

# Faith Connection

March 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...

In lieu of this month's "musings," I'm sharing a copy of an article that Gerald just had published in *America* magazine, a national Catholic weekly magazine published by the Jesuits. He was one of four authors invited to share ideas for fresh, new Lent practices. Although this was written for a Catholic audience with examples of conflict in the Catholic church, I think FMC folks will be able to make the adaptation to scenarios that they encounter, if not in our pews, in their daily interactions on Facebook or at work or in the broader Mennonite Church.

--Joetta Schlabach

### Love the Enemy in Your Pew

We Christians have struggled for centuries to understand how Jesus really expects us to love our enemies. (Bracket those vicious enemies who may actually be out to violently destroy us and ours.) To be ready for that kind of discipleship we must first learn to love our sisters and brothers in the Christian community itself. They are the ones close enough to stick in our craw. So this Lent, listen to uncomfortable voices in your community.

Listen without arguing back, for as long as it takes to really hear. Listen deliberately. Listen for the back story behind positions you may never agree with. Debate later. Listening is the virtue this proposed Lenten discipline would inculcate if practiced throughout the year; it could become a lifelong habit. Especially in our era of culture wars, in which the blogosphere allows us to flame "enemies" we never meet face-to-face, nothing may affect us short of sitting down over coffee or on a park bench to listen face-to-face.

Listen particularly to someone who represents all you think might be wrong with the church. A Catholic neighbor, for example, who is so impassioned about some ways of defending life that he or she seems to

ignore other ways. Or an openly gay Catholic who continues to receive the Eucharist or an activist campaigning to make same-sex marriage unconstitutional. Listen to the fan of that dangerous neoconservative columnist George Weigel, or the fan of that idealistic peacenik Jesuit John Dear; the parish liturgist who still includes those awful guitar-Mass ditties in the new Roman Mass or the patriarch in the next pew who glares when someone changes "his" to "God's," for "the good of all God's holy Church."

Alas, Catholic culture makes it easy to leave Sunday Mass, week after week, without talking at all, much less inviting real conversation elsewhere in the week. But resolve to try conversation at least once, for Lent. Whoever your conversation partner is, ask to hear his or her back story. Resolve that while you may ask for clarification, you may not argue. Trust might begin to develop, though probably not in a first meeting. If the other person reciprocates and asks for your back story, wonderful. Share your own story, but do not argue your position even then.

What if this encounter starts to soften your position? Yes, there is that risk. But this is Lent. Our Lord risked all, abandoning any self-defense other than the vindication of his Father. The cycle of the church year intends to teach us this: resurrection is coming, but not without our dying to even the most righteous of causes, as we identify with the One who did so before us.

--Gerald Schlabach

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## Ministry Staff Update...

Faith Mennonite Church marked the beginning of Lent this past week with an Ash Wednesday Taizé service. About twenty-five of us sat in a circle in the

front of the darkened sanctuary, around a cross positioned on the floor and outlined with candles. It was a beautiful and moving expression of the traditional practices of repentance, fasting, and penitential reflection connected with the season.

Three folks from the Mission Dei community came by and joined the circle, just in time for the ritual of the ashes. This reminds us that Lent is not just a time for turning inward, but also an occasion to turn outward, as well, to connect with others who are not a part of our immediate community. And this year, there are a wealth of opportunities coming up for each of us at Faith to do just that.

On March 3 at 7 p.m. Faith will host, for the second year in a row, a benefit dinner for Mission Dei. As last year, Missio Dei will be taking care of all the preparations—our only task as FMC members will be to come and enjoy the evening! It will be an opportunity to make new connections, especially with many people in the Twin Cities who are a part of Missio Dei's larger (online, etc.) support community—new to the Mennonite world and yet open to learning more about contemporary Anabaptism. You can sign up for the dinner online at [www.missio-dei.com](http://www.missio-dei.com).

Two concerts will then be taking place in our newly painted sanctuary. Coming back to Faith this year will be the Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership benefit concert, at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 11, right after our noon church potluck. This will bring neighborhood folks and folk music fans to our building who are particularly interested in the restorative peace and justice witness of Faith and the Community of St. Martin. Then on Tuesday, March 20, at 7:30 p.m. will be a concert by the Concert Choir from Bethel College (Kansas). The choir came to the Twin Cities a few years ago and sang in St. Mary's Basilica, but this year they chose to come to us. Again, another event that will bring newcomers from around the region—this time those with Mennonite connections—to our church for good music and fellowship. Volunteers are needed to help host a meal for the choir before the concert.

And finally, there is the Neighborhood Sustainability Fair, this year's Missions and Service winter forum, on Saturday, March 17, 1-5:00 p.m. in the church basement. This will be a drop-in event, with stations set up around the church for bike repair (bring your bikes), recycling (bring your old electronics and hard-to-recycle plastics), gardening and landscaping ideas (bring seeds to exchange), a clothing swap area (bring used clothes to exchange), arts and crafts (bring dryer lint to make

firestarters), free food (the kitchen bus from Sisters' Camelot will be here), donut samples from the Donut Collective, activities for kids, and many exhibitors with action ideas for alternative transportation, green energy, environmental advocacy, and everyday sustainable living. We could use some more volunteers to staff stations or share sustainability ideas of your own—as well as just to come and be a part of the fun!

Who knows who will stop by for our fair and want to get to know us better? And what better way for us to live out the Lenten season than to connect with new people and continue to re-weave the fabric of our community, as we journey together with friends old and new through the present hard times, looking forward to hopeful times on the horizon.

--Phil Stoltzfus

### ***What's happening at FMC...***



Creating a Culture of Peace is a holistic approach to training that empowers participants in the spirituality and practice of active peacemaking in their daily lives. Facilitators Phil Stoltzfus and Janet Chisholm utilize a highly participatory, popular education approach that respects and builds upon the wisdom, knowledge and experience of all participants.

Facilitators vary the activities to include small group sharing, exercises and games, brainstorming, presentations, discussions, role plays, music, movement, meditation, and journaling. This training is the first step to living a life of peacemaking and organizing a like-minded community!

**Date:** April 13-15.

**Place:** Faith Mennonite Church.

**Cost:** \$100/person (some 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 Phil Stoltzfus at the FMC office or email [minstaff@faithmennonite.org](mailto:minstaff@faithmennonite.org). And check out the website: [www.creatingacultureofpeace.org](http://www.creatingacultureofpeace.org).

## Missio Dei Benefit Dinner

Please join us for Missio Dei's second annual benefit dinner, Mar 3, 2012, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. At Faith Mennonite Church. Proceeds from this dinner will help us with our goal of raising \$100,000 for a new hospitality house (more on that below). Please let us know if you are vegan or have other dietary concerns. Our menu includes Caribbean-inspired guava-glazed pulled pork on corn tortillas with a cabbage jicama slaw and chipotle mayonnaise.

To accommodate vegans and vegetarians, we'll provide Cuban style beans and lime rice as a substitute for the pork. The beans and rice will also be served as sides. Dessert includes both a tropical cheesecake or a vegan/gluten free sweet potato pie. We'll be serving home-made tamarind citrus ginger ale to drink.

Dinner will be accompanied by live music. Childcare will be provided, please let us know if you will be bringing children and their ages. \$15 suggested donation...you can pay online, but we'd prefer that you pay via cash or check at the door (there are less fees that way). All are welcome, regardless of donation. Please RSVP by February 27. If you have any questions, email: [info@missio-dei.com](mailto:info@missio-dei.com)

## About the Hospitality House Campaign

Of all our values, hospitality is most central to who we are as a community. Hospitality has taken many shapes throughout our history – from short term guests who have recently experience foreclosure to longer term guests who have had a history of homelessness and/or institutionalization. We have received many guests from many different walks of life – each with their own story.

Currently, Missio Dei only owns one community house – Clare House. Our reliance upon other housing has been unstable and unsustainable. In recent months, we have had to turn many away. Not only have guests needed lodging, but others have wanted to join our community to help with our work. But we are at capacity.

## Thank You...

As another year closes, we as a community would like to take the time to offer our heartfelt thanks for all of the support, thoughts, and prayers we have been so blessed to receive. This past year we are grateful to have been able to offer hospitality to many people who might otherwise have no place to go. Everyone's story is different, but many have expressed that they feel a sense of family in our homes. Several of our guests have chosen to become long-term residents of our

community. We are so blessed by the opportunity to serve in this way. As we fumble through the messy reality of offering a home to the stranger we are given the chance to question societal norms, but also the deeply held prejudices that are hidden in our own hearts.

Our community was also able to continue another season of the "Hospitality Train," which involves serving a vegan meal on the Dania hall lot on Cedar Avenue in Minneapolis. We greatly enjoy the opportunity to meet our neighbors and to become more deeply rooted on the West Bank. During a brief period of trouble obtaining permission to use the property we were overwhelmed by the support of our neighbors and the friends we have met over the years.

To all of those who have so generously supported us over the past year, we would like to express our sincere gratitude. We deeply appreciate the ongoing kindness of the family and friends who urge us on in this path to live out the love of Christ in the world.

*--with love and gratitude, Missio Dei*

*If you are interested in receiving Missio Dei's newsletter you can subscribe on the homepage of our website: [www.missio-dei.com](http://www.missio-dei.com)*



*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 17<sup>th</sup>. (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](mailto:jschlabach@faithmennonite.org).

*Saturday,  
March 17  
9:30-11:00  
a.m.*

**The deadline for April newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>.**

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.