

Faith Connection

June 2012

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...

Last Sunday, May 27, we celebrated Pentecost. I don't recall celebrating this church holiday as I was growing up. I'm sure I heard the story in Sunday school and perhaps in a sermon or two, but it was something we talked about mostly in the past tense and with a fair bit of hesitation. The main association I had with the Pentecost story was people speaking other languages—"speaking in tongues." The adult conversations I overheard were mostly disagreements about whether or not speaking in tongues should be a current indicator of whether or not the Holy Spirit is present in one's life. It seemed that Pentecost was best avoided if one wanted to keep the peace and be respectable.

In recent years I have come to love Pentecost. Maybe it's because I often feel an affinity for the underdog and the misunderstood, including neglected spiritual celebrations. Maybe it's because I like to play with fire and I like vibrant yellow/red/orange colors. Mostly, however, it's that I've come to see the story as so much more than a literal interpretation of "speaking in tongues."

Pentecost was about *empowerment*: the transformation of a fearful band of Jesus' followers into a fearless movement that continued the message and work of Jesus, following his death and resurrection. This story unfolds in the book of The Acts of the Apostles, sometimes referred to as The Acts of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost established *equitable sharing*, manifested first in the tongues of fire that rested on *every* person and then by the community of shared goods that the first Christians practiced (Acts 2:44-45). Pentecost affirmed *multicultural diversity*. The multiple languages of everyone present were equally important; each heard their own language being spoken.

All three aspects of Pentecost are things I affirm and celebrate. They also pose their own challenges, almost as much as speaking in tongues! The leading question in

the Pentecost story of Acts 2 is "What does this mean?" What does empowerment mean today in a post-modern, post-Christendom context? How do we boldly speak about and live out "God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:11)? What does equitable sharing mean in a capitalist economy where each individual is responsible for his/her own private retirement savings, and health insurance is a benefit of employment? What does it mean to value and affirm diversity? What are we missing by not having a greater presence of persons from various cultural and racial backgrounds in our congregation?

I would guess that the Pentecost experience took everyone by surprise—the small band of Jesus' followers and the "devout Jews from every nation" who were in Jerusalem. No one was expecting the events as they unfolded. Nonetheless, they were prepared because they shared a common desire and quest for God. The disciples were "constantly devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14) and the "devout Jews" were, by definition, persons who were dedicated to religious practices. We open the door to the gifts of Pentecost—empowerment, equity, and diversity—as we consciously create a culture of spiritual attentiveness in our daily routines. Attentiveness grows as we acknowledge and give thanks for examples of these gifts that we observe or experience in our neighborhoods and in our workplaces. Gratitude and expectancy create possibility. Who knows what Holy Spirit may blow our way!

--Joetta Schlabach

What's happening at FMC...

Seek Peace and Pursue It

Biblical stories of peace will be the focus of our worship this summer. We often alter our worship format a bit in the summer since we have a more flexible schedule and we want to involve our children in meaningful ways during the months when we do not have Sunday school.

This summer we will experiment in two ways. First we will try to incorporate additional voices during the time usually allotted to the sermon by inviting one or two people to reflect on the story from their personal experience following the formal scripture presentation. Second, we will provide an activity for children during the sermon-portion of the service, which will help them engage the story in an age-appropriate way. These activities will sometimes result in a response that the children will bring back to worship. The worship commission will be inviting the participation of many persons and would appreciate hearing from you if you'd like to volunteer. We also welcome your feedback at any time.

--Worship Commission

Comings & Goings

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently visited or begun attending worship:

- **Christine McLain**
- **David Ott**

We wish safe travels to **Aryn Baxter** and **Aine McCarthy**, who will each spend time doing research in Africa this summer. Aryn will be back briefly in July before locating in Arkansas for additional dissertation research during the fall semester.

With deep affection, we bid farewell to **Erin Geiser** who will close the sale of her home in mid-June and move to Colorado. Erin has been an integral part of our congregation since the early 1980s when she settled in the Twin Cities after graduating from Goshen College. She and Mike Schrock were married in the church building across the street and together they raised their sons, Atlee and Haven, in our congregation, while contributing to many aspects of congregational life. Erin served on various commissions—perhaps everyone except the trustees, but she took part in many church work/cleaning days, so she covered that front too! We bless Erin and wish her God's grace and guidance as she begins a new chapter in life. We will miss her immensely and be forever grateful for the many gifts, and the courage, she shared with us. Her contact information as of June 14 is:

1715 Pontiac St., Denver, CO 80220;
Cell: 612-202-9218;
Home: 303-355-2561;
Email: erindgeiser@gmail.com.

An update from Bob Mack: "You may recall that about two months or so ago I shared about the closing of New Harmony and the loss of a church home for a number of

people. Well, New Harmony lives! The folks to whom it was important decided to continue as a house church meeting in the historic Wesley building. Because it is important to a number of people who can use "outside" support, that's where Patricia and I have been most Sunday mornings and Thursday evenings since then.

On Sunday there are about five or six of the regular New Harmony folks plus a few of us who think of other congregations as our church home. Thursday evenings have three or four of the New Harmony folks plus six or seven of us with other church homes. So, my absence from Faith has nothing to do with Faith but more with trying to help New Harmony develop into a more self sufficient group. I'll be back!"

--Bob Mack



June
Birthday
Brunch

If you or a family member has a birthday in June, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on June 9th. (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.

Saturday,
June 9
9:30-11:00
a.m.

BMC Fundraiser: Concert and Meal

Mark your calendars to attend a BMC Fundraiser on Friday, June 8 starting at 6:00 pm at Faith Mennonite Church. Members of the Brethren Mennonite Council, Faith Mennonite and Lutheran Volunteer Corps communities will perform a variety of music. Chef Katie Hochstedler will prepare a delicious pulled pork dinner (and vegetarian option).

All are welcome to attend. A suggested minimum donation of \$20 is requested. RSVP to the BMC office at 612-343-2600 or bmc@bmcigbt.org. There is still room for performers if you are interested, let the BMC office know.

This is a great time of change and BMC needs your help. We have been getting more and more requests for

resources and help and have increased stress on our budget. Even if you cannot attend, please consider donating to BMC's work. Go to www.bmcigbt.org for more information on donating.

--Katie Hochstedler

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	March	April	YTD
Total Giving	\$11,349	\$11,723	\$45,407
Total Budgeted Income*	\$19,080	\$14,208	\$50,714
Budget Target	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$56,000
All Expenses	\$10,702	\$25,164**	\$58,715

*Includes rental and investment income

**April figure includes \$12,000 annual Conference support, usually not paid until late in the year

Spirituality Journal

The anniversary of my dad's death was April 15. It has been one whole year and my deepest grief didn't begin to emerge until around Christmas time. Grief is a weird animal. There seems to be no predicting how it will appear or when and no controlling it either. But as painful as it can be, it can also be a relief. For me it has been both of these things.

One thing I have realized is that sometimes grief can be complex—I find that I am often not only grieving my dad but something beyond him, a whole part of my life that is long over—my early childhood in which he figured prominently. And there is a kind of parallel process going on in which I am letting go of my early life as a child, loved and protected, and watching Micah, my own 5 year old having that time in his life right now. There can be a complicated mix of emotions: both appreciation and loss around parenthood, childhood, memories, protective love, and inevitable mortality.

One of the ways I find myself working through thoughts and feelings about my dad and all this other stuff arising, is through writing poetry. I have always done this off and on throughout my life but right now it is

something I feel more and more urgency to do. Oddly enough, I know my dad would applaud this.

One of the positive things my dad modeled was a curiosity about life. He dabbled in poetry himself, never very seriously but he wrote down a few lines from time to time. For a while he was into photography and would enter his photos in local contests. He was a lay preacher in our church and studied Spanish and math later in life. As I mentioned in an earlier essay he earned his pilot's license after he retired. His life's work was farming and selling insurance on the side. This did not deter him from trying new things or give him a one-dimensional identity he couldn't break out of.

Although my dad modeled all of this for me, I have still noticed my own tendency to box myself in. I wonder if others do it too. Life can be very busy and draining--just taking care of the family and going to work each day. It may seem crazy to think of branching out into some new dimension. I sometimes realize that I have been telling myself I just can't do something, when in fact the obstacle is of my own making. Writing was like that for me. Yet now that I am doing more of it, it is enhancing all the other parts of my life. I would love to share one of my poems about my dad:

Peonies

Memory is not only a road to peace
(to those lovely fresh peonies
you sent me through the mail)

but finds places to lodge, out of sight,
blossoming into tears
that drain away my childhood.

Small gestures remembered
find a way to comfort me.
Dad, I hope they comfort you.

--Ruth Johnston

Thank You...

Thank you for the essential part you played in making our [Bethel College Concert Choir] tour a success. From the wonderful meal with which you welcomed us, to the large and appreciative audience, to the generous offering, you more than earned our deepest gratitude. I hope you enjoyed our singing at least half as much as we enjoyed singing for you. If so, we all had a great time on 20 March! Please convey our sincere thanks to the congregation for all the kindnesses shown us.

--Sincerely, Dale R. Schrag, Director of Church Relations

Coming Out of Empire

“Coming Out of Empire,” a Rootworks workshop, co-hosted by Missio Dei, with Wes Howard-Brook & Sue Ferguson Johnson will be held Saturday, June 16, 8:30 am–9:00 pm, in the FMC fellowship hall. Wes will draw from his insights as a biblical scholar (recent book: *Come Out, My People!*). Sue will draw from her experience as a spiritual director. Join us as we grapple with the shape of Christian discipleship in our imperial context. \$35 suggested donation.

Register at: www.eventbrite.com/event/3606847177

--Mark Van Steenwyk

Save the Date!! Fall All-Church Retreat, October 5-7



Camp St. Croix, a YMCA camp in Hudson, WI, just 40 minutes from Faith Mennonite Church, has been selected as the site for a weekend, all-church retreat, October 5-7. The camp, located on the bank of the St. Croix River, offers renovated facilities, hiking trails, outdoor camp fire rings, and a food service that accommodates a wide range of dietary concerns.

The planning committee (Wendy Brunner, Adam Nafziger, Donna Stucky, and Joetta Schlabach) will be providing more information soon but invites everyone to put the date on your calendar and plan for a great weekend of community building and relaxation in nature.

What's happening here and there...

Wilderness Wind Seeks New Executive Director

After 13 years of able leadership, Kathy Landis has resigned from her position as Executive Director of Wilderness Wind, near Ely, Minnesota. Paula Northwood, one of the founding members of Wilderness Wind and a current board member, wrote about Kathy's contributions in the most recent Wilderness Wind newsletter, *Wind Word*: “Kathy embodies a deep passion for the earth and a grounded spirituality that has served to promote the vision of Wilderness Wind. She has the unique ability of providing gentle guidance while expecting hard work and dedication. She inspired many staff people to bring their best to the mission of the camp. Kathy's leadership brought the camp to a solid place and we appreciate the hard work and commitment and sacrifices she made to make it so.”

Former summer staff member Aubrey Helmuth Miller will serve as Interim Director for the 2012 season. Aubrey's spouse, Clinton, will work as Hospitality Coordinator. Meanwhile the board is beginning the search for a new Executive Director. They will accept applications during the summer with hopes of making an appointment of a new director in fall 2012. Inquiries about the position, including submission of resumes, can be addressed to Steve Mullet, Board President at boardpresident@wildernesswind.org.

Minnesotans United for All Families

Wednesday, June 20 dinner (6:00 pm) and training session (7-9:00 pm) at Bethany Lutheran Church (2511 E. Franklin Ave.) to empower us to defeat the Minnesota anti-marriage amendment. Part of the Minnesotans United for All Families campaign. If you'd like to attend, please RSVP to Bethany: 612-332-2397 or mail@bethanyinseward.org. See poster in foyer.

The deadline for July newsletter items is noon, Tuesday, June 26th.

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.