

Faith Connection

January 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...

"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

--Phillip Brooks, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

The Christmas manger, which we so recently gathered around in wonder and hope, was no doubt a place of both hope and fear for the young couple Joseph and Mary. So much uncertainty surrounded them at Jesus' birth and would continue to loom in the days that followed. Yet at each step hope visited them through visions and dreams and wandering sages from distant lands, each confirming that Emmanuel, God-with-us, resided in their fresh, new, helpless infant and in the future that lay before him.

Hope and fear. Polar opposites, yet they almost always travel together in human experience. We fear that the things we hope for can't possibly come true. We hold on to hope as the only way through and out of life's most fearful moments. We can never entirely extinguish fear but the Christmas story reminds us of ways to nourish hope as we enter a new year.

Joseph dreamed, Mary pondered things in her heart, and the magi looked for meaning around them. God breathes hope in us when we take the time to reflect and ponder the wonders, large and small, that have been part of our lives. God breathes hope in us when we set out in new directions, not sure where we're going but trusting that God's Spirit will lead us.

According to Luke's gospel, Mary went and spent three months with her cousin Elizabeth when she learned she was pregnant. In Matthew's gospel, the magi stopped in Jerusalem to seek the counsel of Jewish scholars to learn where the Messiah was to be born. God breathes hope as we meet with others to consider the events of our lives and of the world. In worship we recall and speak anew, as Mary did in the *Magnificat*, our hope in a God

who cares intimately about the unfolding of human history. In conversation and study we reinforce our hope, as the magi did, in the rich tradition of religious history.

Fear isolates, separates, and destroys. Hope draws people together and births new realities of trust. May we be individuals and a community of hope in 2010, naming our fears but placing them in the manger and at the cross, where God's power and love are made perfect in weakness.

--Joetta Schlabach

"A dog's New Year's resolution: I will not chase that stick unless I actually see it leave his hand!"

--Anonymous

[Editor's note: Ran across this while searching for New Year's quotes—skipped by it as mildly amusing, but on further consideration, decided it was worth taking to heart...]

What's happening at FMC...

Adult Education in January

The Deacons Commission is planning the Sunday morning adult education hour for January. The schedule is:

January 3. We begin the New Year with an extended fellowship time, organized by Kami Blackwell Kinney & Beth Richardson

January 10. Faith Formation in the Family. Studies show that the home was the primary place of faith development for most people who remain actively involved in a faith community as an adult. We'll hear from various folks and share ideas about how we can nurture faith in our home settings across the lifespan.

January 17. Making Our Wishes Known-part 2. As a follow up to the Mennonite Mutual Aid presentation in November, we will take the opportunity to work on advance directives for healthcare (Five Wishes) and funeral planning forms.

January 24. World Fellowship Sunday. Patricia Mack will share about her experience at Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay.

January 31. Navigating the Healing of Trauma with STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience). Donna Minter will give a presentation that she is preparing for the Augsburg College Nobel Peace Prize Forum in March.

Four From FMC to Attend Central Plains Conference Leadership Seminar

Katie Hochstedler, Scott Neal, Joetta Schlabach, and Phil Stoltzfus will attend the January 8-9 leadership seminar, "Come Let us Reason Together: Developing Common Understandings for Discernment," planned by leaders of Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Held in Des Moines, Iowa, the seminar's goal is to engage pastors and congregational leaders in theological reflection around issues of variance.

Pastor Kent McDougal of Christ Community Church in Des Moines will give an opening presentation in which he will use the "rule of Christ" from Matthew 16 and 18 as a framework for ethical discernment. Mathew Swora, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, will present a hermeneutical position that affirms the understanding of human sexuality as described in the current Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. Cynthia Lapp, pastor of Hyattsville (Maryland) Mennonite Church, will present how one arrives at the position of affirming committed same-sex partnerships. The seminar will also include times of worship and time for discussion and discernment in small and large groups.

Getting Ready for Annual Meeting, February 7

The Church Council has set February 7 as the date for the 2010 Annual Congregational Meeting. Annual Meeting is a time to assess our activities of the past year and set a direction for the coming year and also to approve congregational leadership and a budget for the coming year. We will use the adult education hour to begin the meeting and then conclude with the official business following a potluck meal. Childcare will be provided during the after-lunch portion of the meeting.

Reports from each commission and committee are due in the church office (as electronic documents) by January 13. These will be published and distributed two weeks before Annual Meeting.

Boiler Repair in Education/Office Wing

On Saturday, Dec. 26, custodian Michelle Hutchins detected that something was wrong with the heating system in the education wing of the church. Trustees Darrell Martin and Jerry Janzen did some diagnostic work on Saturday and Sunday morning and decided to call in the experts on Monday. Repair work included the replacement of a water pump and an element in the boiler as well as a thorough cleaning of the entire boiler. This work is providing a more even flow of heat throughout the education wing.

--The Trustees

FMC Web Resources

Are you feeling out-of-touch with your FMC family after being away during the holidays? Remember that you can access recent bulletins and sermons on the "worship" menu of the FMC website: www.faithmennonite.org. You'll also find a photo album from the Christmas program. An updated copy of the extended directory (with email addresses) and the revised Church Handbook are also available when you login as a member. The login password is located at the bottom of the brief two-page phone directory that was distributed in mailboxes earlier in the fall, or by contacting the church office.

Advent/Christmas Worship Highlights

The Worship Commission would like to thank the various persons who helped create a meaningful Advent Worship Series:

- Bob Brown, Arlene Geissinger, Matthew Kinney, Adam Nafziger, and Joetta Schlabach who served on the planning committee
- Arlene Geissinger, aided by Leslie Minkler and the children's classes, in creating the visual displays of celestial bodies
- Matthew Kinney who memorized and recited scripture each Sunday
- Adam Nafziger, who coordinated musicians for the Advent theme song "I will trust in you"

- Neil Okerlund and the FMC choir that performed on two Sundays
- Chris Jones, Kristin Green, Lori Gingerich-Boberg, and all of the teachers and parents who helped the children practice for the Christmas program
- Annette Semanchin Jones and the various musicians who led our worship and singing
- The chime ringers and candle lighters
- All who observed the meditative silence at the beginning of each service

We hope that you experienced a message of hope and purpose amidst the uncertainty and confusion that often surround us.

--*The Worship Commission*

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting November 9th, 2009 @ FMC

Present: Joan Kreider, Moderator; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Neil Okerlund, Deacons; Melissa Hochstetler, Missions & Service; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Thaine Dirks, Pastor-Parish .

Absent: Moderator-elect; Worship representative; Fellowship representative; Education representative.

Affirmations. Joetta affirms the folks who organized “Who Are the Mennonites,” especially Rich Deming. Joan affirms Joetta and the Veterans for Peace for the “eleven chimes for justice,” this past Sunday. Joetta affirms Cleta Roth and Arlene Geissinger for the visuals for worship in October and November. Glenn liked Arlene Holdeman’s history of FMC.

Treasurer’s report. Jerry is starting to spend for the new sign. Designated offering of \$3870 was the Mike Schrock offering. The remainder will come out of the Trustee Commission. October giving was very low. Our income has met expenses so far. Joan says we will need to revisit the budget. Gregg notes that we’ve already paid our conference commitments. Jerry says we may need to either reduce our budget or increase income. Joetta suggests quarterly or monthly budget reports in the newsletter. Gregg says he can put it in a box on the back page. He will pull it directly out of the treasurer’s report.

Commission reports.

Trustees. Glenn says trustees did annual review of the custodian, gave a \$1 per hour raise. Landscaping is

coming along. Will remove the old sign and put up the new one. Arlene will do landscaping around the sign. Starting up the interior committee again. Their goal is to have proposals ready for the annual meeting.

Missions and Service. Melissa says they are gathering feedback from people who organized “Who are the Mennonites?” Not a lot of interest in repeating it, but ideas for other events. Fundraiser for Seward/Longfellow Restorative Justice program, perhaps with Community of St Martin. Doing a survey to see where do people give their money? STAR program for trauma awareness that Donna Minter is planning for June at Augsburg. Katie Hochstetler is organizing an MDS trip for April. Also MMA seminar in May. And working on the job description for the “new Michael B.”

Fellowship. Joetta says 20 attended the movie and game night, and there will be signups for Thanksgiving dinners.

Worship. Adam sent in a written report. Advent planning group is meeting, Getting musicians to play Christmas music during fellowship time. Joan will be hosting a carol sing on December 6, children’s program will be December 13. Also planning a Christmas eve service of lessons and carols. Began replacing microphones, and trying to determine speaker size and locations. Jerry notes that Worship is already over budget, and may need to postpone until next year.

Education. Joetta says that deacons will be planning adult ed for January, but no plans yet. Children’s classes are going well.

Deacons. Neil says they had an all-day retreat. Focusing on the spiritual, not task-oriented. Beginning to change how deacons work together. Not just dealing with specific people, but more proactive approach to spiritual growth for families and fellowship.

Pastor-Parish. Met, but nothing significant to report.

Pastor. Attended the Unity Task Force in Iowa. Katie H. and Lisa from St Paul Mennonite Fellowship are also on the task force. Getting to know each other—not as diverse as it could be. Ed Kaufman, Conference Minister, is resigning. Attended an October 29 workshop on assault prevention in houses of worship, included learning to recognize signs before violence breaks out. Met with a small group to discuss events around food and cooking.

Old business.

Approve safety plan. Draft of plan was distributed. Melissa likes statement about all adults being responsible for children. Gregg says he tries to learn all kids names and who their parents are, calls them by name to make them feel a part of things. Jerry asks who

will do background checks? Joetta says they are in the office. Won't check all nursery volunteers, because they're never alone with the kids. Council approves, with several suggestions. Joetta will send to Gregg for newsletter.

Ministry staff position. Draft of new job posting. Joan suggests one change in wording. Gregg asks whether we can afford 12 hours? Jerry doesn't know. Glenn says we should have faith—we haven't been hit as hard by unemployment as some churches. Council approves.

New business.

CSM joint youth projects. Joan says Community of St Martin is interested in joint youth projects. Melissa suggests a joint fundraiser for the MDS trip in May.

MMA Stewardship University. Melissa describes planning for MMA Stewardship University event. A couple of main speakers and breakout sessions on personal finance, and maybe stewardship of health and relationships. Could we get the neighborhood, including immigrant community? A community development component might be of interest to immigrants, such as small business startup. Glenn suggests someone like Helen Wells on ethics around death and dying. Joan suggests breakout session on an alternative view of economics. Melissa suggests a half day, rather than a full day.

Michael Bischoff recognition. Will be during worship on November 22nd. Suggestions for format and a gift.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

	September	October	November
Budgeted expenses	\$10,029	\$9,407	\$13,101
Budgeted income	\$12,273	\$7,534	\$13,176

The deadline for February newsletter items is noon, Thursday, January 28th.

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.

Epiphany—Partly Cloudy

The people who walk in darkness
 are coiling up their strings
 of deluxe, miniature, cool-burning
 lights,
 and looking for the sun
 to return by Eastern Airlines
 from his Florida Solstice. At four o'clock, blinds
 down and lamps lit, I'm folding gold foil paper,
 wrapping the crèche in swaddling tissues
 and vacuuming up dead needles
 from the tree of life. Behind the hum of Hoover I
 overhear my throat
 still singing
 Veni, veni ... (as if he never had). Like most
 productive citizens of Bethlehem (those not watching
 their flocks by night), I was baking fruit and nut
 bread,
 filing out paperwork for Caesar,
 sending formal greetings to distant relations,
 navigating the marketplace in search of the best
 price on frankincense, when the Gloria passed
 through town.
 Following stars is something you can do when you
 live in the desert.
 Enfolded in Great Lakes fog, I follow
 the taillights of the Ford ahead of me
 until the church's white gravel drive
 creeps out the haze and climbs its hill. Inside the
 sanctuary are spotlights and candles,
 and I am informed, and inform you,
 with all due pageant, song and reverence,
 that Unto Us a Child is Born. Then home for turkey a
 la king
 and off to Field's
 to return Aunt Mary's myrrh.
 From a well-salted parking lot
 in a land without sun,
 outside the lower entrance of Sears and Roebuck, I
 lower my parka hood
 and tilt my head back,
 looking for a star.

Cherie Konyha Green