin notices that gifts discernment is looking for a meal coordinator—is this new? Patty says yes, in response to Deacons' discussion. We haven't had a Christmas banquet in some years, having been replaced by cookie-sharing and hymn sing. Discussion about whether to revive the banquet concludes with decision to stick with the hymn sing.

Missions and Service. Gregg reports that M & S has a draft for a proposed service grant program ready, but wants to wait until pastoral reconfiguration and childcare coordinator decisions are made, and financial situation becomes clearer—perhaps six months down the road. M & S also agreed to donate \$500 of its budget this year to paying the childcare coordinator through December.

Gifts discernment. Patty reports that Gifts Discernment wants to be finished by Christmas, and should have potential names to Council at the next meeting.

Childcare committee. Patty reports that the nursery space is set up and working. Martha did not show up last Sunday and there was no message. They are checking into what happened. Erin suggests that we need a backup plan for the future, in case childcare person misses or is ill. Darrell suggests that we could just ask for volunteers during the announcement period before worship.

Trustees. Darrell hands out the budgeting process summary used by the adult education class. Is there any better way to present this? The budget will need a 12% increase to pay for pastoral reconfiguration and childcare coordinator. Jerry says we've been pretty aggressive about conference support, perhaps Missions and Service should be added under the conference and mission support line. Discussion about whether the conference distributes funds according to our wished as contributors. If they are short, they prioritize.

Pastor-Parish committee. The committee will be recommending a 1.1 FTE to the congregation for the

pastoral reconfiguration, not a 1.25 FTE. They also have plans to review the decision at some point down the road. (Probably at 12 months, as 6 months seems to soon). The committee may meet more often, in order to be more visible to the congregation. The special congregational meeting will be November 12, and will combine the pastoral reconfiguration and childcare coordinator decisions. Decided not to include adoption of new constitution in this meeting. Current constitution doesn't require a paper vote, so will do voice vote, or count hands if it is close.

New business

AMBS professor. Ted Koontz, a professor from AMBS is coming the weekend of November 11-12, as part of a listening project to help make seminary education more relevant to church needs. He will be meeting with interested congregational members and community representatives on Friday night and Saturday morning.

Annual meeting. Annual congregational meeting will be January 28. That Sunday will include a licensing service for Joetta.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

What's happening here and there...

Dressed and Ready for Success, Ethiopian Style

Women, men, girls, and boys! Here's a fun way we can make a BIG difference that really, really counts. It's called Dressed Ready for Success-Ethiopian Style. We are looking for:

- Sewing volunteers
- Wannabe sewing volunteers
- People who have fabric that they can donate for dressmaking
- People who can get us free cotton and cotton blend fabric to be made into dresses
- People who want to support this dressmaking venture financially or with other creative ideas

We will make 100 simple dresses for very young women who have suffered from obstetric fistula, which is a serious childbirth injury in which the baby dies and the grieving would-be-mother is left incontinent. These women receive surgery to heal this condition at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia. Our 100 dresses will be completed by March 31, 2007 and shipped to this hospital for the women to receive and wear upon their return to their communities.

If you sew, I can provide you with a pattern to make one or more dresses. If you don't sew but are willing to commit the time and energy to make a dress, I will teach you how to sew it. If you want to sew these dresses together just for the fun of it, we will have several sewing nights scheduled at Trinity Episcopal Church in Excelsior to learn and sew together to make a difference for these young women. This is part of a larger effort to sew 25,000 dresses so that these young women, who come to the hospital with only the clothes on their back, will be able to return to their community healed internally after their surgery and dressed ready for success with one of the new dresses we have made for them.

If you want to find out more about how to get involved call me, Donna Minter at 952-934-0667. If you want to find about more about the Fistula Foundation check out www.fistulafoundation.org.

--Donna Minter

Christmas Letter from Alicia Janzen

To my dear friends and family,

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas wherever you were. May you continue enjoying this time of year as you anticipate a new year and reminisce on the closing year.

I am finally getting around to sending out a little update as to what is going on in my life. I'm currently living in Phoenix, Arizona, and have just moved into a house with my dear housemates Kristin and Lucas. I went to Goshen with Kristin and just met Lucas upon arrival in the city. We are getting settled and I think it will be a good time. They're both wonderful people and I'm excited about living with them.

When I'm not moving my belongs I've been working as a manager of a thrift store. October 31 I started a two year service assignment with Mennonite Central Committee. I will be managing Goldensun Thrift Shop, a non-profit thrift store in Phoenix. The store is called. All the proceeds from the store support Goldensun Peace Ministries which provides residential housing for developmentally disabled adults. It's a new shop that has only been around for about a year and a half. There is a good base of regular volunteers who have been managing it. So it's nice to have some caring and committed volunteers. We're always looking for more though. Anyway I enjoy my job and am excited about learning what it means to be a store manager.

In January I will go to Akron, Pennsylvania, for MCC

orientation. I am excited about learning more about MCC and hopefully visiting some MCC thrift shops out there. Phoenix is treating me well as I continue exploring and learning more about the city. Being in a new place always has it's challenges but it's always a new adventure with lots to learn as well. I hope you all have a wonderful new year and I would love to hear what you are up to as well.

My new address and phone number:

Alicia Janzen
2237 N. 22nd Pl
Phoenix, AZ 85006
new cell number: 602-615-5527

Thanks to all who have been keeping in touch...I will try and keep in touch too...Have a wonderful day! Selam,

--Alicia

One Voice in Concert

One Voice Mixed Chorus, the Twin Cities' 80-voice GLBT community chorus, will perform "Reclaiming Faith: In the Spirit of Justice" in four different congregations during the third and fourth weekends in January, 2007.

Audiences are in for a musical treat as this renowned choral group features music from spiritual traditions around the world, weaving songs and stories and celebrating faith-based communities that are taking action in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. "Reclaiming Faith" is thought-provoking, moving, and artistically compelling.

Each of the host congregations (Mayflower UCC, Temple Israel, Spirit of Hope UMC and Saint Paul UCC) will display the Shower of Stoles in conjunction with the performances. The Shower of Stoles is a collection of over 1,000 liturgical stoles donated by GLBT individuals representing 26 faiths and six different countries. Times and places for the three concerts:

- Mayflower Congregational UCC, Minneapolis Saturday, January 20th, 7:30pm
- Temple Israel, Minneapolis Sunday, January 21st, 3:30pm
- Spirit of Hope United Methodist Church, Golden Valley Saturday, January 27th, 7:30pm
- Saint Paul UCC, St. Paul Sunday, January 28th, 3:30pm

Tickets are available online at www.ovmc.org, or by calling 612-332-1302. Discounted rates are available for groups of eight or more.

Day on the Hill

The Joint Religious Legislative Coalition's "Day on the Hill" will be Tuesday, March 27th, 2007 at RiverCentre and the State Capitol. The keynote speaker will be Fr. Stephen Adrian, pastor of St. Matthew's parish in St. Paul. On-line registration is available at www.jrlc.org.

Last year, over 850 citizens from around the state attended in a powerful display of both religious diversity and solidarity. It was a day filled with learning and social justice activism. Legislators appreciated hearing from participants on the second day of the session. The 2006 keynote speaker was Rabbi Sid Schwartz, president and founder of PANIM: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, Washington, DC. One of his memorable lines was "...social justice is to religion what love is to a family."

JRLC set a new record for conducting visits with legislators than in years past and heard many good things about the relationships built within legislative districts. Many interfaith friendships were started with plans to meet in the near future.

JRLC will continue its tradition of conferring Interfaith Social Justice Awards, one to an individual and one to an organization. The 2006 winners of the awards were Karen Fitzpatrick, who led volunteer efforts to stave off cuts to MinnesotaCare, and SE MN Cares, based in Rochester, Minnesota.

ISIAAH's Faith in Democracy: Renewing the Promise Campaign

ISIAAH has a vision for Minnesota that is based on radical hope, inclusive community, and shared abundance for all. In 2007, ISIAAH will push for the following steps on the road toward our vision of opportunity and full participation for all:

Domestic Violence. We are working toward a future free of domestic violence, where all people have dignity and power. To get there, we must break the silence that surrounds domestic violence, and make it clear that domestic violence is a public not a private issue.

- We call for full and adequate public investment in battered women's advocacy programs and shelters
- And in addition—not one or the other—we call for public investment to restore and /or establish services within those programs for children who witness domestic violence.

Public Transportation. We are working to build and maintain a transit system that connects our communities

and ensures access to opportunity for all. Building a high quality transit system is a crucial investment in our common future.

- We call for adequate dedicated funding for transit. We propose to achieve this through a new ½ cent sales tax in the 7-county metro area for construction and operations of metro area transit.

Civil Rights for Immigrants. We are working toward a community where immigrants are fully embraced, and can participate fully in building our shared future. We must have compassionate policies that treat immigrants fairly and with dignity.

- We call on our elected officials at the state level to pass the MN Dream Act, so that all Minnesota children can pay in-state tuition at our public colleges and universities.
- We call for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level that enables family reunification and ensures a path to citizenship.

Public Education. We are working to realize the promise of a quality public education for ALL children. We will address this in two ways in 2007:

- We call for responsible, adequate, and equitable funding of E-12 public education based on the actual cost of educating all students. As Minnesotans wrestle with what constitutes a quality public education, ISIAAH calls on politicians to work with parents from all backgrounds and cultures, educators, and educational researchers.
- We call for increased opportunities for children and families to experience quality programs that prepare children for kindergarten. With an increase in spending from 1% of the state budget to 2% of the state budget, or about \$400 million per year, we can increase the percentage of children ready for kindergarten from 50% to 80% by 2010.

Interfaith Teen Day of Service

Be part of a growing national movement. On Monday, February 19, 2007, The St. Paul Area Council of Churches will take part in the National Days of Interfaith Youth Service. It's an opportunity for teens to come together to make a difference in their community and to gain valuable interfaith experience. Teens who have completed grades 7-12th are eligible. The program is looking for teens from a variety of religious backgrounds – Baha'i, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and more. Participants will volunteer with the Family Place, Martha's Closet,

Goodwill, Books for Africa and more. After volunteering, teens will spend an hour discussing why their faith calls them to service. What does service mean to their faith community? What can they do next?

The goal of the project is to provide teens with a greater religious awareness and cultural competency by:

- Strengthening teens' connection to their own religious communities.
- Encouraging religious teens to see shared values in other traditions.
- Nurturing a new generation of compassionate global leaders.
- Nurturing better relationships between faith communities.
- Cooperating to serve the common good.

The program will run from 10:00am to 4:30pm, and will begin and end at the MLK Center, 270 Kent St. in St. Paul. Registration starts at 9:45. Participants may either sign-up online at www.spacc.org, or download the form and mail it to SPACC, 1671 Summit Ave, St. Paul, MN 55105.

Mennonite Member Profile Study Complete

Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership will release a national study about Mennonite beliefs, values and commitments at San José 2007. Initial results will be shared with selected church leaders in the coming months.

Mennonite Member Profile 2006 is the most comprehensive study ever completed about Mennonites in the United States and includes four components: a representative sample of Mennonite Church USA members, an additional sample of Racial/Ethnic members in three urban areas, a sample of pastors nationwide, and a congregational profile of participating congregations. The study parallels earlier research studies conducted in 1972 and 1989, as well as other national and denominational surveys.

"Its importance is magnified, however, by the earlier studies conducted by Howard Kauffman, Leland Harder and Leo Driedger in 1972 and 1989, giving us a window through which to view nearly 35 years of social and religious change among Mennonites," said Conrad Kanagy, director of the Mennonite Church USA segment of the project. The data collected in this study will help church leaders and members gauge how Mennonite Church USA beliefs and values have changed in the last 17 years.

In review...

Patty's Picks

"Sweet Land" is a slow and beautiful film about an immigrant couple in southwestern Minnesota. One may have to be from the prairies to fully appreciate the long sweeping prairie shots but the actors are as beautiful to look at as the landscape. Highly recommended.

"Capote" is also slow and beautiful with long lingering shots of places and people. Filmed in Winnipeg, it tracks the fascinating story of Truman Capote's encounter with two Kansas murderers that create his best novel and leads to his drinking demise.

"Little Miss Sunshine" was better than I thought it was going to be. Humorous with rich characters, it portrays a family of mishaps that finds strength in supporting their youngest.

On Beauty, by Zadie Smith, is another hot British novel. *On Beauty* intimately follows a Jamaican/British family in America, the complexity of relationship and loyalty. It gets a little long and racy but I liked it.

The Glass Castle, by Jeannette Wall, is one of the most compassionate and disturbing memoirs I have read lately and I'm reading a lot of them. I couldn't put it down and consequently it has not left me for days. It is about hope and survival. May be too intense for some.

The Tender Bar, by J.R. Moehringer, is a hot book group memoir. Tenderly written, this Pulitzer prize-winning journalist recounts his childhood search for father figures. Beautifully written with a sense of humor and hope in the midst of sadness and loneliness, it fulfills its own prediction, "Every book is a miracle."

--Patty Friesen

Deadline for February newsletter items is noon, January 25th.

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.