

Faith Connection

March 2014

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...

I would like to share a few highlights from my sabbatical time. I want to begin by reiterating my thanks to the congregation for making this time possible and for all the extra work that many of you did in my absence. Last fall as I spoke with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee about my expectations for this time, they affirmed my intentions to see this primarily as a time of rest, in the biblical tradition of Sabbath/sabbatical (in contrast to the academic definition where one produces a "product" during one's sabbatical, as my husband Gerald is doing). I realized that I was no longer doing certain things that have given enjoyment and balance to my life in the past. I wanted to reinitiate a few of them: playing piano, reading fiction, knitting. True to life, some of my expectations were realized, some took a different shape, and some unexpected joys emerged.

I did not play piano during my sabbatical. Instead I began to learn to play the hammered dulcimer. In late December I noticed the dulcimer that has sat in a case in the corner of our dining room for the past six or seven years. We gave it to our son Jacob when he was in high school and too busy to learn to play. I didn't get too far beyond learning some scales and arpeggios, but it's a beginning.

I only read one work of fiction, *St. Julius* by Walter Wangerin, but I savored a poem or two a day from a Mary Oliver collection, *A Thousand Mornings*, and I read a number of books that have been on my reading pile or seemed pertinent to current issues in the church:

- Malcomb Gladwell, *David & Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*
- James McBride, *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother*
- Peter Steinke, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*

- Ronald W. Richardson, *Polarization and the Healthier Church: Applying Bowen Family Systems Theory to Conflict and Change in Society and Congregational Life*
- Margaret Wheatley, *Finding our Way: Leadership in Uncertain Times*

My knitting project was making felted slippers. Knitting for me very much parallels the spiritual life: I knit, then I find an error two rows back and rip out; then knit again. And the cycle continues. Even when I had the pattern almost memorized and was knitting a third pair of slippers, I still needed to backtrack to correct mistakes. The felting process is akin to turning our lives over to God: we put the oversized product in a washing machine with hot water, allowing the tumbling and friction to fuse the individual woolen yarn strands. This produces a newly shaped work that doesn't reveal the imperfection of individual stitches. It's an imprecise process sometimes needing a second or third wash cycle.

In January Gerald and I spent 11 days traveling in Ecuador with 6 other persons from Central Plains Mennonite Conference (all Nebraskans) and two young men from the Colombian Mennonite Church. I have written a separate report that will appear in installments in this and upcoming *Newsletters*.

The week after returning from Ecuador, I joined the second group of FMC folks who went up to Cotton/Cloquet to work with Mennonite Disaster Service. It was very satisfying to take part in work in which you have tangible evidence of what got done at the end of each day, even when that involved spending 6 hours outside in temperatures that didn't get out of the single digits! But the greatest satisfaction came in meeting and hearing the stories of home-owners, and working alongside Mennonites of very different backgrounds from Manitoba, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Iowa.

While at the Collegeville Institute, where Gerald is in residence this year, I participated in the daily prayer life of the monks at St. John's Abbey. Benedictine communities follow the rule *ora et labora*—pray and work. They structure their daily life around the “liturgy of hours,” communal praying of the Psalms: morning prayer at 7 a.m., midday prayer at noon; mass at 5 p.m. and evening prayer at 7 p.m. (The weekend schedule varies a bit.) Most days I would walk to the Abbey for midday prayer; once or twice a week I attended mass or evening prayer. These became important times to pray for my FMC community and the broader Mennonite Church, particularly in the heightened conflict and pain of the past several weeks. I am wondering if I can build the practice of midday prayer into my pastoral routine.

St. John's University has a number of groomed ski trails and I tried to ski as often as possible, which was my primary form of exercise. I also enjoyed the collegiality of Gerald's fellow scholars, who this semester include two Mennonites: Mary Schertz, professor of New Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Indiana and Bill Eash, choral director at Bethel (KS) College (and brother-in-law to Joan Kreider). It was stimulating to share in ecumenical conversations with persons from different traditions who share a deep love and commitment to the church.

I'm looking forward to hearing what has been going on with all of you in the past two months, in addition to surviving and navigating the cold weather and difficult driving conditions. Spring can't be too far away, can it?

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry staff report...

The date for our 3rd annual Neighborhood Sustainability Fair has been set—Saturday, April 26. This is the first Saturday after Easter, and also happens to be the first Saturday after Earth Day this year. The time frame will be noon-4:30 p.m., in the fellowship hall. As in previous years, we are particularly looking for you to provide ideas for hands-on activities. What everyday ideas for sustainability around your house and garden would you have to share with your neighbors?

That will be a busy time of year, as we will also be welcoming the Canadian Mennonite University choir to Minneapolis three days later on Tuesday, April 29.

The choir is on its way from Winnipeg to Indiana, and we are looking forward to hosting them for an evening meal, concert at 7:30 p.m., and overnight stays in homes. Can you open up some beds that evening in your home for some musically-minded Canadian students?

FMC's website, faithmennonite.org, is going to be experiencing a major overhaul in the coming weeks. Mennonite.net is phasing out its content management system, Caravel, that we have been using the past few years. All of their congregational websites will be transitioned over to the open-source WordPress platform. What that means for us is that while the content of our website will stay roughly the same, the look and design of the site will be significantly different. The advantages of this will be that the pages will be structured to make them easier to access on mobile devices, and considerably easier for uploading text and multimedia content.

Our friends at Bethany Lutheran Church, 2511 E. Franklin Ave., have invited us to take part in a series of soup and prayer events on Wednesday evenings during Lent. Suggested donation for soup is \$3/person. Themes for each evening: March 12 “Community,” March 19 “Simplicity,” March 26 “Service,” April 2 “Hospitality,” and April 9 “Justice & Peace.” On Monday nights Sabbath House invites us to “Soup & Sabbath: Reflections for Lent,” 3228 Portland Ave. S, 6:30 - 8 p.m. Details for each of these series can be found on the foyer bulletin board.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Lent Worship

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and continues 40 days until Easter. The worship theme this year will be “Encountering God and Witnessing to our Experience.” The planning team, comprised of Joan Kreider, John Hershey, Cynthia Miller, & John Ratigan, is in the process of finalizing their plans.

Tuesdays in Lent: Writing the Word

One of the gifts of my sabbatical time while I was at the Collegeville Institute was access to an office filled with art supplies that Mary Schertz, New Testament professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN, brought with her for use during her sabbatical at the Institute. Mary and AMBS dean Rebecca Slough have been developing a practice they

call “Writing the Word.” They move the traditional practice of *Lectio divina*, a reflective reading and praying with words of scripture to the right brain by writing scripture passages by hand and creating art—or simply doodling—with the words and images that emerge. This practice does not require visual artistic ability (as I can attest!) but simply an openness and desire to listen with more than our ears and mind.

During Lent we will offer a weekly opportunity of “Writing the Word” each Tuesday evening, beginning March 11. The schedule will be as follows.

6:15-6:45: Soup and bread (optional)

6:45-7:00: Song & prayer for centering; reading the Sunday lectionary texts out loud together

7:00-7:40: Individual time to write, reflect, respond artistically to one of the texts

7:40-8:00: Re-gathering song; sharing of responses (voluntary); closing prayer/song.

Bibles and simple art supplies will be available, but persons may wish to bring a personal Bible, journal or sketch pad, and art supplies they wish to use or share.

--Joetta Schlabach

Lenten Events at FMC

Ash Wednesday Taizé Service

*Wednesday, March 5, 7 p.m.
sanctuary*

Writing the Word

*Meal and artistic engagement with text
Tuesdays at 6:15 p.m.
March 11 – April 15
fellowship hall*

Palm Sunday Service

Sunday, April 13, 9:30 a.m.

Maundy Thursday Meal, Communion & Footwashing

*Thursday, April 17, 6-8 p.m.
fellowship hall*

Easter

*Sunday, April 20
Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service, 9:45 a.m.*

Adult Education Classes & Exploring Church Membership Class Begin

Three new adult education classes began on Feb. 16 and will run through April 27. It’s not too late to join:

- 1) a book study of *Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal* by April Yamasaki, led by Kristi Zabriskie, Kristin Green, and Heather Reinert, meeting in the library;
- 2) a book study of *Making Sense of Scripture: Big Questions About the Book of Faith* by David Lose, led by John Hershey and Phil Stoltzfus, meeting in the fellowship hall;
- 3) a parenting class, led by Alisa Bardo-Martinson, in the parents’ resource room.

Please contact the church office if you would still like to purchase one of the books (\$12).

Also, March 9 through April 13 we will offer a church membership exploration class during the education hour on Sunday morning. This will be a time to consider Anabaptist Mennonite belief and practice, to learn more about the history of our congregation, and to share the things that have shaped our faith development. Anyone is welcome to participate (including long-term members), and decisions regarding membership will come at the end of the sessions, i.e. participation is not a commitment to membership. If there are persons for whom Sunday morning does not work, we can also consider an additional, alternative meeting time.

--Candace Lauth & Joetta Schlabach

FMC Women's Retreat - March 7-9

Several women have put their heads together to plan a fun and relaxing weekend for the women of FMC at a home near Lindstrom, MN. And there’s still time to join in! A flexible schedule will allow people to come for a day or the whole weekend. Participants will help prepare the meals and everyone is invited to bring snacks to share. The group will work on a mosaic or art collage, so participants are invited to bring magazines or picture calendars. There will also be time for outdoor play and skiing at nearby parks. Suggested cost is \$60 for the weekend, according to what one can pay (extra contributions are appreciated). Please contact Kristin Green to register, make payment, or ask questions. The planning team guarantees: This is going to be fun!

Deacon Commission Update

For the last several months, the deacons have been discussing and subjectively measuring the “spiritual

pulse of the church.” During our regular meetings, we have been informally rating the energy level and spiritual fulfillment level of people within the congregation. Using a scale of 1 -10, with 10 been the highest, we have give our own scores individually and looked at the pattern. Each deacon’s score is based on both personal observations and informal conversations. Additionally, we hosted an adult education hour in January seeking responses to several questions about how congregants felt about life at Faith. These answers were gathered and are being compiled and will be shared in the next month’s newsletter.

The reason for this focus on a “spiritual pulse” stems partly from our ongoing conversations about our church identity and where we are as a church and how people feel about their roles in the church community. There is no formal direction to this project, at least from the deacons, other than to help in the conversations we continue to have about our church, its structure and our involvement in it. If you have anything you would like to add to our on-going discussion, please talk to any deacon at any time.

--Adam Nafziger, for the Deacons

“What is This Place?” Rescheduled

Part Two of “What is this place?” in February was snowed out and so is rescheduled for Friday, March 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m., again at Rudy Okerlund’s home. Part Two builds on Part One’s exploration of what we look to and need from our faith community. Part Two asks the question, “What is our mission and are we currently organized in a manner that effectively moves us forward in carrying out our mission?” More importantly, “What does our mission look like when it is acted out?”

This series is mainly an effort to get the conversation going. It carries with it no expectation that a proposal will come forth out of our time together. We’ll simply enjoy each other’s company over a topic that all of us share. And of course, good food will fuel the conversation. Email Rudy Okerlund if you plan on attending: neildeb@bitstream.net.

February Church Council Highlights

Missions & Service Commission: We collected \$450 in designated offerings for the fire victims at Cedar-Riverside and added \$250 from the M&S budget for a total of \$700. Coming up is the MN FoodShare March campaign, which we are coordinating with

Community Emergency Service. Treasurer’s Report: Our January income was \$2,500 less than our expenses, due partly to \$1,500 in heating costs. New Business: A letter signed by 150 credentialed Mennonite clergy was sent to MC USA saying it is time for MC USA to address LGBT issues seriously. Glenn Geissinger recommends that we read the letter along with the research of Stephanie Kraybill, a Ph.D. student studying LGBT issues in MC USA.

--Jenny Wandersee, Secretary

Update on Credential Review Process

The Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC) of Central Plains Mennonite Conference will be meeting on Saturday, March 1, to conclude their review process of Joetta’s credentials. They undertook this process at the direction of the Conference Board in response to feedback from regional meetings throughout the conference in fall 2012 concerning the marriage guidelines adopted by our congregation. Joetta has received a verbal indication of the committee’s determination, which she will share with the congregation as soon as a formal statement from the committee is submitted to the Conference Board, which is also meeting on March 1.

 <p>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 15. (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.</p>	<p>March Birthday Brunch</p> <p>Saturday, March 15 9:30-11 a.m.</p>
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What’s new in the library?

Our church library collection is growing, thanks in part to some recent donations of materials on Mennonite themes. A wonderful example is pastor Joetta’s donation of several issues of *Vision: a Journal for Church and Theology*. This journal is published by the Institute of Mennonite Studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and the

Institute for Theology and the Church at Canadian Mennonite University. According to its mission statement, “*Vision* seeks to encourage theological reflection by church leaders on the identity, mission, and practices of the church from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective.”

While the mission statement mentions church leaders, the essays in this journal hold broad appeal. Each issue contains around ten short essays relevant to a particular topic. The fall 2013 issue is entitled *Peace* and includes essays from various perspectives, including: “Anabaptist origins of Mennonite commitment to peace” by C. Arnold Snyder, “Restorative justice: The promise and the challenges” by Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, and “What a half-Italian Jersey girl is doing in a peace church” by Samantha E. Lioi.

Vision is an accessible resource for those interested in current Anabaptist-Mennonite perspectives. You can find it on display in the church library next to the Fellowship Hall on the lower level of the church.

--Cynthia Miller



“men who drum”

**Session One:
Drum-making**
Friday, March 14, 7-9 p.m.
fellowship hall

**Session Two:
Drumming workshop**
Saturday, March 15, 10-noon
chapel

**Session Three:
FMC worship service**
Sunday, March 16

“The men who...” series provides an opportunity for men in the church to discover the joy and benefits of being a part of something bigger than oneself. “Men who drum” is a three-part, hands-on series of drumming opportunities. The outcome is to learn basic drumming skills within a spiritual context.

Those who choose session one will make their own hand drum. These are quality Native American hand drum kits much like a tambourine without the jingles. They come in 12”, 16”, 18”, and 20” diameters ranging in cost from \$35-98. Mike Okerstrom has experience in assembling these drums. Payment for the kit will be due that evening.

Session two will be a workshop on learning basic drumming skills while experiencing how drumming can be a spiritual happening. We will have drums available for those who choose to not make their own. We are bringing in a drummer who applies a spiritual dimension to his drumming sessions. The cost of this workshop is \$10 and is free to anyone with a limited budget. Payment will be due upon arrival. Session three is a demo/performance during the church service on March 16. You can participate in one, two or all three sessions. Men in our church with drumming experience are invited to participate as a demonstration of solidarity with the guys.

You do not need to know how to read music to enjoy these sessions. Everything we do will take a “play and respond” approach. There is a possibility that some of us may choose to continue on in a drumming support group. We’ll explore this option after the series. Questions? Talk to or email one of us.

--Mike Okerstrom and Rudy Okerlund

Comings and Goings

From Erin Geiser: I’ve been attending First Mennonite Church in Denver since moving here in 2012. In December I joined as a member. One of those “You’re a commissioner on council, you have to be a member!” I am so happy to have found a church home that feels as comfortable as Faith did. Theology is sound and similar. People are friendly and welcoming. I’ve been drawn in and that is good. Blessings to all of you and I will stop for a visit when in Minnesota!

From Andrew Jilani: I am grateful to God that I am adjusting well both to my work and to the country. World Vision in Cambodia has 1,200 staff spread over the country working in Health, Nutrition, Child Protection, Youth and Education. I am learning about my role as Education Manager to boost functional literacy at elementary level and planning to launch new education initiatives in partnership with other NGOs here. I am also taking time to get to know the community. Today’s highlight was a lunch with MCCers who are doing great work in fair trade and

also with Cambodians who are deported from the United States. And for now I have exchanged my layers of winter clothes with a single shirt and my Asian body feels good. Thanks for your prayers, lovely send off and love. Soon I will have an apartment and then you can plan your trips to Cambodia. I will be your host.

From Nate Herr: It's great to get the weekly updates from FMC in our modern WiFi connected world! I also find myself sucked into following Pink Menno and MCUSA discussions online. My thoughts and prayers are with everyone involved and affected. I arrived in Uganda last week, settling in at the UMN house, and will be working on the ongoing collaborative research for the next two months between the UMN Global Pediatrics Department and the Ugandan Makerere University at Mulago Hospital in Kampala. While here I'll be doing my best to revive the UMN Uganda blog, which can be found at <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/iac/electives/>. Feel free to follow along! Abby will be joining me in early March for a week of vacation here. Expect safari photos!

Ecuador Fellowship & Learning Tour Report - Part 1

Over the next several Newsletters I will share portions of the report that I wrote following Gerald's and my January 17-28 trip to Ecuador. The report had three sections: Learnings, Fellowship, & Recommendations.

Gerald and I were privileged to participate in the January 2014 Learning and Fellowship Tour in Ecuador. We traveled with three other couples from Central Plains Mennonite Conference (Don & Shirley Kempf, tour leaders, from Shickley, NE; Mark Epp and Cathy Wismer from Henderson, NE; and Dennis and Carolyn Peters from Lincoln, NE) and two young men from the Colombian Mennonite Church (Santiago Marin and Miguel Basabe). Elaine Kauffman from Mountain Lake, MN joined us in Ecuador, where she is spending sabbatical time.

We divided our time between the capitol city of Quito and the smaller city of Riobamba, both in the Andes region of the country. In Riobamba we were hosted by local Mennonite families throughout our stay. In Quito we split our time between home stays and a hotel located near the Quito Mennonite Church. Our time included visits to museums and historical sites as well as scenic areas, presentations to help us learn about the social, political, and religious reality in the country, including the development of the Mennonite Church in Ecuador and the church's ministry to

Colombian refugees, and participation in worship, study and fellowship life of the church.

Learnings. This was Gerald's and my first time in South America. Having spent 5 years with MCC in Central America (CA) in the 1980s with several trips back to the region in the succeeding years, we couldn't help but notice the similarities and distinctions between Central America and Ecuador. We realized that Ecuador is probably the country we knew least about, dwarfed by its larger neighbors Colombia, Brazil and Peru. We were very impressed by the changes brought about by the government of Rafael Correa who was first elected in 2006, following a time of instability in which seven presidents served in six years. Correa is a University of Illinois-trained economist with a socialist orientation, formed in part by Catholic social teaching. His first action as president was to call a constitutional congress which created a new constitution that removed resources from the control of political parties and gives priority to social investment.

Correa appointed two commissions: one to investigate the corruption and fraud in the banking system that channeled a significant portion of international loans to the oligarchy, and another to investigate the crimes of the oligarchy, especially during the presidency of León Febres Cordero (1984-88). As a result of the findings of the first commission, the country has stopped paying interest or principal on the portion of foreign loans that had been fraudulently used for personal gain and began to invest this amount in public health, education, and infrastructure. As a result, the poverty rate dropped from 37.6% in 2006 to 23.7% in 2013. The current government claims a dual identity: 21st-century socialism and *sumak kawsay*—a Quichua phrase meaning the “common good” or “good life.”

The most visible example of this social investment for us was the excellent quality of the roads, both highways and streets within the cities we visited. We also saw newly renovated parts of Quito, including La Ronda, and several new parks. In one park we saw a mobile after-school program. High school students and several adults from a Catholic high school were working with elementary-aged students. They had a mobile library with books and puzzle and a mobile black-board with various panels containing word and number exercises.

We did not visit the poorest of neighborhoods in Quito nor did we visit rural areas with majority indigenous populations that tend to have highest levels of poverty. We were told that there is a high incidence of teen pregnancy and lack of healthy relationships in

marriages and families. Violence is on the increase in some of the urban centers. We were cautioned against using taxis that aren't officially registered and were told that theft is common on the trolleys. However when we were on a very packed trolley at rush hour I didn't notice a high level of alertness or precaution on the part of people around us, which appeared to include persons from various social classes. *To be continued.*

--Joetta Schlabach

What's happening here and there...

Housewarming Party—Simone Weil House

Come celebrate with us! We at Mennonite Worker recently purchased a new hospitality house (Simone Weil House) and you are invited to attend our housewarming party on Saturday, March 22, 7-9 p.m. Our new house will expand our capacity for hospitality as well as be the home for the Gene Stoltz Center for Creative Peacemaking. We will open and dedicate the Center later in the spring. Bring snacks or beverages if you'd like. Housewarming gifts will be gladly received, but aren't necessary. If you'd like to know more about what we still need for the new house, please contact us. A little ways into the party, we will share a bit about our vision and formally dedicate the house. We will also give folks an opportunity to contribute to our kitchen renovation fund. The Simone Weil House is located at 2420 11th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55404.

Kay Welsch Recognition

We at United Church of Christ in New Brighton are in the process of putting together a small liturgical recognition of Kay Welsch's 25 years as an ordained minister. Kay is a member here, and we feel privileged to be part of this moment in her life. The celebration will happen on Sunday, March 23 during worship. Part of the service will be a lighting of candles representing the churches she has served as an interim minister. We would be glad to have a member of each of these churches present to do the lighting. We also wanted to ask if you would like to send written greetings to Kay, we would love to receive them (1000 Long Lake Road, New Brighton, MN 55112), so we can include them in a memory book.

--Beth Donaldson, Lead Minister

Note: If you would like to represent FMC at the March 23 service, please contact Hermann Weinlick.

Masterworks Choral

The Masterworks Choral of Augsburg College, which includes Hermann Weinlick of Faith and Kristopher and Rebecca Hartwig of Emmanuel Church, will present a sacred concert Saturday, April 5, at 5:00 pm, at Central Lutheran Church. Free admission with a freewill offering. The program includes *Mass in Time of War* by Haydn and two 20th-century works: *A Lenten Cantata* by Hadley and "Let Peace Then Still the Strife" by Wilberg.

Thank You, Thank You...

Han Mitakuyapi (Hello My Relatives),

On behalf of our nonprofit, I am writing to express our gratitude for your donation of \$300 to Oyate Nipi Kte (The People Shall Live) for the Makoce Ikikcupi Land Project. While many people speak of a commitment to social justice, your actions demonstrate that your congregation is willing to live your commitment to reparative justice and decolonization. We welcome you as an ally in the struggle for a liberated future!

As you know, Oyate Nipi Kte is committed to restoring a land base for Dakota people so that we may begin to bring some of our relatives home, re-establish our spiritual and physical relationship with our homeland, and ensure the ongoing existence of our People. Our dream is to establish new communities within our homeland based on sustainability and adherence to our ancient ways of being. We hope they will be lands on which we can resume traditional practices of wild-ricing, sugar-bushing, hunting, and foraging, where we can grow our traditional gardens, bring back the bison, reconstitute our traditional forms of governance, practice our spirituality, educate our children, and throughout all these activities, speak our language. We thank you for your support of this dream!

--Waziyatawin, Founder and Council Member of Oyate Nipi Kte

The deadline for receiving April newsletter items is noon on Wednesday, March 26.

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.