

# Faith Connection

January 2011

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 life of the soul, as the structure of dreams reveals, is a continual going over and over the material of life...In memory we never tire of reflecting on the same events. I spent many summers in my childhood on a farm with an uncle who told stories endlessly. This, I now see, was his method of working the raw material of his life, his way of turning his experience round and round in the rotation that stories provide. Out of that incessant storytelling I know he found added depths of meaning. Storytelling is an excellent way of caring for the soul. It helps us see the themes that circle in our lives, the deep themes that tell the myths we live.*

– Thomas Moore, Care of the Soul

Most of us realize that our most memorable learning experiences do not occur through listening to a lecture or sermon—although pastors and teachers alike hope that a few nuggets of truth or wisdom are remembered from time to time! Rather we learn through doing, and more often than not, by making a mistake and then re-doing. These learning experiences make powerful stories and the learning process continues for ourselves and others as we tell them.

Christians have long had a word for such storytelling: we call it testifying or testimony. Like in a court of law, one's testimony serves the purpose of bringing light to a situation and establishing the truth. Testimony, or witness, is also one of the meanings of the word martyr. At times bearing witness and testifying to the truth has cost people their lives.

During the Lent and Advent seasons of 2010, we invited people within the congregation to testify in our worship services, to bear witness to some occurrence in their life where they had experienced the hand of God. Although testifying in our setting doesn't threaten one's life,

sharing a personal story is always risky business. Yet we are all witnesses to the power of such testifying. The person who testifies usually finds new truth in their own story as they reframe it to share publicly. We listeners are moved by the experiences of others to consider such moments in our own lives. Such storytelling is, in the words of Thomas Moore, "care for the soul."

As we transition from 2010 to 2011 we will have the opportunity to reflect not just on the personal stories of the past year, but on the past 50 years of Faith Mennonite Church. We are entering a year of memory and celebration of our congregation's 50th anniversary.

Like a personal life, our church's life has been made rich by experiences of discovery and growth as well as conflict and pain. I trust that the year ahead will be one of new understanding and care for our congregational soul as we share the stories of experiences that have shaped us thus far.

Happy New Year!

--Joetta Schlabach

## Outreach ministry update...

### Immigrants Among Us: Education and Advocacy

Through the concerted efforts of Dick Westby, Ry Siggelkow, and Pierre Gingrich-Boberg, Faith Mennonite will be sponsoring a January series of educational forums on immigration. These are the only adult education events being offered during January. Our hope is that this will encourage broad member participation. We are also publicizing the series to the wider community.

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles (Assembly for Civil Rights) will lead us in an action oriented forum entitled "Emancipation: A Path to Immigrant Liberation." La Asamblea is a faith-based non-profit organization that works to organize

immigrant congregations and their allies towards the transformation of individuals, communities and the immigration system.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, advocate and Faith Mennonite member Hillary Richardson will describe the ways current immigration law can hurt vulnerable individuals and families. The January 23<sup>rd</sup> forum, "Voices From the Southern Border," will feature Gabe Schlabach and Valerie Ong talking about their experiences on the U.S./Mexico border. They will be joined by Francisco Segovia, director of Waite House, examining why people leave their homes in Mexico and Central America to come to the U.S.

The series will close on January 30<sup>th</sup> with our own Joetta Schlabach, who will lead a discussion about Mennonite policy and advocacy on behalf of immigrants. She will also share some of the conversation and controversy related to the question of holding the 2013 Mennonite USA convention in Phoenix.

In order to follow up on the awareness raising during January, we will be inviting as many FMC folks as possible to attend the February 6<sup>th</sup> vigil sponsored by the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration. On Sunday, January 2, 2011, from 2:30-3:00pm, we will gather to show support to those detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Ramsey County Detention Center on 425 Grove Street in St. Paul.

More details on the vigil will be forthcoming.

--Kathleen Remund

## **Spirituality journal...**

### **Waiting for the Presence of God**

*This month's journal is written by Terry Gerber. She prepared this to have read as the sermon response at our December 12 Sunday service, which was canceled due to the weather.*

Last May I fell on our garage floor and broke my right arm. Who'd have guessed that a broken arm would mean that I'd have to learn to walk all over again (for the third time in my life)? But I used to walk with a cane and was used to putting my full weight on my stronger right arm.

I spent six weeks in a nursing home with my arm totally immobile, then had a horrible infection for three weeks, and finally, had to wait two more weeks for a bone

specialist to approve bearing weight on the healing arm, so that I could begin therapy on my legs. The physical therapy came to a standstill when I just didn't have enough endurance to walk more than 10 steps at a time.

During the summer months, I found myself at odds with many of the caregivers at the nursing home. It was a lonely time for me—away from my family, my church, my home, and my own way of doing things. I missed people, and I missed God. I felt lost. I prayed and prayed that God would be present with me.

Let me tell you how God answered my prayers. One of the overnight aides came into my room softly singing a hymn I knew. Her coworker told her to stop singing, but I said, "No, let her sing. I like being around people who have a song in their heart!" This aide gave me a big smile and showed extra kindness in giving nursing care.

Another means God used to convey deep love for me was through the visits of friends from Faith Church. I give heartfelt thanks to those of you who made time to come see me. I treasure those visits and the phone conversations that brought me into the congregation. Communion has always been special to me—a connection with God that runs deep into my spirit. So when Joetta and others brought communion to me, I felt a part of the congregation. I felt that God was enfolding me in ever-loving arms.

My plea to experience the Presence of God was answered also through imaginative prayer. Several years ago, Carol Harder and I were prayer partners. We tried some exercises using imaginative prayer. My favorite was imagining I was approaching the tomb of Christ and, like Mary, I am looking for Jesus. He turns to me and quietly calls, "Terry." Another time, I imagined what it would be like to climb the hill to listen to Jesus teach—and his giving his "sermon on the mount." I hear the excited voices in the crowd—and then silence as Jesus sits on the ground (a sign of a teacher). I let the words sink in and ask God to let the teachings of Jesus become a part of my life.

Please join with me in thanking God for answering my prayers. God is present with us in so many ways. What a wonderful God—who answers us in such abundant ways. It may not be in the time we want or even the way we want, but God answers and is always present with us, whether we recognize it or not. Sing praises to our living God. Sometimes God says to me, "I am here; I've been here all along!

--Terry Gerber

## What's happening at FMC...

### Comings and Goings...

*Note: Eric Casper is in Lithuania*

Thanks for the lovely Christmas card I recently got in the mail. I think about the FMC community a lot. I'm having a great experience here, but I really miss being a part of the vibrant community of Faith.

I was planning to join the Peace Corps when I came here, but my plans have changed. I have found my dream Ph.D. program at the University of Sussex in Brighton, England. I visited the school and met with a potential adviser over my fall break, and I'm hopeful that I could begin there in Fall 2011. I would be using complex systems computational models to investigate the processes of social capital formation in a neighborhood in a developing country context.

The Peace Corps actually gave me a placement to serve in Albania, but I have turned it down to pursue this Ph.D., which I think will ultimately better prepare me to find and create good work in developing countries. As part of the Ph.D. program, I would spend about one year doing field work, so I will still get to live and work in a developing country. Since I won't be leaving for a Peace Corps placement in the spring, I have decided to stay at LCC International University to teach for the spring semester. I have really enjoyed teaching this semester, and I'm excited to apply all the lessons I learned from this first try, making the spring courses even better. I'm also planning to do some research with Natalija Zacharova-Nausede, now that she's done with her UMN thesis.

--Eric Kasper

*Note: Atlee Schrock, son of Erin Geiser, is spending this winter on the custodial crew at Murdo Research Station in Antarctica.*

I wanted to talk about a few things in my life. Just to let you guys know, last summer I made a big change in the way I live my life. I decided that I was going to do what I want, and if I don't want to do something, others can live with it. So far, I think this decision has been for the best. It has opened my eyes to a lot of things that I didn't know I wanted to do. With everything that has happened in my life in the past couple years, I found that attending church honestly bored me. If I went, I was going to go for myself. If God wants a bunch of people to bow at his feet, shouldn't they at least enjoy it?

So this summer I only attended church when I wanted to, and I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed it. My god friend [sic] haha Andre did a sermon at East Goshen church. I thought it was fabulous. It was on the God Samaritan [sic] ha ha. Andre is a great, handsome guy that does not need anyone filling his big gracious head with any more complements, so I will just say that the Good Samaritan is an easy topic. It was honestly the one of two sermons I have ever heard that I could actually pay attention to the whole thing. Needless to say, Andre did a great job, and made me want to change my life. I actually enjoyed going to church! It filled me with joy that later translated into giving Andre more complements!

Okay, back to topic. This summer I didn't get to go to Faith Mennonite my home church to visit. I realized how much I missed those people! It is a great place with an amazing community of good people who actually care about each other. (As I've grown into adulthood, I realized that there are A LOT of people who don't, which really confuses me.) So, Faith Mennonite: thank you for the Christmas card, I will be visiting and attending when in Minneapolis this coming summer.

So back to the God subject and a disclaimer. I have a lot of wonderful relatives who I love love love that are strong in their faith and I don't want them to worry about me. This is who I am and I am happy about it. I think it's just fine to question and try to find out some kind of purpose. So don't worry, I want to believe in something for my dad, granddad and grandma who all passed recently. They were great and deserve me being faithful for their sake. So whatever I find in the coming years, it will be a good thing.

--Atlee Schrock (For additional posts and photos from Atlee visit: [atleegs.blogspot.com](http://atleegs.blogspot.com). To send Atlee an email: [atleegs@gmail.com](mailto:atleegs@gmail.com)).

### FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	September	October	November
<b>Total expenses</b>	\$7,854	\$13,858	\$12,300
<b>Total income</b>	\$16,673	\$15,238	\$24,096
<b>Monthly budget</b>	\$12,775	\$12,775	\$12,775

## Missions & Service Commission Contributions for Partnerships and Community Projects in 2010

One of the tasks of the Missions & Service Commission is to disburse funds to various community organizations. In 2010 \$4200 was budgeted for this purpose. In recent years the Commission has attempted to focus allocations on organizations with which FMC has a relationship. Following is the list of organizations and the amounts that were disbursed in December 2010.

Brethren Mennonite Council	\$500
Christian Peacemaker Teams	\$600
Families Moving Forward	\$500
Friends for a Non-Violent World	\$150
Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches	\$100
ISALAH	\$150
Missio Dei hospitality ministry	\$500
Minnesota Council of Churches	\$150
Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation	\$200
Pan-African Community Organization	\$300
Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Project	\$500
Twin Cities Peace Campaign	\$50
Wilderness Wind	\$500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4200</b>

The Commission also disbursed \$1000 to support Mennonite Mission Network workers Wayne & Lois Hochstetler (based in London, England) and \$500 to the Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia.



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 22. (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).

*January  
Birthday  
Brunch*

*Saturday,  
January 22  
10:00-11:30  
a.m.*

## Thank You From MCC US

Thank you for your contribution of \$1,500 to Mennonite Central Committee. Though you may never know the names of the children and families you have helped, thousands went to school, and others received food and humanitarian aid. Many more have access to clean water. Communities, where violence generally pervades, are experiencing peace. Through you MCC is reaching out, in the name of Christ, to people in need at home and around the world. People of all ages are touched by MCC's work and feel deep gratitude for the opportunity your funds provide. Thank you for supporting MCC work and showing care for humanity, in the name of Christ.

-- Arli Klassen, MCC Executive Director

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

#### **JRLC Day on the Hill, February 17, 2011**

Registration for Joint Religious Legislative Coalition's 2011 Day on the Hill is officially open. The JRLC invites us to join with hundreds of faithful advocates on February 17, 2011 to raise their voices for social justice. The JRLC seeks the support of individuals in presenting their legislative agenda to state lawmakers. This agenda is developed in conversation with and ratified by the four bodies that comprise the JRLC: the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, the Islamic Center of Minnesota, the Minnesota Catholic Conference, and the Minnesota Council of Churches. Early-bird registration (\$30/person; \$15/student) ends February 1, so take advantage of the discount today. To register go to: [www.jrlc.org/register-for-day-on-the-hill.html](http://www.jrlc.org/register-for-day-on-the-hill.html).

**The deadline for February newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>.**

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.