

Faith Connection

July 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.

Pastoral Musings...

I've always found encouragement from the words of Paul in Romans 8:18-30 where he wrote about patience and hope. He likened our personal longings and waiting to the experience of creation, which he graphically described as "groaning in labor pains." For Paul, this longing and eager waiting was for the complete redemption and liberation of all people and all things. He expressed confidence that God's Spirit accompanies us and prays through us in our times of waiting, and that we can be assured that "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose."

I've experienced waiting in several different ways this summer. On our train trip to the west coast in early June, we experienced significant delays on the tracks, particularly as we rode across North Dakota where the oil boom means there are many more tanker cars on the tracks. (Amtrak rents the rails from BNSF which takes priority.) Fortunately, Gerald and I were not on a tight schedule, having planned several stops with time for camping and visiting friends. I learned that waiting feels different when there's not a deadline. We had extra time to observe the beauty of creation—especially the plentiful birds and waterfowl.

On our first day near Glacier National Park, the morning was clear as we explored the small town, but by afternoon when we had hoped to go on a hike, clouds and rain settled in. We waited a while to see if the skies would clear, then decided we'd put on rain gear and walk regardless of the rain. The sun didn't break through during our walk but neither did we get entirely soaked. Waiting for perfect conditions would have robbed us of a lovely time in the woods.

The next day when we entered the national park (and a week later when we visited Crater Lake National Park) we found that roads were still closed in higher elevations due to the snow pack. Obviously we could

not wait until they would be open—perhaps not for another month—and thus we didn't get to see the full expanse of these parks. But we got to walk on the roads (still closed to cars but open to hikers and bicyclists) and enjoy the leisure of a smooth walking surface on roadways that others coming later would only experience in bumper-to-bumper traffic. We beheld incredible beauty despite the limitations.

Camping among the coast redwoods in northern California, we walked among trees that are some 2000 years old. It's an awesome experience to walk in an old-growth forest and be surrounded by towering trees. It took the efforts of people determined to wait—to preserve areas that had not yet been cut and to protect the regrowth of other areas—to create a state and national park system where we can see nature fully liberated.

These experiences of waiting have been largely positive, but I dare not forget the painful experiences of waiting that others experience. This week is National Gay Pride Week reminding us that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons still wait to be fully included, valued and respected in our society and in the church. This week's news has been filled with stories of the tens of thousands of minor children and youth from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador who are waiting in detention centers along the US border, desperate for liberation from the corruption, poverty and narco-trafficking violence in their countries. In our church persons are waiting for renewed health and mobility, permanent employment, and vocational clarity.

This week we are waiting and praying that the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA (meeting in Chicago, June 26-28) will find wisdom and courage to help our church "move forward together in the midst of disagreement," making a place for all. I wait in hope, even as I know that the labor pains may not yet be over. Paul concluded his chapter on patience, hope, and waiting by saying that even in the midst of suffering and

persecution, he was confident that God was present: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38). May we know God's presence in our waiting.

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry staff report...

This summer we are holding a number of special events for FMC and community folks. On Sunday, July 6 we are yet again hosting the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration's (ICOM's) monthly immigration vigil outside of the Ramsey County Detention Center, at 2:30 p.m. The focus of our vigil this month will be the recent increase in detentions of children crossing the border. It would be wonderful if we had a large delegation from FMC. All are welcome! If you would like to help with the service, contact Richard Westby at sandrich22@comcast.net.

On July 20, at Bethany Lutheran on Franklin Ave., we are co-hosting an afternoon joint concert/hymn fest. This is an attempt to encourage more collaborative interaction between members of Faith, Bethany and the Community of St. Martin. The congregations will contribute music that highlights our respective community's singing portfolio. Refreshments afterwards. Beginning time TBA.

On Saturday, July 26 at 9:30 a.m., for the second year in a row, the Summer Singers, directed by Russell Adrian, will hold their Free Family Concert in our sanctuary, geared toward children ages 0-10. The Summer Singers have been rehearsing in our sanctuary for the past two months on Thursday evenings.

On Wednesday, August 6, at 7 p.m. the Missions & Service Commission is hosting a Minnesota Council of Churches (MCC) presentation at FMC focusing on healthcare. Do you know of persons who do not have health insurance and haven't yet signed up through MNsure? What's the latest on how MNsure and the ACA are doing in Minnesota? MCC has been sponsoring a program this past year to help inform congregations of MNsure benefits and assist individuals in the enrollment process. The presentation will discuss Minnesota's health insurance marketplace, what benefits are available, eligibility requirements and how to enroll. The overall goal is to help all of us be better stewards of our own health.

Finally, later this summer watch for an announcement about details of a Respectful Conversations about Guns in Minnesota event that the Missions and Service Commission is planning to host, again through Minnesota Council of Churches. This is part of the MCC's ongoing respectful conversations model of community dialogue, giving us practice on listening skills and articulating our viewpoints on issues we are passionate about. The first event we will have, perhaps sometime in late August before the respectful conversations event itself, will be a training session where you can learn how to hone your expertise as a table facilitator.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Four Families Participate In Parent/Child Dedication On June 29

We are glad to be a church that welcomes and seeks to support persons of all ages and life stages. On June 29 we celebrated with four families who have welcomed children into their families in the past two years. Candace and Daryn Dockter brought baby daughter Lydia, born in 2012, when they began attending in summer 2013; Ry, Marcia, Owen and Aleida Siggelkow, who have been in Princeton, New Jersey, for the past three years, welcomed Wendy in 2012; Pierre, Lori, and Simone Gingerich-Boberg adopted Josette, born in 2011, in 2013; Abra, Phil and Cassius Staffin Wiebe welcomed Theia in 2013. May we be the village that supports and receives blessings from each of these families.

Free Family Concert at FMC – Saturday, July 26

The Summer Singers (TSS) is a local *cappella* ensemble directed by Russell Adrian, a PhD student in choral conducting at the University of Minnesota and member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church. Part of their mission is to educate the community about the art of choral music. Last summer, TSS hosted its first Free Family Concert on Sunday, July 14 at Faith Mennonite Church. Parents, grandparents and special friends brought children ages 0-10 to enjoy a musical experience geared specifically for them: free, interactive, and short. There were even goodie bags to take home.

Please join us for our second Free Family Concert on Saturday, July 26 at 9:30am, hosted again by Faith

Mennonite Church. Experience music from around the world through singing and activities especially for children. We hope to see you there!



If you or a family member has a birthday in July, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on July 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.

*July
Birthday
Brunch*

*Saturday,
July 12th
9:30-11
a.m.*

What's happening here and there...

Central Plains Conference Annual Meeting Highlights

Faith Mennonite Church was well represented by an intergenerational group at the annual meeting of Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC) in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, June 19-22. Thaine Dirks, Joetta Schlabach, and Kristi Zabriskie served as adult delegates. Hannah Dirks and Sophia Kouay assisted with the children's activities during delegate sessions and participated in youth events at meal time and in the evenings. Joy and Luke Zabriskie participated in children's activities and Joy read several books. Gerald Schlabach also attended a portion of the meeting.

The theme for the meeting was "Joyfully Following Jesus: Formed by God's Word." Here are a few highlights that capture different words of that theme:

The overall mood of the annual meeting was "joyful." While there has been considerable tension and anxiety in parts of Mennonite Church USA since Mountain States Mennonite Conference licensed Theda Good, a married lesbian, as associate pastor of First Mennonite Church, Denver, in 2013, a sense of unity and trust pervaded the atmosphere at the CPMC meeting. The delegate body presented the annual "Peace Mug" award

to Cesar Moya and Patricia Uruena, and celebrated this Colombian Mennonite couple's fourteen years of service in Ecuador. Another joyous moment was welcoming into membership Iglesia El Balsamo, a Spanish-language church in Muscatine, Illinois. Most of their congregation, including children, were present on Saturday morning to be received into membership. We learned that the conference has ended each of the last three fiscal years in the black, reversing previous trends, and that this year's annual meeting had an increased number of children and youth present.

We heard several stories of partnership in "following Jesus," within the conference and in the Ecuador Partnership, which includes the Colombia Mennonite Church. One story from southeast Iowa was about a summer lunch project, initiated this summer by two Mennonite churches in response to the awareness of hungry children in the community. Last summer a rural Mennonite family had moved into Wellman, Iowa, while they were having work done on their home. Their children made friends with other kids on the street, and before long it became apparent that some of these children had no parents at home during the day and no food in the refrigerator. The family began serving lunch to the group, which was usually some 8-10 children. This summer Wellman Mennonite Church and West Union Mennonite Church are collaborating to provide meals to about 25 children and youth, identified by the public school social worker as being at risk.

Keynote speaker Jewel Ginerich Longenecker, Associate Dean for Leadership Education at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, gave three engaging presentations describing the ways that churches are studying the Bible and being "formed by God's word." In one of our delegate sessions we were introduced to a new resource, developed by a team of young pastors in the conference, "Seeking God's Will Together: A congregational study on communal biblical discernment." This resource includes a set of videos and a study guide ready for use throughout the conference. The three conference ministers, David Boshart, Shana Peachey Boshart, and Tim Detweiler, presented an updated strategic plan for the next three years and invited feedback from delegates.

This was Sophia Kouay's third year attending the conference annual meeting. Here are her reflections: "Conference was fun. I had a lot of fun spending time helping with the little ones and doing activities in child care. I also got to spend time with a cousin, cousins once removed, and second cousins. I also had fun with

the youth in the evenings. We stayed up late and watched movies as well as hanging out and having fun with the pool table and exercise equipment. The car ride to conference was also fun, listening to the same five songs from *Frozen* and *The Phantom of the Opera* (because my mom forgot to download the song *Celebration*) as well as eating the many snacks that I brought including (as usual) Peanut Butter M&Ms. The meals were fun as well. The youth got to sit together to talk about the meetings and other fun stuff and it was especially fun because no matter how small the table we managed to all fit. So to sum things up conference was a blast and I hope I get to go next year as a youth delegate.”

And from Hannah Dirks:

“My name is Hannah Dirks. I went to the Mennonite Conference this summer as a first timer. I don’t quite know what I was thinking it would be like, but the experience was amazing. I loved how the youth group was more the kids and less teachers and we could do more our own thing. I liked the age range too! I felt like a teenager, not a 7 year old! I liked the campus. It wasn’t packed or busy. It was peaceful but big. You could get lost but always find your way back if you tried.”

We will plan to do additional reporting later this summer.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

Study Buddies

Study Buddies is a one-on-one academic mentoring program in which volunteers spend one to two hours a week helping a child with homework assignments, special projects, academic skills, and more, through CommonBond Communities. At this time, volunteers are needed at Seward Towers in Minneapolis.

I participated in the Study Buddy program for more than three years in the mid-2000s, working one-on-one with a grade-school girl evenings until she moved out of the area. It was an opportunity to build a friendly relationship with my student (and her family). I enjoyed helping her with homework assignments and participated in several Seward Towers community get-togethers to mark the end of the school year and other important events. I found the program to be well organized, with good attendance and parental interest in getting their children to their appointments on time. Training and resources are provided.

If you have the time and are interested in volunteering as a Study Buddy, I encourage you to check in to this program. To register for an orientation and fill out an application, visit:

www.commonbond.org/volunteer.aspx. For more info, you can contact Allyssa Woodford Hughes at VolunteerServices@CommonBond.org or 651-290-6226. If you have any questions, I’d be glad to answer them.

--*Susan Weinlick*

The deadline for August newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, July 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.