

Faith Connection

March 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...

We are living in interesting, some days breath-taking times. The world has watched as protests in Tunisia and Egypt brought down decades-long dictatorships. The spirit of self-determination and the possibility of change is spreading across the Middle East. All of a sudden the fears of “militant, terrorist Arabs and Muslims” are being pushed aside by the images of disciplined, non-violent action. Not all of the protests have been violence free, to be sure, but the power of individuals, joined collectively, is bearing more fruit with only minimal loss of lives and resources, in comparison to the military option our country and so many other nations seems to believe is the only way to maintain peace and bring change in the world.

These events remind me of the words in John 3:8, “the Spirit blows wherever it pleases.” While we believe that God has called the church to live a new reality in the world, we also acknowledge that the reconciling work of God in the world is not bounded by the church. The work of the Spirit in places that are majority Muslim, such as Egypt, calls us to humility and to acknowledge that which we share in common with people of other faiths. We can also give thanks for the minority Christian community that has existed in Egypt since early Christianity.

Several things have stood out for me as I've listened to news reports and commentary about the demonstrations in the Middle East. One is the fact that the uprisings have been led by a new generation. Their parents have thanked them for doing something that the parents, in their generation, did not do. Generational change is sometimes difficult. As a church, we need to be open to new winds of the Spirit and new ways of doing things, and to have the humility to thank those who are messengers of the new.

Another thing that has struck me is the fearless resolve of those who protest. This week, when protests turned

bloody in Bahrain, I heard that families with children continued to turn out for the demonstrations. This reminds me of some of our Anabaptist martyrs, especially women, who refused to recant even when they were leaving small children behind. I do not confess to have this resolve. I realize that I sometimes shrink back and move to safety around matters where the stakes aren't nearly as high.

Finally, I've been moved by the goodness of humanity exhibited in so many ways. We often talk about human nature as something flawed at its core—and certainly the dictators provide convincing examples of this. Yet, when I watched the massive effort of demonstrators cleaning Tahrir Square after the struggle was over, and I read Madeline Kreider Carlson's account of helpful taxi drivers and folks on the street in Cairo, I couldn't help give thanks that there is much of God in our humanity. We truly are made in the image of God.

We will soon enter the liturgical season of Lent. The theme for our worship in Lent will be “Becoming Human: Called and Shaped by Jesus.” We have many images from all around the world to guide our meditation of what it means to be human and to follow God who became human in Jesus.

--Joetta Schlabach

Outreach ministry update...

Missio Dei Fundraiser A Success!

The young, laid-back, highly effective disciples of Missio Dei showed us this past Saturday that they know how to put on a fundraiser! More than 70 people—most of them core supporters of Missio Dei through their online community, families, and friends—turned up for this first-ever benefit dinner on behalf of Missio Dei. There was also a good turnout from Faith Mennonite.

The fellowship hall in the basement has never looked lovelier. Tables were draped with cloths in various

designs and shades of blue. There were candles and a centerpiece of pine needles and pine cones on each table. Guests were welcomed at the bottom of the stairs with a smile and a raffle ticket. Coats were checked in the library. A table display showing photos and describing Missio Dei's mission was set up near the entrance to the fellowship hall, inviting browsing.

We were treated to a feast: green salads with dried cranberries and balsamic vinaigrette and sliced baguettes followed by pasta with a couple of sauce options and steamed French green beans. For dessert, guests could choose between a flourless chocolate torte and a dried-apple torte. Both were rich, creamy, and delicious. Music—including some traditional Irish tunes—was provided by various members of the Missio Dei community.

Raffle items included some recycled “bike buckets” and a bicycle tune-up, a hand-painted wooden rain barrel, photography services and knit scarves, all of them provided by different members of the community.

According to Mark Van Steenwyk, Missio Dei netted \$1479 in funds for the evening. Special thanks go to Clea Gingrich, Katie Hochstetler, Andi Kuenning, Dan Leisen, Pat Eliason, Jenny Wandersee and Cindy Bjork for volunteering with setup, kitchen support, cleanup and childcare. This event was an important step forward in solidifying the partnership between our two faith communities!

--Kathleen Remund

What's happening at FMC...

Lent 2009

The season of Lent begins on March 9, Ash Wednesday. Lent is the 40-day season of confession as the church reflects upon the significance of Jesus' journey to the cross. This year our worship theme will be “Becoming Human: Called and Shaped by Jesus.” The gospel texts for this year come primarily from the Gospel of John and call us to reflect on the questions: What does it mean for us to be the created and recreated images of God? How may we become *authentically* human? We are grateful to Clea Roth Gingerich, Kristin Green, Gregg Richardson, and Andrew Smale who are serving on the Lent worship planning group.

Many people choose a special personal discipline during Lent in order to deepen their journey with Jesus. This can take the form of giving something up or making a commitment to something new. Faith Mennonite

Church will offer the following things we can do together as a community to enter more fully into the spirit of Lent.

Ash Wednesday Taizé Service, 7 p.m., March 9. We will gather in a candle-lit sanctuary to hear scripture, observe silence, sing, receive ashes, and pray around the cross.

Gathering around the Word with the St. Francis Cabrini Catholic Community, 7 p.m., March 29 and April 12. Rather than a weekly mid-week event, as we've had some years, we will join our neighbors at Cabrini Catholic Church (1500 Franklin Avenue SE) for two evenings of fellowship, scripture reflection, and prayer. Cabrini will host the gathering on March 29 and FMC will host on April 12.

Maundy Thursday Meal with Communion and Footwashing, 6 p.m., April 21. We share a simple soup meal around tables in the Fellowship Hall and enter the mystery of Jesus' passion as we take part in the rites of foot washing and communion.

In addition to these events, many opportunities for Lenten reflection are offered in the wider religious community. Several additional events are listed in the “What's happening here and there” section of this newsletter.

Annual Meeting Summary, February 13

The Annual Congregational Meeting was held on February 13. Following are several pieces of information that were shared and actions taken.

Budget & funding plan for sanctuary paint project. The Proposed Church Budget for 2011 was approved. Included in that budget was a \$25,000 line item for Trustees Maintenance & Supplies. This represents an increase of \$20,000 from last year's budget. This additional money is intended to cover fire alarm and suppression system upgrades and to cover the costs associated with the water infiltration problems on the east sanctuary wall, east library wall, and the foyer wall below the bell tower as a result of this winter's heavy snowfall.

In addition, Glenn Geissinger presented a plan from the Trustees Commission for repainting the sanctuary. The estimated cost of this project is \$36,000 and is a separate project not included in our annual budget spending. As such, funding for this project will be

raised through special donations. The goal is to raise this money by June so the painting can occur during the summer months. To date, \$14,000 has been received.

Sunday morning schedule change.

The proposal brought by the Christian Education Commission to begin Sunday morning events at 9:30 a.m., in order to allow a full hour for Christian Education, received sufficient support to make the change on a trial basis for the remaining months in the current Christian Education season (through May 22), beginning on March 6. The change will be evaluated thereafter.

Family, Singleness and Marriage Series, February 20-April 3.

Beginning on February 20, the Marriage Guidelines task force will facilitate a series of sermons and discussions during the education hour on our understanding of how the Gospel calls us to live as families, single persons, and in covenanted relationships. The impetus for this study is to clarify our congregational practice around the blessing of marriage/covenanted partnerships. The task force charged with developing a process for this discussion wanted to make the discussion as broadly encompassing as possible and to place our conversations in dialog with the statement on Family, Singleness and Marriage, Article 19 in The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. The current conversations are intended to build on the past decisions of the congregation and to continue discerning how we honor this welcome and all persons who are seeking to live faithfully in response to the Gospel.

In parallel to this series, the congregation will be given opportunity to provide input to the creation of a set of Marriage Guidelines. These guidelines will be based on our vision for families and relationships, and enable us to clarify our position on marriage as it applies to the entire congregational community.

February 20 & 27: Family (coordinated by Ry Siggelkow)

March 6 & 13: Singleness (coordinated by Kathleen Harder and Joetta Schlabach)

March 20 & 27: Marriage/Covenanted Relationships (coordinated by Richard Westby)

April 3: Vision for Christian Family & Relationships

Report From Deacons Commission

The deacons met for their monthly meeting on February 16th. A membership Sunday was tentatively planned for

Easter, April 24th. Persons who have attended Faith Mennonite Church for some time and would like to explore membership are invited to speak with a deacon or the pastor.

The deacons discussed plans for following up the Christian Education series on Marriage, Family & Singleness with further opportunities for discussion once the guidelines are formulated. Several deacons have been asked about small groups, so it was decided that the deacons should put out a call to see how many people might be interested. The next meeting is scheduled for March 9th.

--Aryn Baxter, secretary for Deacon Commission

**Join in a concert to benefit
Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice
Partnership
Sunday, March 13, 2:00-4:00 pm,
Faith Mennonite Church**

Featuring bluegrass musician **Chris Jones** and others who will have you tapping your feet and singing along to folk songs, songs of peace, and meaningful stuff, with some pure silliness sprinkled in. Come enjoy a fun afternoon with family and neighbors to support an essential program in our neighborhood. Since 2004, Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership has provided an alternative to juvenile court for youth committing misdemeanor offenses in Seward and Greater Longfellow. Freewill donations will be gratefully accepted. Door prizes from local businesses.

Spirituality journal...

Recently I took a poetry writing class from The Loft Literary Center. One of the poems I wrote during this class had a line in it that came to me whole, seemingly dropped into my lap, and its message is both an inspiration and a challenge for me. The line from the poem is this: "Notice what calls out to you without your consent or understanding." It is not the kind of advice we often hear and yet there is something compelling about it.

When I think about how this kind of "noticing" has played out in my own life thus far, I am aware of the

Meet your fellow FMCers...

tension it often brings. I have been taught, as most of us have, to think things through, to be reasonable. We are a very head-oriented people and there is plenty that is good about that. But over the course of my life I have become increasingly aware that my thoughts often skim the surface of a deep well that lives between God and me. It takes a different kind of noticing and knowing to get in touch with the direction God is moving me and the gifts God is trying to give me or call out in me. Over this past year I have been working hard to let go of preconceived ideas about what I “should” or “should not” be doing, thinking, feeling, needing, and spending energy on. I have been trying to notice what is calling out to me, and conversely what is saying, “don’t go there!” even when I do not fully understand it. This has required me to stop needing everything reasoned out and it has also meant stepping out of my camp—the certainty that I (and my group) already know the right way to be and direction in which to move. It is risky, scary, exciting, freeing, and a growing experience.

For me this kind of holy “noticing” often starts in tiny and subversive ways. My current interest in poetry and gardening, both of which seem quite innocuous, has been the beginning of a complete re-ordering of my life right now. I do not know where I will end up or if this re-ordering was the whole point in the first place. For now, that is a mystery. One of the things the line from my poem speaks of to me is about the power and function of poetry itself. A poet pays deep attention and then expresses the fruit of that attention in words that speak to the heart as much as the head. Poet Kathleen Norris quotes her mentor, Betty Kray, as saying this, “[poets] are asked to fulfill the priestly role of descending into the depths and returning to speak of it.” Poetry, nature, silence, art, animals, music—all of these and more can help us get out of our reasoning mind and free us to “notice what calls out to us without our consent or understanding.”

--Ruth Johnston

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	November	December	January
Total expenses	\$12,300	\$14,774	\$11,698
Total income	\$24,096	\$36,918	\$13,872
Monthly budget	\$12,775	\$12,775	\$14,850

Barb Beers was born in Illinois, grew up in Iowa, and has spent most of her life in Minnesota. She earned two bachelor’s degrees from the University of Minnesota, a BA in Linguistics and Greek and a BS in Elementary Education. But she has not lived her whole life in the Midwest. She earned an MA in Applied Linguistics from USC in Los Angeles. She also worked in Mexico for a year and a half at a bilingual elementary school and in Australia for a year, with Wycliffe Bible Translators/ Summer Institute of Linguistics. As an ESL specialist, she’s had jobs related to teaching English in Texas and Los Angeles, as well as the Twin Cities. Currently she works at the U of Minn in a program for international graduate students who want to be TAs. If they don’t have a high enough score on an English-speaking test, they have to take classes from Barb’s department in English and U.S. teaching skills. So we can thank Barb and her coworkers for the improved quality of TAs.

Barb met her partner, Joan Wing, at a women’s triathlon in Wisconsin in 1989. They had friends who were friends, and back in the Cities they continued to see each other over the next several months. Barb says she was newly aware that she might want to date women and Joan was very friendly. On September 30, 1989, they decided they wanted to date each other and have been together ever since. September 30 is the date they celebrate their anniversary. Their son Anthony was born in May of 2000.

Barb has been attending FMC for around fifteen years, ever since she discovered the congregation when she came to a Sunday service at which Joan was singing with One Voice Mixed Chorus. At that time the choir practiced in our building. Ironically, Barb had earlier tried unsuccessfully to find a Mennonite church when she moved back to the Twin Cities in 1988. She was interested in Mennonites because she had heard they are rather conservative theologically but socially more radical. She says that “for some reason known only to God, I couldn’t find a congregation then.” She has been a part of Faith ever since that Sunday morning, despite uncertainty at first. She says, “There were always signs from God that I was supposed to be at FMC.”

Barb has had some interesting travels in addition to the Australian and Mexican sojourns. One trip was a month she and Joan spent in Costa Rica in the mid 1990’s studying Spanish. Now Anthony’s school is planning a

trip to Puerto Rico this June for the kids who are moving on to middle school. They are fundraising now for the trip, and if anyone would like to buy some greeting cards, Anthony is selling them.

--Arlene Holdeman

**Creating a
Culture of Peace:**
*Nonviolence training
for personal and
social change*



Facilitated by Phil Stoltzfus and Candace Lantt.

Date: March 18-20.

Place: Faith Mennonite Church.

Cost: \$100/person, with scholarships available

Registration: Registration form can be downloaded from the FMC website or picked up at church near the display in the back of the sanctuary.

Questions: Call Kathleen Remund at the office or email her at minstaff@faithmennonite.org.

Note of Thanks

Dear Friends, Thank you so much for your kind contribution to Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Interests (BMC). We realize that we live in challenging economic times with many demands, so we appreciate your support and participation in the work of BMC.

Big things are ahead for 2011! These include: Coordinated presence at denominational conferences, development of new workshops, including transgender education, Supportive Congregations Network pastors' theological retreat; educational outreach to Mennonite and Brethren retirement communities; LGBT support on Brethren and Mennonite college/university campuses. In addition, BMC will continue with our usual ecumenical, denominational and individual outreach that includes personal support and referral to those who are just coming out, congregational resourcing, denominational

conversations, coalition building, and participation in ecumenical activism and programming.

A community like BMC grows by being open to new ideas and energy. Please always feel free to contact me with ideas that you have to improve our work, or if you are looking for concrete ways to get involved. I would love to talk with you!

--With appreciation, Carol Wise, Executive Director
[A copy of the complete letter is posted on the Missions & Service bulletin board in the fellowship area at the back of the church.]



*March
Birthday
Brunch*

If you or a family member has a birthday in March, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on March 26. (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,
March 26
10:00-11:30
a.m.*

**Mennonite Church USA and Central Plains
Mennonite Conference News**

**A Conference on Christian Unity: That the World
May Know.**

This winter the ministry staff of CPMC have prepared a paper, "Becoming a United Church in a World of Division: A Biblical View of Christian Unity," and distributed it to churches in the conference. On March 12 there will be a gathering of congregational leaders from across the conference in Des Moines, Iowa, to continue the ongoing work of finding what it means for Christian churches to live in unity in a culture that seems bent on building walls rather than bridges. The purpose of the gathering is to "recover a biblical view of unity and to discern commitments we can hold in common as we seek to follow Jesus in many places within CPMC."

Everyone is invited to read the paper, which can be found at www.centralplains.mennonite.net. Please pray for this gathering and for those from FMC who will attend: Arlene Geissinger, Matthew Blackwell Kinney, Neil Okerlund, and Joetta Schlabach. (Several others are considering attending as the newsletter goes to print.)

Delegates Needed for CPMC Annual Meeting, June 16-19, Quad Cities, Iowa/Illinois.

The Hispanic Mennonite Churches of the Quad Cities will host the 2011 CPMC Annual Meeting. The featured speaker for the meeting will be Juanita Nunez, co-pastor of a Mennonite church in Ocoee, FL and member of the Mennonite Church USA executive board. Faith Mennonite may send three delegates to the annual meeting, in addition to the pastor. If you would like to serve as a delegate at the annual meeting, please speak with Matthew Blackwell Kinney or Joetta Schlabach.

Bridges to the Cross: Mennonite Church USA Convention, July 4-9, Pittsburgh.

Planners of the biannual assembly of Mennonite Church USA that will take place in Pittsburgh this summer are working to have the gathering reflect the multicultural diversity of the Mennonite church family and be a more welcoming and inclusive place for members from communities of color. Throughout the week, racial/ethnic constituents will serve as speakers and leaders of worship, music, and seminars, and there will be culturally diverse worship elements and special late-night activities. A full schedule of children's activities make the Assembly a family-friendly place. Faith Mennonite will have two official delegates (the pastor and one other person), but anyone is able to register and participate in the worship, workshops, service projects, and more that make up these gatherings. Katie Hochstedler is involved in planning for the Pink Menno witness that will take place during the convention. For details and to register:

www.mennoniteusa.org/convention.

What's happening here and there...

Abundance: See It And Share It, A Mini-Retreat For Women

Jane Leyden-Cavanaugh leads Saturday, March 19, 9 a.m.-noon. Using scripture, prayer, small group discussion and humor, participants will tackle the questions: What does abundance look like in your life? What keeps you dwelling on what you *don't* have and

stops you from seeing what you *do* have? Call Loyola Spirituality Center for details on location and cost: 651-641-0008, ext 11.

Soup & Sabbath Reflections for Lent

The Golden Rule in World Religions. Mondays of Lent, March 14-April 18. 6:30 – Simple soup; 7-8 p.m. – Prayer and reflection. Sabbath House, 3228 Portland Avenue South, Minneapolis. Call for reservations: 612-822-2623.

Open to the Light: Contemplative Prayer and Meditative Movement

David Rothstein, leads Mondays March 7, 14, 28 & April 4, 11 at Loyola Spirituality Center, 389 North Oxford Street, St. Paul, 6:45-8 p.m. This is an opportunity to deepen your prayer life, find relief from stress and anxiety, and receive healing for spiritual, physical or psychological issues. Centering prayer will be combined with gentle meditative movements derived from yoga and Qigong. \$75 for series. Register at www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org.

Prayer in the Style of Taizé,

Wednesday, March 23, 7-8 p.m., St. Frances Cabrini Church, 1500 Franklin Avenue SE, Minneapolis. (Jointly hosted with Prospect Park United Methodist Church)

Bread for the World Global Poverty Summit

Saturday, April 2, 2011, Christ Church International, 3015 13th Avenue S., Minneapolis, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Keynote presentation by BFW president David Beckmann, 2010 World Food Prize Recipient. Free-will offering & \$5 lunch (or bring your own). Books available for sale. To rsvp email breadmn@bread.org (Subject line: Global Poverty Summit Attendance) or call 612-871-9084. A detailed brochure is posted on the Missions & Service bulletin board at the back of the sanctuary.

The deadline for April newsletter items is noon, Tuesday, March 22nd.

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.