

# Faith Connection

March 2013

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 in the heart of Lent, a season of reflection and contemplation on the suffering of Jesus and the meaning of his death. This is also the time of year when day light hours are lengthening and we find hope that the cold of winter will not last an eternity. Sometimes it's difficult to give ourselves fully to a season of spiritual introspection when we're so ready to leap forward into the next season. But late winter in Minnesota is a fine teacher, reminding us that growth comes in a rhythm of moving forward and then waiting, over and over. During the day as temperatures rise, snow melts, only to freeze again during the night, making walkways treacherous the next morning. We need to walk slowly, with careful, measured steps.

My reflections during this Lent are being framed by a course I decided to audit this semester in the St. Catherine University theology department. The course, "Creative Leadership in Challenging Times," examines issues in leadership and mentoring, including the larger social context in which these take place. A week ago we discussed several concepts and questions that churches (and any healthy organization) need to continually consider. These are also good questions for each of us as individual.

What time is it in your life? If life unfolds like seasons or chapters, when would you say that the current season/chapter that you are in began? How would you describe this season/chapter? What deserves your best time and energy in this season? When Jesus visited in the home of the sisters Martha and Mary, he reminded them that we become "worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one" (Luke 10:41-42). What one thing is most needful right now in your life?

Another set of questions revolves around our particular work in the world. Author Frederick Buechner has written that personal vocation is "the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need." This leads us to ask: What are the needs and questions in the world for which my life, my skills, my gifts, my passions are the answer.

As Jesus walked toward Jerusalem and the cross, he had a clear sense of timing and purpose. It is sometimes hard for us to understand how his place of "deep gladness" embraced the road of suffering. But perhaps as we find and grow more deeply into the "one thing that is needed" this becomes clear, as it did to the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian church: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1:25).

--Joetta Schlabach

### *Holy Week and Easter Activities at FMC*

*Thursday, March 28  
Maundy Thursday Meal,  
Communion & Footwashing*

*6 - 8 p.m.*

*(Childcare provided)*

*Sunday, March 31  
Easter Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.*

*Worship, 9:45 a.m.  
(note later time)*

## Ministry Staff Report...

Over fifty people came to the Wednesday community meal on Feb. 27—so many that we used up all the food, as well as the leftovers from last week! That was appropriate, too, because afterwards we packed into the chapel to watch the film “Dive!” about the economics of dumpster diving and wasted food in the US.

It was also heartening to see a good number of new people. I was delighted to meet a person from the neighborhood whom I had known from several years ago when he lived in Northfield, and we had worked together on some underground cabaret performances focusing on social justice issues.

I was reflecting this week on how one goes about creating something new. One approach is to start from base, building relationships through one-to-one conversations. This reminds me of the experience I had a week ago on the East Coast for, among other things, the National Council meeting of Fellowship of Reconciliation, USA. FOR is the largest and oldest peace organization in the US, a traditional home for people of faith working on peace and justice issues from a pacifist perspective, as well as for conscientious objectors from a variety of backgrounds.

Traditionally, FOR has attempted to build nationwide programs and campaigns from its national office. But recently FOR has begun retooling the staff for a more grassroots focus. The current plan is to locate six regional organizers around the country to help support and build local groups and religious peace fellowships. One of those will be in the Twin Cities. This means that some of FOR’s international programs, such as the Colombia accompaniment program and delegations to Iran, will likely be scaled back.

So we might say that FOR is returning to its “base.” In Latin America, there was a similar movement beginning in the 1960s—the “base community” movement. Faith Mennonite Church is a kind of base community. But we’re also made up of smaller bases—like deacons groups, Christian Ed. groups, Wednesday community meal groups, and so on.

How are you building your base? Or your bases? With one conversation, one relationship, at a time? Developing and nurturing our base helps us come out of our shell and become conscious about habits and structures in our world that need to be transformed.

--Phil Stoltzfus

## What's happening at FMC...

### Church Membership Exploration

Anyone who has been attending worship or other FMC activities and would like to learn more about the congregation and Anabaptist/Mennonite belief/practice is invited to a three-session series. We will use this time to get better acquainted and learn about

- our various personal faith and church experiences
- the history of FMC and our connection to Mennonite Church USA, and
- the beliefs/practices of Anabaptist/Mennonite churches.

At the conclusion individuals may choose whether they would like to make a commitment of membership. Each session will be offered in two formats, on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, according to the following schedule. Persons may switch between formats to accommodate schedules, if needed. The second two sessions are:

#### Session 2:

Sunday, March 24, 11-noon (education hour)

Wednesday, April 3, 6:45-8p.m.

(after community meal)

#### Session 3:

Sunday, April 7, 11-noon (education hour)

Wednesday, April 17, 6:45-8 p.m.

(after community meal)

Current members interested in getting better acquainted with more recent comers and sharing from their experiences are welcome to participate.

--Joetta Schlabach and the Deacons

### New Office Volunteer

Beginning in February, Phil Fuller has become our weekly office volunteer. He is helping to fold the bulletin, distribute items to mailboxes, and update the bulletin board and periodical shelves. Thank you, Phil!

### Online Meal Signup

Our online tool for arranging periodic meals for church members is going well. Pierre & Lori Gingerich-Boberg and Kristin Borntreger & David Ries appreciate this opportunity for regular connection with FMC friends even if they can't always make it to church. We include the web links

in the midweek email update if volunteers are needed for the next several weeks into the future. The schedule is arranged into weekly or bi-weekly slots, depending upon need. After signing up for a slot, individuals contact the families to arrange a day/time within that timeframe to deliver the food. You can find our signup pages on [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com) by clicking on the “Find a Signup” tab and entering the email address [faithmc@faithmennonite.org](mailto:faithmc@faithmennonite.org).

--The Deacons



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 23. (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).

March  
Birthday  
Brunch

Saturday,  
March 23

9:30-11  
a.m.

## Neighborhood Sustainability Fair

What do you do to live sustainably? Do you know how to make something rather than buy it? Recycle something rather than trash it? Fix something to make it last longer? Design something in a greener way?

A team of us have started meeting to plan this year's neighborhood sustainability fair, which we've put on the calendar for Saturday afternoon, April 13, at FMC. Yes, we could try to get a keynote speaker, or have lots of organizations come and set up fancy literature tables. But we're thinking of approaching our fair a bit differently. How could we make it interactive, bringing together the resources, expertise, and creativity of our own communities in order to explore sustainability?

This is where you could come in! Can you fix bicycles (and do you have one to bring to fix)? Do you know how to recycle electronic equipment (or do you have some to bring to recycle)? Do you know how to design a garden? Or make a rain barrel? Or a composting bin? Or do native landscaping? Or grow chickens? What about solar ovens? Wind power? Alternative forms of transportation? Do you know how to design an art or craft project, or make a particular kind of food that supports sustainable ways of being? What can kids do to live sustainably?

Well, you get the idea! How many different “interactive drop-in stations” do you think we could muster for our fairgoers to try out? Could you volunteer to organize or lead one of the stations? The FMC members on the sustainability team are Laurie Kaufman, Susan Weinlick, Phil Stoltzfus, and Dick Westby. Contact one of us with your fairly green ideas!

--Phil Stoltzfus

## Why I am Sending an Extra Donation to The Mennonite Magazine

This week we received the usual pile of requests for contributions from various organizations we like to support and a bunch we've barely heard of. Among them was a request from *the Mennonite*. I set it aside because I wasn't sure if we would make a donation. And then I sat down and read several articles from their most recent publication. As I read, I saw how the magazine discussed various issues, including full participation of LGBT folks in our churches, biblical interpretation and women's role in ministry. I saw that this was a place where dialogue happened and both conservative and progressive readers could express their views. I am glad there is this place where people trust the process of respectful dialogue and reflection. I feel this dialogue is how we as a church will grow.

Having worked for a Christian magazine myself, I know that subscription rates don't come close to covering the cost of putting out a publication. So, I urge you to consider supporting this valuable source of dialogue in our church community. If you don't have their fund appeal letter, you can go to their website and make a contribution:

[https://www.themennonite.org/public\\_donations/new](https://www.themennonite.org/public_donations/new)

--Dan Leisen

## Thank You, Thank You...

*Each year our congregation contributes funds to a number of organizations. The following are some of the responses we have received:*

Thank you for your gift of \$2,300 to Mennonite Central committee in 2012. Since its beginning in 1920, MCC has worked to follow Jesus' call in Matthew 25:35 to reach out to those who are hungry, thirsty, ill or in prison and to welcome strangers. Your gifts are vital to our ministry of meeting basic human needs and working for peace and justice in the name of Christ.

Your support is changing lives. Farmers are improving their land and diversifying their crops for better nutrition; people affected by violence and disaster are receiving immediate help and children and youth are learning to be future leaders, empowered through access to basic education and vocational and university training.

Thank you for putting your faith into action through your charitable giving to MCC. Your generosity is a great encouragement and offers hope to a hurting world.

With Gratitude,  
--J. Ron Byler, MCC U.S. Executive Director

Dear Friends,  
Thank you for your contribution of \$200 towards the work of Mennonite World Conference. 2012 has been a year of organizational transitions, as the executive office has moved from France to Bogota, Colombia and Cesar Garcia has completed his first year of service as MWC General Secretary.

Our Peace Commission has prepared resources and encouraged churches around the world to celebrate Peace Sunday on Sept. 21. The Faith and Life Commission celebrated the publication of the last volume in the Global Mennonite History series. The Mission Commission is focused on two global networks exploring ways of partnering around the world not driven primarily by North American priorities or management. Our goals and activities are relational rather than programmatic—above all to be a global community of faith in the Anabaptist tradition, linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service, and witness.

With much gratitude,  
--Lynn Roth, North American MWC Representative

Dear Friends,  
Here at CPT we began our year with lots of social media activity. Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence, a partner of our Canada-based Aboriginal Justice Team (AJT), went on a 25-day hunger strike demanding a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and a representative of the Queen in Canada about crucial issues of justice for aboriginal people. Our AJT started a Facebook campaign in support, with one of our Twitter photos being shared over 2,500 times. Spence's hunger strike is a part of a wider movement of First Nation activists across Canada. Known as *Idle No More*, the campaign protests a number of bills before Parliament and asserts that First Nations be recognized as sovereign stakeholders in decisions affecting land and resources.

Thank you for helping CPT keep the lights on, electricity flowing, and internet bills paid!  
--Sarah Thompson, Christian Peacemaker Teams

Dear Friends,  
I write to express our appreciation for your thoughtful gift. Fellowship of Reconciliation, USA launched a number of significant actions this year in resonance with our Demilitarizing Life & Land framework. The Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean (TFLAC) is preparing for a Community Leader Delegation to Juarez and El Paso, and is training young adults for new accompaniment for the Colombian peace Community of San Jose de Apartado. The Task Force on the Middle East promoted the 2 Million Friends effort of the Afghan Peace Volunteers and supported a Syrian Political Prisoners Campaign. Our Task Force on Social, Economic & Racial Justice partnered with the National Gun Victims Action Council for saner gun laws, and sponsored a young adult gathering, *Young, Pacifist & Proud* last month at our headquarters in Nyack, NY.

For peace and justice,  
--Jonette O'Kelley Miller, FOR Development Director

Dear Members of Faith Mennonite Church,  
Thank you very much for your \$150 gift to Friends for a Nonviolent World. All donations help us to fund our nonviolence programs.

Peace,  
--Patricia Van Cleve, volunteer

Dear Faith Mennonite,

We are grateful for your gift of \$150 for the Families Moving Forward program. Your generous support gives hope to families experiencing homelessness, like Toniesha's. Toniesha had been homeless on and off for six years, staying with friends and relatives or living in her car. With the help of the family advocates at FMF, Toniesha was able to get the support she needed to secure stable, permanent housing.

Sincerely,

--*David Everett, Director of Congregational Partnerships, Portico*

Thank you, friends at Faith Mennonite Church, for your donation helping us to continue to provide for our community. We are grateful for your kindness and support and remember you in our daily prayers.

Sincerely,

--*Peace House Community, 510 E. Franklin Ave.*

Dear Friends,

Winter is a time to look to the future with hope. Every day we work with folks experiencing homelessness who thought they had exhausted their options and had little reason to be optimistic about the future. When our staff works with them, however, their hope returns. On behalf of the grateful people you have helped, thank you for your important role in our work with your recent gift of \$200. Your gift means someone's homelessness ends today.

Warmly,

--*Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director, St. Stephen's Human Services*

**The deadline for April newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, March 27.**

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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.