

Faith Connection

June 2015

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...

As we wrap up another year of Christian education and schools and colleges finish their academic year, teachers and students alike are glad for a rest and break from routine and deadlines. Yet educators are finding that one key factor in the educational achievement gap between wealthier and poorer communities in our country is the way in which children spend their summer. If children have access to an ample supply of books and stimulating camp experiences they continue to advance their learning—or at least they don't back-track. On the contrary, children in families with fewer resources, where parents must work full-time and depend on television rather than books and camps to occupy the children, often do lose some of the gains they made during the school year.

Learning something once, of course, doesn't mean we'll always remember it. And at times we find, through further study, that something we learned in the past isn't accurate or at least needs to be reinterpreted. I'm in one of those re-learning moments. Soon after the Worship Commission decided to make the parables of Jesus our summer worship theme, I saw an announcement that Amy Jill Levine, a Jewish professor of New Testament at Vanderbilt University, would be giving a lecture at St. Catherine University. Her talk would be about Jewish insights into Jesus' parables, based on her just-published book: *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*.

Joan Kreider and I went to hear the lecture. Dr. Levine is a deeply knowledgeable Old and New Testament scholar and an entertaining speaker. In her lecture, as in her book, she helps readers understand how Jesus' Jewish audience would have heard and understood his parables. Rather than "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning" that have been domesticated over time, or interpreted with an anti-Jewish slant, Levine shows how the parables amplify Jesus' concerns about justice, care

for the neighbor and the enemy, sharing with those in need, and extending mercy. One of her primary points about parables is that, if we *like* a parable or it makes us feel good, we're probably not understanding it! Parables should make us squirm.

Dr. Levine's book is correcting some of my erroneous understanding (some of which I've learned from Christian Bible commentaries) about things such as Jewish purity laws, and the role of Pharisees, priests, and Levites (Levine challenges the way they are portrayed in mostly negative terms in the Gospels). It's humbling to think back to some things I've said in past sermons, thinking I was on solid ground, but now realizing I'd reframe some comments. That is the beauty of being part of a community of learning and discernment. As we learn new things we make adjustments to some of our former thoughts and actions.

You will hear more from Dr. Levine's book this summer. And I look forward to hearing about what you're reading during your summer leisure.

--Joetta Schlabach

"Sometimes you gotta not look too hard—just let the dog find you."

-- Greg Brown, "Eugene"

Ministry staff report...

This is the time of year when we often have groups coming through town who request to use the geographically strategic location of our church as an overnight stopping-off point. This year, for the third time, an Ontario-based drama group, Theatre of the Beat, is sleeping in the church at two points on their westward "through the states" tour.

In a note they left behind two weeks ago, they wrote:

“Dear Faith Mennonite Church, Thank you so much once again for allowing us to sleep in your beautiful church. Your generosity and hospitality are so appreciated by our group, and we love that we have a ‘home base’ in Minneapolis. Hopefully one of these times we can meet you fine folks, and maybe even put on a play here! Much peace and many blessings to your church and all its members. Please enjoy a copy of our script/CD of a recent production for your library/interest. Love, Theatre of the Beat.”

Attached was a book for our library containing the script of a musical by Bryan Moyer Suderman, the musician who sang at our church last year.

Also staying overnight at the church in June will be a group of “Discovery” science students from Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg, VA.

In other news, Joetta and I met with a group that is exploring forming a Seward neighborhood network of congregations. This might develop into something similar to the Longfellow Faith Forum, which we are already members of. In addition, I’m hoping to pull together a group soon to review the youth Sunday School curriculum.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Summer Worship Explores Parables of Jesus

What do you get if you add a “Good Samaritan,” a mustard seed, a bit of yeast, a pearl of great price, a few talents, some vineyard workers, a rich fool, a great banquet, a barren fig tree, a sower, a persistent widow, and a lost son? Summer worship at Faith Mennonite Church *and* a great opportunity to revisit some short stories by Jesus that might just have something new to teach us!

The worship commission has decided to once again move to the basement for our summer worship, beginning on June 7. This setting allows for greater intimacy during weeks when our attendance fluctuates due to summer vacations. It offers flexibility for children (and others) to sit at tables to draw or work with clay or legos during the service. The acoustics are

great for singing. And on those hot sultry days it’s usually 5-10 degrees cooler than the sanctuary.

The worship commission receives many comments about people’s love of singing, the desire to sing various types of songs, and the wish of some to learn to read music. We plan to have an extended time of singing at the beginning of worship each Sunday and we will invite congregational input on songs to include – watch for a sign-up sheet!

--Worship Commission (Alisa Bardo-Martinson, John Hershey, Joan Kreider, Kristi Zabriskie, Joetta Schlabach)

January-April Financial Statement

Income	Year to Date
Offerings	\$ 40,328
Rent	12,122
Investments	2,552
Miscellaneous	0
Designated offering	1,439
Total Income	\$ 56,441
Expenses	
Church Council	\$100
Conference support	15,000*
Deacons	453
Education	3,342
FICA	563
Fellowship/Retreat	1,014
Missions and Service	3,625
Office	826
Pastor/Ministry Staff	25,224
Trustees/bldg expenses	17,697
Worship	397
Mortgage	2,262
Total Expenses	\$ 70,503
Income minus expenses	(-\$14,062)
YTD budgeted offerings	\$49,900
Actual offerings	\$40,328
Shortfall	(-\$9,572)

*Note: Because we entered 2015 with a substantial balance in the checking account, we were able to make our annual conference contributions at the beginning of this year. The "Conference support" line includes contributions to: Mennonite Church USA, Central Plains Mennonite Conference, Shalom Mennonite Church, Mennonite Mission Network, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Deacons Organize Opportunities for Connection

One Sunday in May the Deacon Commission invited persons who were present in worship to indicate interest in one or more possibilities for staying “connected to the vine” – deepening relationships with one another and with God. The four activities were as follows:

1) **Informal Sunday lunch groups** eating together in a nearby restaurant. This was launched on May 24 when 13 people tried out the cuisine at the recently opened Café Racer Restaurant on 25th Street and 30th Avenue S. Lots of conversation and an introduction to the chef/owner occurred. Beginning on June 7 there will be a sign-up sheet as people arrive each Sunday and individuals can indicate interest in eating together that day.

2) **Hosting a monthly Sunday meal in one’s home.** Five people signed up for this. Watch for more details.

3) **Participating in the Tuesday evening weekly meals at the Mennonite Worker Simone Weil House.** Several people expressed interest and will likely invite others to join them when the first time is agreed upon.

4) **4x4 Small Groups.** Some years ago we organized “4x4 Groups” here at Faith. These were small groups of 8-10 people who agreed to meet 4 times over 4 months to share faith stories and get better acquainted. Enough people have expressed interest to form at least two groups. We will invite further participation during the first half of June and hopefully get groups organized to meet during the summer.

As a response to these suggestions, Leah Otto offered to organize a monthly bike ride this summer. The next ride is scheduled for June 13, gathering and departing from FMC at 11 a.m. The deacons are happy to receive other ideas as well.

--Deacon Commission (Thaine Dirks, Glenn Geissinger, Kristin Green, Melissa Hochstetler, Ry Siggelkow)

Church Council Affirmations

Council would like to affirm and thank: Eric for his time of service as our custodian and we give him our best wishes for the future; John Hershey has spend time and energy improving the church's yard; Heather Reinert is working hard at keeping the kitchen clean and stocked; Andy Martinson cleaned the parent resource room; Dan Leisen has been providing the flowers at the front on the church.

--Marcia Siggelkow, Council Secretary



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 27th

(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.

June
Birthday
Brunch

Saturday,
June 27th
9:30-11
a.m.

Library News

In connection with the adult education class on end of life planning this winter, we have made some additions to our church library collection. Both books were part of the curriculum for the course that was prepared by Everence, the stewardship agency of the Mennonite Church, USA.

Necessary Conversations: Between Adult Children and their Aging Parents is written by Gerald and Marlene Kaufman who are family therapists. The Kaufman’s acknowledge that many of us don’t feel equipped to have conversations in our families about issues like finances, medical care and changes that can come with aging such as the decision to stop driving. *Necessary Conversations* provides a practical guide for beginning family discussions, as well as questions for self-reflection. Some members of our congregation have used the book with their families and found it helpful in getting family conversations started.

A different sort of resource is Allen Verhey’s book *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus*. Verhey is a professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School. The first two parts of the book provide a very interesting history of *Ars Moriendi* (the “art of dying”) books in the fifteenth century, and contrast this perspective with the 20th century “medicalization” of dying. The third part of the book makes suggestions for a modern Christian *Ars Moriendi*, guided by Scripture and the life of Jesus. Interspersed through the book are the author’s reflections on his own mortality as prompted by a serious illness. *The Christian Art of Dying* is well-researched and well-written and a

thoughtful source for contemplating the end of life and end-of-life practices from a Christian perspective.

These and other books on end of life issues can be found under the call letter “N-Families” or “NN- Grief, Loss and Transition” in the church library. To check out a book from our library, write your name and the date on the card in the back of the book and place the card (alphabetically by author’s last name) in the card file by the library door. If you have suggestions for the library collection, please talk with Cynthia Miller or leave a note in the Martin/Miller slot in the mailboxes at the back of the sanctuary.

--Cynthia Miller

Comings and Goings...

The Mennonite Fellowship in Kalamazoo, Michigan, recently contacted us and introduced us to a prisoner, **Paul Korn**, who has been serving a 25-year sentence for a drug-related offense in Lexington, Kentucky. After 19 years he will be released this November, on good behavior. He had hoped to settle in Kalamazoo, but his parole board is requiring him to return to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he was arrested and sentenced. We are beginning to correspond with Mr. Korn and will share his communications as a way to begin getting to know him and anticipating his arrival in the fall. Individuals who would like to write to him may contact the church office.

Tim and Susan (Gotwals) Lehman, who reside in Ely, visited in mid-May. Tim was an FMC pastor in the early 1990s and then went on to pastor several congregations in Ohio, specializing in interim ministry. Susan’s son Matthew and wife Brooke are members of Third Way Mennonite Church in St. Paul.

John and Denay Murray visited in early May and will be moving to Minneapolis in early June. Denay will begin the Physician Assistant program at St. Catherine University this fall and John is employed by Mennonite Mission Network to do volunteer recruitment.

Troy Osborne was an active member at FMC between 2000 and 2009, when he and his family moved to Bluffton, Ohio. Several years later they moved to Waterloo, Ontario, where Troy is a professor at Conrad Grebel College. Troy is formally transferring his membership on June 7, 2015 to Waterloo North Mennonite Church. He and his wife Emma have two daughters, the oldest of which was dedicated here at Faith in 2006. Troy sends warm greetings to the congregation.

Thank You From Mennomedia

On April 14-16, FMC, with the assistance of the Fellowship Commission, hosted a meeting of the editorial committee of the *Leader* magazine. We recently received a letter of thanks along with four new books for our church library. The letter read as follows:

Dear Joetta and staff:

We at MennoMedia want to offer you our most sincere thanks for all the ways that you welcomed our *Leader* editorial committee in April. From the snacks and beverages to the absolutely outstanding meal and warm hospitality—you all went above and beyond. We could not have asked for better hosts. The room where we met was just perfect! A highlight for all of us was the dessert and beverage reception with area Mennonites on Tuesday evening. You made all of us feel so welcome, and we are grateful to now consider you all friends in Christ.

As a token of our appreciation I have enclosed several of our newest titles to add to your church library:

- *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Lamentations/Song of Songs*
- *Reconcile*
- *Christian, Muslim, Friend*
- *Sensing Peace* (a children’s book)

--Sincerely, Amy Gingerich, Print Media Director

FMC Participant Feature: Dan Leisen

Dan Leisen, one of four children, grew up in Roseville, Minnesota. His mother taught school and his father was a chiropractor. The suburban environment of his upbringing left him “somewhat naïve of world issues.” His family was Catholic, and at the large, nearby church he served as an altar boy assisting at Latin Masses. At fifteen he began working full time as a maintenance worker and janitor for his church and its twenty-four—class-school building when he was not in school and 20 hours a week during the school year. Income from this covered half of his high school tuition at Cretin High, a military academy in St. Paul, and covered all of his costs when he attended the Minneapolis College of Art & Design.

In his mid-20s Dan joined a young adult group at a Baptist Church and for a while attended both Catholic and Baptist services before deciding that he had a “more personal connection” to the Baptists. When his first wife became the minister for women in an inner-city

Chicago Church, he accompanied her there and “saw some of the rougher edges of life but also saw people who really cared for each other and the gospel message of salvation and ministry.”

A year and a half later, in 1980, Dan moved to Philadelphia where he became the Art Director for a “civil rights, social justice magazine called *The Other Side*.” That experience introduced him to a wide array of movements, including those against war, nuclear weapons, and racial and economic injustices and those favoring the advancement of rights for women and gays. During the last two of the eight years he spent in that city, he also did illustration and design for the Quaker *Friends Journal*. While in Philadelphia, Dan and his family’s faith community was a small house-church intentional community “dedicated to social justice and simple living.” He also became a member of Germantown Mennonite Church. Dan’s two children Rebekah and Jonathan were born in Philadelphia.

When Dan and his wife divorced and she moved to Minnesota in 1987 with their children, Dan knew he needed to move there too. By then he had met and “grown to love Andi Kuenning . . . and she had to decide if she and her daughter Elena would follow me to Minnesota.” To his great joy she joined him. They established their new “three-child home” in a location where his two children lived only three blocks from their mother’s home. Eventually he and Andi “adopted a son, Vicente, from Ecuador.”

Since leaving his work for the magazines, Dan has done freelance and contract graphic design for several major companies, and he offers his “graphics assistance voluntarily to a few non-profits including Ten Thousand Villages.” Presently he is pursuing his passion photographing “the woods and waterways of our beautiful world.” In his experiences at Faith Mennonite Church he finds that his participation in small groups that met weekly, “to share their lives, joys and challenges,” the most meaningful experience of his church membership.” Overall, he notes: “What’s been important to me in life and faith has been to keep an open mind and to understand the need to always strive towards love.”

This is a lesson he learned from his mother. Now he sees that this is the message that also calls to him through the gospels.

-Shirley Leckie Reed

What's happening here and there...

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting – June 18-21

Delegates from across Central Plains Conference will gather at Woodland Hills Church for the 2015 Annual Meeting. Greg Boyd, pastor of Woodland Hills church and noted writer and speaker, will speak in three worship services which are open to the public: Friday, June 19, 8:30-9:30 a.m.; Saturday, June 20, 8:30-9:30 a.m., and **Sunday, June 21, 9 a.m. in a joint worship service with Woodland Hills Church. We will not have worship at Faith that morning and encourage people to attend this worship gathering at 1740 Van Dyke St, St. Paul.** Thaine Dirks, Sophia Kouay, Jim Kuebelbeck, Donna Minter, and Joetta Schlabach are the FMC delegates.

The theme of the conference is “Joyfully Following Jesus: Communities Centered in Christ.” Four persons from Faith will present workshops: Donna Minter will introduce the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience trainings; Dick Westby will present about our Sustainability Fair; Kristi Zabriskie is facilitating a workshop on Human/Sexual Trafficking; and Joetta Schlabach will co-facilitate a workshop about the Ecuador Partnership and an upcoming Learning and Fellowship Tour. Glenn Geissinger is a member of the local host committee and Susan Weinlick and Joetta Schlabach have been assisting the planning committee in planning for compostable table service at the meals.

Members of the local host committee will be at FMC on May 31 to explain ways for local involvement and invite volunteer participation.

Shalom Church, Eau Claire

Faith, along with Emmanuel Church, Minneapolis, and congregations in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and Freeman, South Dakota, are covenant partners with Shalom Mennonite Church, providing support and finances for this new church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. I represent Faith when the covenant partner congregations meet quarterly in Eau Claire for an update. Here are portions of the latest report of their pastor, Adam Nussbaum.

“In September I will complete my three-year contract with Shalom Mennonite Church. This naturally has started me thinking about the ways the church has developed, and also to address the areas where we would still like to develop and grow. I am looking

forward to this process, because it will offer a space for our congregants to think about these questions. More and more I am thinking about this process as a way for our congregation to evaluate itself.

“We continue to meet on Sunday mornings, switching between traditional (preaching) services and prayer services. One way I see that our small community has developed is in our prayer services. They seem to get richer and richer, especially in our times of discussing scripture together. Regardless of the number of people who attend, I consistently sense the Holy Spirit in these gatherings. From a personal perspective, these worship services allow me, as the pastor, to sit side by side with our members and receive their insights instead of standing behind the pulpit. It’s one of the aspects of this church’s worshiping that I appreciate most.”

--*Hermann Weinlick*

Get Your Finances Organized!

Do you ever struggle trying to manage all the passwords that you are supposed to remember, but not write down? It can be quite the struggle! It is easy to break that ‘do not write your passwords’ rule, isn’t it? Fortunately, there are now programs like Password Safe and others that help manage that for you.

Now, imagine all the personal and financial information that we manage on a regular basis, such as: financial accounts, investments, creditors, financial, legal and tax representatives, family members, and end of life planning information. It is lots of information that is probably located in numerous places in our home.

Just like it is valuable to have programs like Password Safe to manage our passwords, we also need a tool that can help us manage all or personal, financial and end of life information. Everence has just the tool to help people get organized – it is the Personal financial affairs directory (PFAD). This 20 page booklet is a PDF fillable document that you can complete on your computer.

This tool will help you get organized. And as a result, simplify the management of your key personal, financial and end-of-life information in one nice handy place. To access and download go to www.everence.com and type in “personal financial affairs” directory in the “search” field box. An example is posted on the bulletin board at the back of the sanctuary.

--*Thaine Dirks, FMC Everence Advocate*

Rivolose

You think the ridge hills flowing, breaking
with ups and downs will, though,
building constancy into the black foreground

for each sunset, hold on to you, if dreams
wander, give reality recurrence enough to keep
an image clear, but then you realize, time

going on, that time's residual like the last
ice age's cool still in the rocks, averaged
maybe with the cool of the age before, that

not only are you not being held onto but where
else could time do so well without you,
what is your time where so much time is saved?

--*A. R. Ammons*

The deadline for July newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, June 24th.

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.