

# Faith Connection

June 2009

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]ndeed you do love all the brothers and sisters .....  
But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more.  
--1 Thessalonians 4:10*

June 1 marks the one-year anniversary of my installation as fulltime pastor of this faith community, following eight months as a half-time team member with former pastors Patrick and Patty, and nine months in an interim capacity following their move to Saskatchewan. This amount of change in so little time has been the pattern rather than an exception in most of my adult life. Most often the changes were precipitated by modifications in the institutions where I worked, leading to an invitation to reconfigure or take on a different set of responsibilities. I learned a great deal about a variety of things along the way, but never went deeply into one area. At times I wondered if a master design would ever emerge from my vocational labyrinth.

As I spent time this spring responding to written questions in preparation for my ordination interview in mid-April, I realized that I was at a new place. I could honestly say, for the first time in my vocational life, "I love and find deep joy in what I am doing." In the language of Paul to the Thessalonians, I want to do this "more and more."

Like the babies in our midst who break into smiles when others make eye contact with them, my joy comes largely in response to, and as a reflection of, the joy and wellbeing that reside within this community. Although we live busy lives and often carry the burdens of others in our families or with whom we work, we are resilient, open to new ideas, seeking new ways to engage in the complexity of life around us. I don't believe that I've ever heard anyone say, in an attempt to side-track a process, "but we've never done it *that* way." Nor have I heard nostalgic

laments, "if only...." or "things were better when..." In our activities to become more involved in the community this year, people have asked probing questions and offered critique of some of the partnerships we're exploring, but they've continued to support the overall process.

Oh yes, we miss those who have moved away. Yes, those with most seniority among us certainly remember highpoints from the past. And yes, we feel the emptiness of the section that used to be filled with youth. But some newer (not so youthful!) folks have begun to fill that section, bringing a fresh set of gifts, questions and suggestions. The burgeoning population of infants and children fill us with promise for the future. People who share their gifts in worship inspire us. And the list of ideas for activities and ministries that people keep sending to the Missions & Service Commission will keep us in business for some time.

This is the community that I feel affirmed and supported by. This is the community that I believe the Pastoral Leadership Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference, which conducted the ordination interview and approved my ordination, was able to see standing behind and with me. As I look forward to my ordination this summer, I do so in anticipation of together, with this community, doing "more and more" of what God is calling us to in this time and place.

--Joetta Schlabach

"It amazes me that most people spend more time planning next summer's vacation than they do planning the rest of their lives."

-- Patricia Fripp

## What's happening at FMC...

### Faith and Community

*“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.”*

*1 Corinthians 12:12*

Faith Mennonite members carry out service and witness in many different ways. At times, this feels scattered to me, and I wish for more cohesive, collective action with the church as a whole moving in the same direction. At other times, I step back and feel a collective, divine spirit weaving these many acts of individual service together with synergy and wholeness.

At the May 10<sup>th</sup> Adult Education session, we were able to reflect together on some of the common themes of service that have been emerging within the congregation in the past six months. During that session, we broke into three small groups to consider past and future action in three areas:

- Partnering with other faith communities in the neighborhood and beyond
- Building relationships with East African communities in Seward and Cedar/Riverside
- Encouraging healthy and sustainable relationships with food and land

These are some of the overall themes that emerged from that discussion included:

- Recent community forums have shared the values of the congregation, and raised the profile of the church in the neighborhood. Continue with forums, as a way of carrying out themes listed below.
- It is important to prioritize and go deep in partnership with limited number of community groups--yet, we also want to be intentional and thoughtful about the long-term commitments that the church makes, so that those commitments are realistic, fruitful, and fit the calling of the church.
- Focusing on the immediate neighborhood around the church is one natural way to focus the church's many opportunities for relationship-building and service.

Some of the next steps that the Missions and Service Commission is planning include:

- Planning a fall community forum, “Who are the Mennonites?” Would you like to be a part of the planning group?
- A strawberry picking trip in June. Marcia Siggelkow is coordinating this. Watch for announcements.
- Following up with the Pan-African Community Organization to support the learning center for adults that they are starting in Seward. Want to volunteer as a tutor in their center?
- Expanding relationships with other African-serving organizations in Seward. In July, some of us are going to be making a movie with youth at the Seward Towers apartment buildings. Want to play with kids as they make a silly movie?

This summer, we will also have a focus on sharing reflections in some worship services about community service and faith. I'm interested in hearing stories about how community service has changed you, and about ways of engaging the community that are life-giving for you right now. Please share your stories of this with me and others—and please also let me know if you're interested in joining any of the areas of activity that are listed above.

--Michael Bischoff

### “Oh the Places We'll Go” – Celebrating Our FMC graduates

We congratulate and pray God's blessings on those who are graduating this spring:

**Hannah Breckbill** is graduating with a B.A. in mathematics from **Carleton College**. In the short term, she will be training for Christian Peacemaker Teams and then will head to Elm Mott, Texas, to intern on the World Hunger Relief farm. (For those who may not have gotten to know Hannah, she is a niece of Phil Stoltzfus and her home church is First Mennonite in Lincoln, Nebraska)

**Steve Cayford** completed a master's degree in Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy offered through the **University of Minnesota** public policy school. He wrote his thesis on balancing the benefits of using refurbished computers for development projects against the environmental and health costs of their eventual disposal. Steve continues to work at the University as he considers next steps.

**Moti Endalew** will graduate from **Johnson High School** in St. Paul and will enroll at **Goshen (Indiana) College** in the fall.

**Geneva Martin** is graduating from **South High School** in Minneapolis and will attend **Northern Michigan University** in Marquette, Michigan.

**Michelle Okerstrom** is graduating from **South High School** in Minneapolis and will attend **University of Wisconsin at Madison**.

**Emory Richardson** is graduating from **St John's College-Santa Fe** with a Liberal Arts degree. He'll work for the Summer Classics program at the college for the summer. This is a weeklong seminar course offered to the public throughout the summer focused around classic texts in Eastern and Western thought. Following that he'll be moving to Chicago to look for a job (and keep sister Hillary company).

**Noah Skogerboe** has completed a **Masters of Library and Information Science** from **Dominican University (River Forest, Illinois)/College of St. Catherine** (this is a partnership program; his degree is from Dominican University). Noah will continue to work as a reference/archive assistant for the Minnesota Historical Society, as he looks for other professional opportunities.

**Aaron Zeug** is graduating from **Delano High School** and will attend **University of Minnesota at Morris**.

## **Pentecost**

We know about Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, but what, some ask, is *Pentecost*? Pentecost is an ancient Greek word meaning “the fiftieth day.” It was celebrated in historic Judaism as *Shavuot*, a harvest festival 50 days after the commemoration of Exodus, when God gave the Ten Commandments. It was at the Shavuot/Pentecost celebration, following the resurrection of Jesus as recounted in Acts 2, that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. Throughout Christian history, churches that follow a liturgical calendar have celebrated Pentecost on the 50<sup>th</sup> day, or seven weeks after Easter. On Pentecost Sunday (May 31 this year) we celebrate the universal church since one of the manifestations of the coming of the Spirit was the phenomenon that everyone heard the message of Christ in their own language. Empowered by the Spirit, the followers of Jesus soon moved out from Jerusalem, carrying their message to other parts of the known world. As Mennonites we celebrate the way the Spirit has empowered the church to live as followers of Christ in a world that lives by a very different set of values. The modern Pentecostal movement, which began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, took its name from its special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

## **Summer Worship – Letters to the Early Churches**

Our summer worship series will draw from the New Testament epistles, or letters. Over the course of the summer we will be led to consider themes that were addressed by the Apostle Paul and various other writers to early Christian communities across Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor. All of Paul's writings were completed before the first gospel was written. The epistles, thus, give us a bird's-eye view of the early church when everyone was new to faith in God through Jesus Christ. All were working out what that faith meant and how to live it out. By studying how these letter writers understood and lived out faith in their context, we learn the process of how to determine and live out faith in our own. Thaine Dirks has joined the other members of the Worship Commission (Erin Geiser, Adam Nafziger, and Jenny Wandersee) to plan the summer worship series, using resources based on the *Gather 'Round* summer curriculum. Most of the epistles are relatively short, which makes them good candidates for summer reading lists!

*Joetta Schlabach*, with excerpts from *Letters to the Early Churches: Multiage Teacher's Guide, Summer 2009*.

## **FMC Women's Art Outing – June 11**

FMC women are invited to an Artist Reception and Discussion on Thursday, June 11, 5:30 p.m. at the Basilica of St. Mary. The reception will feature eight Twin Cities women artists—four Jewish and four Christian—whose work makes up the exhibit *Interpretations of Faith: Women Artists in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*. Publicity for this exhibit, which runs from May 2-June 28, says “The arts have played a vital role in the life of many religious traditions. Working with bold and subdued colors, figurative and abstract images, natural materials, handmade or special papers, language and text, these Twin Cities' artists share reflections of faith through their art. (For more information about the exhibit visit: [www.womenspirit-TwinCities.org](http://www.womenspirit-TwinCities.org), [www.mary.org](http://www.mary.org), or [www.stthomas.edu/jpc](http://www.stthomas.edu/jpc).)

Post-reception/ discussion options include going out to dinner or taking a stroll through the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Let Joetta know if you plan to attend so we can arrange carpooling.

## June 28 – Church Membership Day

Three persons are planning to join Faith Mennonite Church on June 28. Karen Zeug will transfer her membership from Southern Hills Mennonite Church in Topeka, KS. Ry & Marcia Sigglekow will be received as members through baptism (Ry) and confession of faith (Marcia). If there are others who are interested in considering church membership at this time, please speak with the pastor or one of the deacons.

## The 2009 Un-Retreat

At its April 2009 meeting, the Fall Retreat Planning Committee (Wolf Bartel, Rhonda Martin, Cleta Roth Gingerich and Joetta Schlabach) decided on a different retreat format for 2009. In reviewing recent retreat experiences and some of the changing demographics within our church, some change seemed in order. The committee noted that overall attendance at retreats has been declining the past couple years. This may be due in part to busy schedules that make it difficult for people to take an entire weekend away. Some families with young children can find overnights away from home challenging.

The long-standing goals of our church retreats remain important: to provide an extended opportunity deepening friendships, for intergenerational activities, and for spiritual development. To meet these goals, the retreat committee is recommending a series of shorter events to supplement the monthly after-church events already planned by the fellowship commission. Watch for more information about the following events, and if you'd like to help with planning any of them, please contact the committee member (or other person) designated for each:

- Summer 2009 (July or August) – Como Park Zoo/Conservatory/Picnic event (Rhonda)
- Labor Day—Sept. 7—Picnic and Bluegrass Festival @ Minnehaha Park (Cleta)
- Early October – Game/movie night at the church (Wolf)

## Missions and Service Report

Missions and Service Commission (MSC) met on May 6. We began the meeting by talking a little about keeping meetings efficient by introducing new proposals through email before meetings if possible and trying to at least have them in writing. We also discussed creating subcommittees and working groups

to work on events and projects and keep meetings more for bringing reports, proposals, and questions.

We talked about the PACO fundraising meal concluded that it seemed to be a success. PACO raised \$1000 from the event. We discussed upcoming events of the Car Sabbath on May 24 and the Pride Parade coming on June 28. Saint Paul Mennonite Fellowship sounds interested in marching together in the parade. There will be a Strawberry Picking Extravaganza in June or July depending on when strawberries start coming in. Marcia Sigglekow will be coordinating this event. Katie proposed a fundraiser meal at her house to raise money for the Pink Menno Campaign. The event will be June 6 at 7:00. MSC will provide support by reimbursing a portion of food costs for the meal.

We also discussed how we want use matching funds from MMA and decided to use up to \$1000 of it for Families Moving Forward when they come to speak at Adult Education. MSC will use \$500 of our budget with the rest of the matching funds coming from a free will offering on Sunday.

Other updates: Michelle Braley of the Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice program spoke during Adult Christian Education May 2. Michael will be leading Adult Ed. to discuss the work of MSC. MSC is still working with the Trustees to enhance the signage at FMC.

Our next meeting will be June 17, 7:00 pm.

-- Katie Hochstedler

## Deacons Report

The Deacons Commission met on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009. After checking in with one another, Beth Richardson shared a meditation based on Winifrid Gallagher's book *Rapt: Attention and the Focused Life*, on the psychology and neuroscience of attention. Beth shared that what you focus your attention on is a choice, and can make all the difference as to whether you are happy and fulfilled or not. This reminded Joetta of a book by Eckart Tolle, in which he says that the now is what we have; we need to focus on that and not dwell on the past or the future. Joetta and Cleta both mentioned Elizabeth O'Connor's book, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*. It's an account of how the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., inspires and directs all it's members into active ministry and discipleship. We decided that reading *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*

would benefit us all as deacons, and possibly the whole congregation. We've scheduled a deacons' retreat in early September to explore O'Connor's book more thoroughly.

In addition to sharing care concerns for members of the congregation, we spent time in fruitful conversation around two themes: the desire to draw people deeper into community via the small group model; and helping people make decisions, perhaps by utilizing the Quaker clearness model.

We finished our time together with prayer for personal needs within the congregation, for each other, as well as for guidance.

--*Kami Blackwell-Kinney*

## **FMC Marathon Day – June 14!**

How many things can we do in a single Sunday? The stars have aligned to fill our plate on June 14:

**During our morning worship, Mennonite Mission Network workers Wayne and Lois Hochstetler will speak.** This year the church has begun providing support for Wayne and Lois, who recently began a service assignment with Mennonite Mission Network. Based in London, they travel around the world visiting and providing spiritual care and counseling to expatriate MMN workers. The Hochstetlers will be in town visiting their daughter Melissa and have agreed to speak in our worship. Persons who would like to join in a noon lunch with the Hochstetlers to learn more about their work should contact Joetta Schlabach.

**During our sharing time in worship and in the fellowship time we will recognize our high school graduates** (Moti Endalew, Geneva Martin, and Michelle Okerstrom) and **give our sending blessing** to the Bardo Martinson family, who are departing for a year in Washington, DC.

**In a special 11:15 a.m. session, we will have a conversation with our Columbus 2009 delegates** (Rhonda Martin and Leslie Minkler) about the agenda items that will be discussed at the national assembly, June 30-July 5. **We will also use this occasion to pass the hat in a fund-raiser** to help pay a portion of our delegates' travel and conference expenses.

## **Meet Your Fellow FMCers**

In 2001 Shelly Hendricks, a Church of the Brethren member from Kansas, and Matthew Abts, a Methodist from Ohio, were both in graduate study at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Home one weekend, Shelly was asked by her mother if there were any interesting men in the program; she said no. But the next week she met Matthew, three months later they were engaged, and in August 2002 they were married.

Matthew and Shelly now have two children, Noelle, 4, and Micaiah, 8 months. When they got married, they decided they did not want a hyphenated name and wanted all members of the family to share the same family name. They considered family names in their heritage that had died out, but in the end they chose to use Shelly's family name.

That sort of quiet, thoughtful, independent decisiveness is evident in other aspects of their life. They do not have a television set in the house, believing this provides a better environment to raise children. They do have lots of books, a piano that gets used, and frequent dinner guests.

They are committed to the city. Matthew, after working for a nonprofit focused on affordable housing, now works for the city of Minneapolis and often bikes to work downtown. Shelley has a part-time job in St. Paul. They now live in north Minneapolis but hope to find a duplex or fourplex in south Minneapolis, where they would be closer to church and many friends and could build a small community that might share childcare and occasional meals.

While I was visiting in their home, something on their refrigerator door grabbed my attention. It was not a piece of preschool art or a photo from last summer's vacation. It was the family budget, with the totals for each category filled out for each of the months since January 1. Something else grabbed my attention: the first category of expenses was contributions. Matthew told me that he grew up with the family budget on the refrigerator. What a wonderful way to prepare children for managing their own money, giving them some idea of how much it costs to rent an apartment or make payments on a mortgage, how much car insurance or electricity costs, how important we think charitable contributions are.

Both love to play games, especially bridge, and are willing and eager to teach that game to others.

--*Hermann Weinlick*

## Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 @ FMC

**Present:** Joan Kreider, Moderator; Jenny Wandersee, Worship; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service ; Marian Heinrichs, Fellowship; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons.  
**Absent:** Education representative; Pastor-Parish representative.

**Affirmations.** Glenn affirms Michael Bischoff and the forum planners for the Immigration and Food forum. Joan asks whether a report could be sent to *Mennonite Weekly Review*? Joetta affirms the musicians who attended the music workshop. Joan affirms Deedee Stevens-Neal's worship leading during Lent. Joetta affirms the visuals that Joan and Kristen Green created for Lent.

**Treasurer's report.** Jerry says March was financially quiet. Took in \$4000 more than we spent. Joan notes that we appear to be \$2000 ahead of budget in income. Jerry points out that not really, we had five Sundays in March, we're actually exactly on track. Hermann is thankful that so far nobody in the congregation has apparently lost jobs or housing thus far. Glenn asks if the increase in ISAIAH's rent is due to extra space? Jerry says they paid extra in March to cover increase not collected in January and February.

### Commission reports.

**Trustees.** Glenn says volunteers will be doing painting in the building this coming Saturday. Next item up will be reconvening the interior decorating committee for decisions about narthex and sanctuary painting.

**Missions and Service.** Katie reports on the Immigration and Food Forum. About 90 attended, 20 of them from FMC. The Pan African Community Organization (PACO) fundraiser is coming up April 25<sup>th</sup>. They need more help with cooking and setup. Strawberry picking will be in June. Seward Community Garden is asking us to be their fiscal agent. Joetta says the land is owned by the city. We need more information before deciding. M&S is suggesting a "car sabbath," asking members of FMC not to drive to church 4 times per year. They note that this could impact attendance and offering. Joan asks whether carpooling might be an alternative. Gregg suggests that carpooling may result in a longer term change in behavior. Hermann asks whether we might post a metro area map with pins somewhere to illustrate where our members live? M&S is planning a community meal for

fall. The Seward Peace Garden is looking for help weeding this season. Also young Mennonites are organizing a presence as "Pink Mennos" at the conference in Columbus, Ohio this summer, to advocate for GLBT welcoming.

**Fellowship.** Marian says Fellowship has identified potluck dates, and coordinators. They didn't wait for volunteers, but assigned roles and left it to those assigned to change if they needed to. Working well so far.

**Worship.** Jenny says they are planning past Easter into summer. Joetta says that for summer, they've discussed forming three groups that meet as intergenerational "house churches" in the building. What does Council think? Gregg asks how they would accommodate visitors? Joetta says if they are visiting with a member, they could go with them. Joan says summer is a good time to try new ideas. Gregg says it will be important to stay on top of the convening and reconvening, to keep on schedule. Joan says it might be a good way for visitors to connect with someone.

**Education.** Joetta says parents met to discuss plans for some type of vacation bible school. No plan this year, but are now starting to plan for next summer. May 17 will be children's day. The May adult education will be reports from M&S, including Families Moving Forward, Seward-Longfellow Restorative Justice program, and updates from Michael Bischoff..

**Deacons.** Hermann says Deacons discussed supporting single people, or those who otherwise attend alone. Also planning women's retreat, and planned soup and silence during Lent. They also met with the ushers and deacon greeters to clarify responsibilities. Joetta says they also discussed "discernment groups" for those making life decisions.

**Pastor.** Joetta checked on attendance: 77 for the first 15 Sundays of 2007 and 2008, but attendance during this year has been 89. Some people from Woodland Hills Church have been visiting, and members are engaging with visitors. Joetta met with the 20-30 age childless members to build connections. Also met with the leaders of a new church in St. Paul that considers itself Mennonite, and is staying in touch with Mark Van Steenwyk. Glenn asks whether these emergent churches are happening elsewhere? Joetta says yes, and Mark is known throughout the US due to his web presence. Jerry asks what role do we play? Joetta says we offer stability, and a grounded theology, and come from 500 years of history. Emergents are young, coming mostly from the evangelical tradition. We can benefit from one another. Jerry asks whether we can be more proactive in contacting them? Joan says Joetta is already being pretty proactive.

### Old business.

**Touchstone Mental Health.** This is a proposed assisted housing facility close to the Hiawatha Line, for mentally ill residents. They've asked us to write a letter of support (Joan reads a draft letter). Gregg says he attended their presentation at Community of St Martin, and they're developing and presenting this project to the community very well. Joan will sign the letter on behalf of FMC.

**Conference delegates.** Joan Kreider, Scott Neal and Katie Hochstetler will go to Central Plains Conference. Katie encourages supporting the "Pink Mennos." Rhonda Martinson and Leslie Minkler will go to the national conference in Columbus. Joetta follows up on the open letter from pastors on welcoming GLBT persons. She has drafted her own, which Council affirms, and she will send to all CPMC pastors and then post on the Open Letter website. Katie says other letters are being posted on the website at [openlettertomcusa.org](http://openlettertomcusa.org), and anybody is welcome to sign the letter there.

### New business.

**Guidelines for building use.** Joan hands out a proposal for drafting guidelines from the Trustees, Joan and Michael Bischoff. Questions: Do we allow free use for those who can't pay? Hermann asks whether we should include guidelines regarding children, pets, alcohol, kitchen use, nursery use, etc.? Marian asks whether the suggestion of a "free will offering" really is a free will offering? We should standardize it in some way. Develop criteria for paying or not paying? Gregg suggests leaving room for discretion in individual cases. Trustees will develop guidelines and bring back to Council.

**Mennonite Mutual Aid \$2000 matching funds.** How do we decide how to use these funds? Joetta says they could be used for internal needs like a medical emergency, or to a community organization. Suggests splitting between Deacons and M&S. Gregg suggests asking the commissions to offer proposals. Joan suggests half to Deacons, and the other half to distribute among the commissions. Joetta suggests that Families Moving Forward is currently in dire straits. M&S may increase its contribution to them, with a match from MMA.

--Gregg Richardson

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

### Ten Years of Resistance to War – Lake Street/ Marshall Avenue Bridge Peace Vigil

On Wednesday, June 17, a special Vigil, Potluck, and Speakout will be held to remember ten years of consistent public witness against sanctions, war and occupation and to share "bridge stories." Members of Faith Mennonite Church were among the co-founders of this weekly vigil in spring 1999, when in response to the US bombing of Yugoslavia, a group of peace activists started a weekly vigil on the Lake Street Bridge. The vigil continues to this day and has been an inspiration to many others who started similar vigils around the state and nation.

Over the years the vigil has focused primarily on opposing US policy in Iraq, but participants have raised their voice about related issues: threats of war against Iran, North Korea and Syria, torture, attacks on civil liberties, opposing the war on Afghanistan, and US support for the occupation of Palestine. The underlying message is always *fund human services, not war*.

The schedule for June 17 is:

5:00 p.m. Vigil on the bridge

6:30 p.m. Potluck at St. Albert the Great Church, 2836 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave S.

7:00 p.m. Music by Bret Hesla and Linda Breitag

Story-telling and sharing of memories

-Marie Braun, *Twin Cities Peace Campaign-Focus on Iraq* (612-522-1861)

**Deadline for July newsletter items is noon, Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup>.**

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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.