

Faith Connection

May 2009

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 early January I received an invitation to join other pastors in signing a proposed "Open Letter to Mennonite Church USA"¹ that would be published during Lent 2009. For various reasons, which I discussed with the Church Council in its January meeting, I decided not to sign that letter. I composed another letter that I sent to each of my pastor colleagues within Central Plains Conference. I felt that addressing people to whom I am accountable in a more personal way, rather than signing on to a group letter, might open doors to further communication with churches in our conference who have not agreed with our practice of welcoming gay and lesbian persons. I share that letter with you here, and it will also be posted on the Open Letter website, in the "More voices" section.

April 15, 2009

To my pastor colleagues in Central Plains Mennonite Conference,

Earlier this month an Open Letter to MCUSA was published with more than 100 signatures of pastors, retired pastors and other church representatives calling the Mennonite Church to confession and healing for our lack of hospitality toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (glbt) persons. Although I did not sign that letter I would like to bear witness to the ways in which the welcome and inclusion of glbt persons at Faith Mennonite Church (FMC), Minneapolis, has strengthened and brought healing to our congregation.

Ours has not been a path free of resistance or pain. Unlike the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), where the early church discerned a way to accept Peter's bold proposal for the inclusion of Gentiles in Jewish Christianity, the early experiences of acknowledging and affirming the presence of glbt

persons at FMC met opposition. Nearly one-third of the congregation left to form another church and the former Iowa-Nebraska Conference removed our right to vote at Annual Meeting.

Although wounded, church members decided not to recoil either from our conference involvementⁱⁱ or from the missional call to include in our welcome and at our table persons who have historically been marginalized, in church and society, because of their sexual orientation. Balancing our love of and accountability to the wider church with our care for persons who had been deeply wounded by that church, sometimes slowed the healing. Members didn't always agree on how quickly to move in one direction or another.

But one thing always gave us courage: the persistent presence of glbt persons who wanted a church home and who filled our church home with love. Our congregational life has been enhanced by the gifts of glbt persons who have served as Sunday School teachers, led worship and participated as musicians, contributed to fellowship activities, served as a deacon, built supportive relationships with our young families, and have modeled the faith development of children in their family settings. Their presence contributes to the growth of our church since, increasingly, people who are looking for a peace church view the inclusion of glbt persons as an important expression of the commitment and witness to Jesus' way of peace.

I know that our experience has caused pain and consternation to some churches in the conference. We have tried to maintain a spirit of mutual respect and open communication. We were glad to help host the Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC) Annual Meeting in 2006 and we welcome any to "come and see"—to worship, serve, and

learn with us. I am grateful that opportunity was given at the 2008 Annual Meeting for a dialogue with St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship (which remains without voting rights) and that the topic of providing pastoral care when a person “comes out” in a congregation was included in the January 2009 CPMC Pastor/Elder/Deacon workshop. I pray that such occasions for genuine sharing, in a spirit of love and truth, will lead us toward unity and healing for the whole body of Christ.

--Joetta Schlabach

ⁱ The Open Letter can be found at www.openlettertomcusa.org

ⁱⁱ The voting rights of FMC were reinstated by CPMC in 2003.

"There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you."

-- *Maya Angelou*

What's happening at FMC...

Worship from Easter to Pentecost

In a recent conversation with former FMC pastor Patty Friesen, she commented on how Easter was her favorite celebration day during her time at FMC. “It was always so special and full of life!” This year’s celebration was no exception. Around 90 people attended the breakfast and over 100 people filled the sanctuary for worship. In my Easter sermon I quoted someone who once said that the resurrection was not an event but *is* an experience. Similarly, we celebrate not just one Easter Sunday but a whole season of Easter—seven Sundays until Pentecost.

Pentecost, the church’s celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit, will fall this year on the very last day of May. But we’re not waiting until then to talk about the work of the Spirit. The Lectionary, in fact, replaces the weekly Old Testament scripture reading with a reading from the Acts of the Apostles during the Easter season. One doesn’t read very far into the book of Acts without running into the Holy Spirit. The Easter church that emerged following the resurrection was very much a Spirit-fueled church. We are giving witness during our Easter season worship to ways in which the Spirit continues to move among and through us.

--Joetta Schlabach

May 17 – Children’s Day

Last year we tried something new and made our final day of Christian Education “Children’s Day.” Feedback was positive so we’re moving ahead with plans for our 2nd annual Children’s Day! Like last year, the pre-school and primary aged children will sing songs in worship that they’ve been practicing in their Sunday morning singing sessions. The day also promises a few surprises. And if the weather permits, we’ll enjoy a potluck picnic in the park at noon.

--*Education Commission*

Missions and Service Commission May Adult Education Sessions

May 3: Seward/Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership. Michele Braley, the Coordinator of this program, will describe how Restorative Justice is working in the neighborhood. She’ll also talk ways people can be involved in the program. The field of Restorative Justice has strong Mennonite roots, and this is a chance to learn about the idea is being developed and practiced in our backyard. The mission of the Seward/Longfellow program is to “Promote reconciliation and healing within our youth and our community.”

May 10: Continuing Discernment: Faith’s role in the local community: Michael Bischoff will facilitate a discussion of Faith Mennonite’s overall community outreach and service. We’ll look at what has developed in the past six months, and reflect on next steps that the church is called to. Your input is needed.

May 17: Families Moving Forward: Leslie Frost, the Executive Director of Families Moving Forward, will provide an update on the vision and needs of Families Moving Forward, and the overall family homelessness crisis. Families Moving Forward provides emergency shelter for families, in partnership with congregations in Hennepin County. FMC provides volunteers to help other congregations house families through Families Moving Forward.

Summer Vacation Bible School Alternatives

A meeting was recently held and Minke at Joel Sundseth’s house to discuss the possibility of having VBS at Faith this summer. It was concluded that the coming summer was too soon to get the word out and

have a suitable curriculum and enough volunteers ready, but there was interest in setting up VBS for the summer of 2010. In the place of VBS, there will be several family-friendly events held over the summer, including some swim dates at Matthews and some kind of harvest event. Curriculums are being researched, and another meeting will be held at the end of the summer to go over some options. A fall/early winter meeting will invite a broader constituency to be part of the conversation, as there are other groups/churches that may want to help and bring kids to VBS at Faith. You can contact Minke if you have an interest in helping, and more information will be coming out in the coming months.

--Minke Sundseth

Addressing the Intersection of Food, Faith and Justice

Last year Faith Mennonite Church held a forum on Michael Pollan's popular *The Omnivore's Dilemma* as a way to foster a dialogue about how Christian faith relates to food. As it turns out, the forum on faith and food marked the beginning of a larger inter-religious dialogue on how the distinctive food traditions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are inextricably linked to questions of immigration, the working conditions of the people that produce and distribute food to most of the population, the effects of industrial corporate agriculture on the environment, human bodies, and the economy. Such a lively discussion took place on March 29 at Faith Mennonite Church at the well-attended forum, "Immigration and Food Justice: A Multi-Faith Dialogue."

The forum was sponsored by organizations such as the Islamic Center of Minnesota, Jewish Community Action, Oxfam, and Bread for the World. The forum, moderated by Michael Bischoff, consisted of four panelists: a Catholic theologian, Tisha Rajendra, the director of a rural Latino entrepreneurial center, Reginald Haslett-Marroquin, the founder of an initiative that addresses the production of kosher food, Rabbi Morris Allen, and the President of the Islamic Center of Minnesota, Awais Bayunus.

From a Christian theological perspective Tisha Rajendra spoke of the social and spiritual consequences of the current food system's tendency to hide and obscure the working conditions of the producers and distributors of the food we eat. Reginald Haslett-Marroquin emphasized the importance of empowering rural Latino immigrants to become successful entrepreneurs as an important step toward blocking the exodus of economic and labor resources from immigrant communities. From

a Jewish perspective, Rabbi Morris Allen stressed the important connection between ritual observance of Jewish dietary laws and the ethical issues involved in the production and distribution of kosher food. Awais Bayunus helped to raise awareness about the challenges that face Muslim immigrants who seek to observe *halal* dietary laws. Each of the panelists, along with the many good questions asked by the audience, brought fresh and insightful perspectives to the table that led to a lively and creative dialogue about the distinctive ways the three faith traditions think about food and justice and the possibilities of cooperative action.

--Ry O. Siggelkow

Faith and Community

I'd like to thank the several people who helped make the fundraiser for the Pan-African Community Organization (PACO) on April 25th a success. Katie and Joetta worked with PACO volunteers to make the great food. Pat, Sarah, Yeshe, Orv, Gregg, and Patricia helped with clean-up and set-up. The Okerstroms delivered fliers in the neighborhood. Others pitched in many ways.

We had a full house for the dancing, presentations, and meal. Seeing the large group of kids and adults dancing at the end of the performance was one of the highlights for me. It was also fun to see the many conversations happening between people from Faith, PACO, the Community of St. Martin, and other folks from the neighborhood. Attendance at the event was higher than expected, and PACO received \$1,643 in income from the event. The PACO leadership is quite grateful for Faith Mennonite's help with in putting on the event.

PACO is planning to open their new Learning and Resource Center in June. It will be housed at Lighthouse Academy Charter School, which is a few blocks from Faith at the intersection of 26th St. and 26th Ave. They are planning to have the center open from 4-6 pm on weekdays, and serve adult African immigrants. This programming is aimed at improving language skills, basic educational capacity, computer skills, and civic engagement. PACO is planning to start with a group of 12 students. Details about volunteer opportunities will be coming soon.

For the May Adult Education sessions, Missions and Service has organized three Adult Education sessions for learning and reflecting about community engagement that Faith is involved with. Please see the announcement about these sessions in the newsletter, and join us for those discussions.

--Michael Bischoff

Painting Update

The trustees thank the following primers and painters who put in long hours Friday and Saturday April 17th and 18th to beautify corridors in the basement below the sanctuary. Dick & Sandy Westby finished priming the back hall / stairway next to the furnace room; THANK YOU! Joetta painted the hallway connecting the Fellowship hall to the Education wing; THANK YOU! Cleta Roth Gingerich and Arlene Geissinger primed the hallway from the East entry door to the lift; THANK YOU! Jenny Wandersee and Melissa Hochstetler painted the entire hallway on Saturday; an extra special **THANK YOU** to Jenny & Melissa for the long hours, the up & down ladder work and the clean-up at the end!!!

The interior decorating committee (Bob Mack, Nikki Fitch, Arlene Geissinger, Mike Okerstrom, Cleta Gingerich & Glenn Geissinger) will be meeting soon to develop one or two proposals for the painting of the sanctuary. If you have any further thoughts, suggestions or feedback about what you'd like to keep of the present scheme or what you'd like to see go away from the present scheme, please write your comments on the half sheet (in front of the mailboxes) and leave in one of the committee members mailboxes.

--*The Trustees*

Simply in Season

During the summer of 2008, Carol Harder, along with Candace Lutt and Phil Stoltzfus, organized the "Simply in Season" project as an outreach to the community and as a way to make healthy organic foods more available to the community and the church.

On July 2, a group of 53 people went to Natura Farms to pick strawberries. This represented a large effort of outreach to people outside of Faith Mennonite, and there were 32 people from the community who joined 21 from the church. A school bus was needed to transport everyone, the cost of which was covered by donations and the Missions and Service budget. Eleven people returned to Natura Farms to pick raspberries in mid-July. Raspberries were also picked at The Berry Patch, a nearby farm.

The weekend after raspberry picking, a group of undaunted Faith Mennonite attendees gathered to make pickles. The cucumbers had been grown in the Seward Youth Peace Garden just across the street, so this was truly a local project. In addition to the eight jars of pickles bought by those who participated, three jars were given to the nursery, and two were given to MCC.

Fifteen people returned to Natura Farms in August to harvest tomatoes and cabbages. Some of these were canned and donated to the MCC Relief Sale. Many bushels of fresh tomatoes and cabbages were also donated to a wide variety of people and organizations throughout the Twin Cities.

The program wound up in October with a trip to the Women's Environmental Institute to pick apples. Five people picked apples, and four and a half quarts of applesauce were processed and given to the nursery.

This program touched many people throughout the course of the growing season, both from Faith Mennonite and from the wider community. We hope to continue the program in some form in 2009, but organizers are needed! If you are interested in helping with this project, please talk to a member of the Missions and Service Commission.

--*Melissa Hochstetler*

Deacons' Report

The Deacons' Commission met on April 15, 2009. Neil Okerlund opened our meeting with a meditation based on the book *Never Call Them Jerks* by Arthur Paul Boers, a Mennonite Pastor in Waterloo, Ontario. Neil pointed out the need to proactively look at different areas of our church in order to make sure they are healthy enough to deal with conflict when it arises.

The fall retreat update by Cleta Roth Gingerich revealed that the committee has decided to offer seasonal activities in place of the traditional away retreat this year. Look for forthcoming information on those community-building opportunities from the Retreat Commission. The women's retreat is fast approaching—on May 8th and 9th—on the theme of "Simple Living."

We continued our dialogue from last meeting about the "Ways People are Alone in Church." We found it beneficial to explore this topic and raise our awareness of the issue, so we remember such things as not just using traditional family metaphors when we speak; changing our perspective to see the fullness of single life; and making the effort to connect with new attenders, as well as regular attenders who come to church by themselves. Our discussion yielded many affirmations of the welcoming atmosphere at FMC, particularly coming from Joetta's presence at the pulpit and during prayer time. Joetta shared that average attendance is up to 88; last year it was 77-78.

We finished our time together with prayer for personal needs within the congregation.

--*Kami Blackwell Kinney, recorder*

Meet Your Fellow FMCers

Brooke and Jason Derrickson and their kids Elissa and Zach are one of our church's many families with young children. If you don't already know them, you can look for three-year-old Elissa's bright curly red hair, and you'll have the right family. The Derricksons started attending Faith when Elissa was a baby, having heard about us through Shelly Hendricks, a childhood friend of Brooke's in Kansas.

Brooke was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and after moving around quite a bit, she and her family moved to Lawrence, Kansas when she was ten. Though there are some Mennonite connections on her father's side of the family, they didn't regularly attend church. She and Shelley shared a love of reading, and Brooke used to escape the din of her large family to go over to Shelley's to read. Brooke has one sister and five brothers, one of whom now lives in the Twin Cities as well. The Derricksons regularly go to Kansas to visit family.

Jason also moved around a bit before his family settled in rural Front Royal, Virginia, the family having moved there for his scientist father's career. Like Brooke, Jason didn't grow up attending church with any regularity, but curiously, he also had a close childhood friend who was involved with an Anabaptist church. That Mennonite friend was connected to Jason's eventual decision to attend Oberlin College in Ohio, where Brooke and Jason met. Each of them had wanted to attend a reputable out of state school where they could broaden their horizons, but the shell shock upon finding themselves among such a very experimental and liberal student population was something Brooke and Jason had in common. Both eventually graduated Oberlin; Brooke with a degree in English with a creative writing focus, and Jason in East Asian Studies with lots of coursework in politics and economics.

After college, the couple moved to the D.C. area where Jason took a job with a small congressional research company and Brooke worked with emotionally disturbed teenagers. Eventually, Jason took a job with Lexis-Nexis, working his way up to a management position. While Jason's career was taking off, Elissa was born, and the couple had always said they'd like to move to a city closer to Kansas. It felt like the right time to make the move, but the time after which they made the decision to move to Minneapolis and buy a fixer-

upper was very stressful. Jason's family was sad that they were leaving just after their first grandchild had been born, Elissa was just a few months old, and Jason didn't know until two weeks before they left whether he'd be even able to keep his job. For a time, it seemed to those around them and even themselves they were making an awfully risky move, but thankfully, things have turned out well. The couple has done a lot of work on their South Minneapolis house, and picked up many skills in the process, though they say that progress has largely stalled with the arrival of Zach.

Jason is able to work from home for Lexis-Nexis, and Brooke works part-time as a Learning Specialist for the junior high school at Lake Country Montessori, where Elissa will start pre-school in the fall. The family has had the benefit of lots of time spent together at home, and like many families in our church, they make that work through a combination of both parents care-giving, swapping childcare with a church family, and a little daycare. They enjoy the Twin Cities and all it has to offer, and are grateful to be part of a supportive, family-friendly church community here. Zach and Elissa were both dedicated at Faith, and along with others who want to learn more about the Mennonite tradition, the couple is currently attending a catechism class led by Joetta.

--*Minke Sundseth*

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting February 9th, 2009 @ FMC

Present: Joan Kreider, Moderator; Jenny Wandersee, Worship; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service ; Shelly Hendricks, Education; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Thaine Dirks, Pastor-Parish.

Absent: Fellowship representative.

Affirmations. Joan affirms all for the sense of continuity and stability through the process of hiring a new pastor, and Joetta's calm, wise and steady leadership. Shelly affirms the congregation for their giving during a financially tough year.

Treasurer's report. Started conference support in January this year, due to funds from parsonage. Tuition support paid out for four students at Goshen. Paid into the pastor's pension. Received a \$500 rebate from Minnegasco for new furnaces. The gas bill was still pretty big due to a very cold January. Local giving was right on target.

Commission reports

Trustees. Glenn says Bernie Waibel and Dick Westby are finishing work this week. Will be replacing glass downstairs and in office from the November break-in. Have only 13 responses to the decorating committee survey.

Missions and Service. Katie says they are phasing out Meserete Kristos College support, in order to support Melissa Hochstetler's parent who will be doing overseas service for Mennonite Mission Network. Received a report from Carol Harder and Candace Lutt on the Simply in Season project, will repeat a couple of the events that had good attendance in the coming year. M&S is helping with the April 25th Pan-African Community Organization fundraising meal. The date of the immigration and food forum may need to change to accommodate Sabbath needs.

Worship. Jenny says they are currently planning for Lent.

Education. Shelly says Kathleen Harder is the new adult ed coordinator, and they still want a youth coordinator. Currently discussing a new "peace village," but that would need a lot of congregational support. Joetta suggests a more traditional vacation bible school. Joan says Community of St Martin members may help, but may not have the energy to initiate it. Joetta notes that Peace Village charged a fee, but VBS is traditionally free.

Deacons. Hermann says Deacons met with new members.. The new chair will be Neil Okerlund. They discussed the parent support program.

Pastor. Joetta was at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary pastors conference last weekend. About 40 people met to discuss the open letter on GLBT concerns. Joetta may send her own, whether or not she signs the final draft. David McCarthy is a musicology student at the U of M, currently attending FMC as part of a project on the role of music in the church. Joetta received a report that the Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA) Sharing Fund will now match congregational contributions up to \$2000/year. This is an increase over the previous \$500 level for which we were eligible in past years. Five FMC members are doing Mennonite Disaster Service term in New Orleans in March. She is considering a Lenten midweek soup supper with silent prayer.

New business.

Joetta's ordination could be either spring or fall this year. Council agrees that Joan should write to the conference to ask that she be ordained.

No-one from FMC going to Mennonite World Conference so far. We get two delegates to Mennonite Church USA conference in Columbus, June 30th-July

5th. Katie may go, also Leslie Minkler. Joetta doesn't need to go if we have two other delegates. Hotels are filling rapidly. Central Plains Mennonite Conference is in Freeman, S Dakota in June. Joetta is going, we need one more delegate. Jerry says he will go if no-one else does. Scott says he may go.

Touchstone Mental Health and Bernie Waibel are asking for a letter of support from FMC for a new residential facility in Seward. MICAHA and Project Pride in Living are also supporting. This will come back to council's next meeting.

--Gregg Richardson

Faith Mennonite Church Annual Congregational Meeting February 8th, 2009 @ FMC

Present: Gregg Richardson, Beth Richardson, Scott Neal, Deedee Stevens-Neal, Heather Wengard, Tom LoBello, Shelly Hendricks, Glenn Geissinger, Bruce Brunner, Donna Minter, Larry Peterson, Karen Linn Peterson, Mike Okerstrom, John Ratigan, Matthew Hendricks, Brooke Derrickson, Nikki Fitch, Chris Jones, Bob Mack, Candace Lutt, Andi Kuenning, Dan Leisen, Wolf Bartel, Shelly Bartel, Darrell Martin, Leslie Minkler, Karen Zeug, Pierre Gingerich-Boberg, Joan Kreider, Joan Wing, Barbara Beers, Phil Stoltzfus, Dan Gerber, Cindy Bjork, Kathleen Harder, Kami Blackwell Kinney, Orv Gingerich, Cleta Roth Gingerich, Kristin Green, Gerald Schlabach, Michael Bischoff, Minke Sundseth, Neil Okerlund, Rachel Hoskins, Arlene Holdeman, Arlene Geissinger, Donna Stucky, Alisa Bardo-Martinson, Melissa Hochstetler, Jerry Janzen, Pat Eliason, Paula Okerstrom, Hermann Weinlick, Susan Weinlick, Adam Nafziger, Richard Westby, Jenny Wandersee, Terry Gerber

Neil Okerlund opens the meeting at 11:15 am

Treasurer's report: Jerry Janzen reviews the 2008 financial report. Highlights money paid out for heating project during the year. Also, the Calvert fund was hit hard by the stock market decline. Glenn Geissinger moves and Donna Minter seconds a motion to approve the report. Motion passes unanimously.

Commission reports

Fellowship. Barb Beers says people have expressed interest in more fellowship activities. She suggests that anyone who has ideas for an activity talk to a commissioner and then take the initiative—we need people to volunteer.

Christian Education. Shelly Hendricks says 15 children regularly attended 2-4 year old and K-2 classes last year. We currently have 27 children in the 0-9 range and more on the way. It's a great time to be a kid in our church. She welcomes volunteers to teach and mentor. Pat Eliason says several people worked with the youth this year, and highlights adult ed classes from the written report. Kathleen Harder will be replacing her on the commission.

Deacons. Mike Okerstrom says several small groups formed in addition to the geographical groups this year.

Deacons also initiated the parenting partners program. Mike and Candace Lauth will be replaced by Neil Okerlund and Kami Blackwell Kinney. Net membership grew from 100 to 111. Joetta notes that some left, but more joined.

Worship. Adam Nafziger says he never realized that ushers were under the Worship Commission. The changed worship time has continued to receive good feedback. Also changed the bulletin this year. Jenny Wandersee continues to schedule the musicians. Commission will be thinking this year about what worship is.

Trustees. Glenn Geissinger says that the trustees' dreams have always been bigger than the finances. The "windfall" from the parsonage paid for the heating system. He thanks Tom Johnson and Darrell Martin for managing the parsonage for years. Also thanks Darrell for general contracting the heating project, and also Dick Westby and Bernie Waibel for all their work. The trustees will be looking this year for a congregational consensus on redecorating the sanctuary.

Missions and Service. Gregg Richardson notes that the *Omnivore's Dilemma* forum and *Simply* in Season project were very successful, and similar events are being planned for this year. M&S has been working with Michael Bischoff on discerning congregational interests in outreach to the community, and is developing a number of initiatives. He says they've also clarified a policy on contributions to outside organizations in response to the congregation's request last year. The commission's policy will be to narrow the number of organizations, but build a closer relationship with those to which we do contribute. Donna Minter will be replacing him on M&S.

Moderator's report. Neil thanks the council and congregation for their support in his two years as moderator.

Michael Bischoff. Michael says he recognized the spirit of his assignment in the sharing of the new members in worship this morning. He spent October and November listening to members, to discern where

the most energy exists to move forward. He is currently leading planning for the Immigration and Food Justice Forum scheduled for March 29th. The committee encourages volunteers and participants from the congregation. He is also working on building a relationship with the Pan-African Community Organization, and is sponsoring a fundraising meal on April 25 to help them develop a community center. Bethesda Missionary Baptist church has approached us about sharing the building, and he's helping explore a way to build fellowship with them—also interest in sharing music and small children.

Shelly Hendricks moves and Wolf Bartel seconds a motion to accept the reports as amended. Candace Lauth asks that the Deacons report be amended to mention Mike Schrock's death, and Gregg Richardson asks that the M&S report add a mention of participation in the Pride Parade.

The meeting recesses for potluck and reconvenes at 1 pm.

Congregational handbook. Neil notes that the congregation has received a first draft of the new congregational handbook. Other things will be added.

Orv Gingerich moves and Adam Nafziger seconds a motion to approve the annual meeting minutes of February 3rd, 2008. Passes unanimously. Wolf Bartel moves and Glenn Geissinger seconds a motion to approve the congregational special meeting minutes of April 27th, 2008. Passes unanimously.

2009 Budget. Jerry Janzen presents the proposed 2009 budget. Meserete Kristos Church support will be gradually phased out, beginning this year. Library budget increased to pay for renovations. No youth currently being mentored, so no budget. Office budget increased to reflect actual expenses. Pastor's budget was temporarily increased last year to anticipate contingencies in the transition, now reduced again. Decrease in the trustees to anticipate lower heating costs due to new heating system. No more rent from the parsonage, so local giving needs to increase.

Question/comments: Shelly Bartel says payroll services could be cheaper. Hermann asks which commission oversees the library? Education. Candace Lauth asks why ISAIAH's rent is increasing? Darrell says they have more space now. Joan Wing asks why the change in nursery coordinator budget? Jerry says this brings in line with what we actually paid her—she didn't work every Sunday. Joan Kreider asks where \$2000 budget for youth will go with only one youth? Jerry says that

used to go to conference. Pat Eliason says there are 4-5 recent grads too. Joan Kreider asks whether the custodian and secretary salaries were increased from last year? Jerry says yes. Joan asks about the decrease in health insurance cost? Glenn says they are already covered elsewhere.

Barb Beers moves and Candace Lauth seconds a motion to accept the budget. Passes unanimously.

Gifts Discernment slate. Joetta notes that Clea Roth Gingerich's term actually ends 2010. Also Karen Zeug is actually not a member, but Joetta will talk to her about officially joining. She also notes that we have no children of mentoring age, so the deacons asked the mentoring coordinator to coordinate parenting partners. Candace Lauth notes that we have an Mennonite Disaster Service liaison, but do we have an Mennonite Mutual Aid liaison?

Minke Sundseth moves and Jenny Wandersee seconds a motion to accept the gifts discernment slate. Passes unanimously.

Joan Kreider thanks Neil for his service as moderator. Joetta closes with prayer at 1:27 pm.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

What's happening here and there...

May Adult Education Events at the Community of St Martin

All sessions will meet in the Upstairs Chapel in the Education Building at Faith Mennonite from 5:30 to 6:25 pm on Sunday evenings before our weekly Worship service.

Sunday, May 10. An evening for sharing all things GARDEN! Come for a Garden Exchange conversation. Bring your stories of success and failure, a list of the gardening tools and supplies you have and would be willing to share, as well as a list of what you might need. We welcome seeds to share. No dirt tonight please, but if you have perennials you'd like to offer to divide, we'd love hear about them, and we'll figure out a way to share them. Any one have extra garden space to share, or need some to use?

Sunday, May 17. Another Community skill sharing night! Learn to Make Yogurt, Use Less Plastic and

Save the World! This was a topic of much interest at our Spring Day of Renewal in April. If you make your own yogurt, please bring your equipment for a virtual (no liquids please) demonstration. OR bring your stories, recipes and tips for making yogurt at home!

Sunday, May 31. Join us for a special presentation at the last Adult Ed until the fall. On the eve of the inauguration of FMLN President-elect Mauricio Funes, Ann Butwell will speak about her experience observing the recent Salvadoran elections on March 15. She will address the historical significance of this win for the former guerillas and answer any questions you may have on the topic. Ann led this elections trip through the Center for Global Education, where she works as the International Travel Seminar Program Coordinator. She and her husband John Wright Rios lived in El Salvador in the early 1990s during the post-war time period, and have been regular visitors ever since.

--Carol Witte, Community of St Martin

Alternatives to Violence Workshop

The Alternatives to Violence Project will hold a 21 hour hands-on workshop focused on building new skills which transform violence to cooperation and build community via affirmation, respect for all, cooperation and trust.

This AVP workshop can help you:

- gain tools for your own use in home, workplace or community
- creative conflict resolution that works
- assertive communication that doesn't put anyone down
- non-violent problem-solving
- building a trusting community
- build successful personal interactions
- gain leadership skills
- learn how to facilitate similar workshops inside prisons and in your community

Please join us at our next AVP Basic Workshops:

Dates:

June 12 – 14

Friday June 12, 6 - 9 pm

Saturday, June 13, 9 am - 9 pm

Sunday, June 14, 12:30 - 6:30 pm

(Attendance at all three workshops is required.)

Location:

Faith Mennonite Church

How to participate:

Register at least 7 days prior to workshop
 Online @ fnvw.org (click on the AVP link) or email:
 avprich@gmail.com

By phone at: 651-644-5851

Mail a check written to:

Friends for a Non-Violent World
 1050 Selby Avenue, St. Paul 55104
 (include check & date of workshop)

Cost:

\$25 (non-refundable) required to reserve your spot or...

\$150 full payment (reservation fee absorbed)

Volunteer scholarships available--no one refused for lack of funds

--Richard Deming

Deadline for June newsletter items is noon, Thursday, May 28th.

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.

The Midnight

To Christ our Lord

(after Gerard Manley Hopkins)

I caught the light-lost sky, the dim-dark velvet
 nimbus globe, pins of bright-broken-brilliance hover far from finger
 fetch. Crackling lights of electric shimmer-shown orbs linger
 close, obscuring enduring fire far-away. God's greatness galls regret
 great and small of things not seen but felt, or not felt—Indebt
 me the higher high-air's creator; may my malingering-
 ings be met with grace; grateful when I finally finger
 wonderment afterall: the conscious cosmos I so covet.

Brute beauty and spirit and life, oh open, huge, hidden, here
 Enthral. Scale so superior, my place perfectly, painfully felt
 Futile and glorious, beyond belief, Oh my fear.

No wonder of it: broken ground makes dull-down and svelte
 Living natural, and grey-gaunt earth, oh God come near,
 Lies, hides real, and shackles nature-knelt.

--Jacob Schlabach