

# Faith Connection

May 2010

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...

*He who is aching in every limb, worn out by the effort of a day of work, that is to say a day when he has been subject to matter, bears the reality of the universe in his flesh like a thorn. The difficulty for him is to look and to love. If he succeeds, he loves the Real. – Simone Weil*

*The Lord God took the human and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. – Genesis 2:15*

I'm not a master gardener but I like to dig in the dirt. My garden will never be as artistically beautiful or as productive as those of some of our FMC gardeners, but it no doubt provides the same therapeutic value. One of the things that gardening does for those of us whose primary work largely involves our thinking and relational capacities is that it gives us a connection to the earth, to physical labor, and to an opportunity to see measurable results.

As the economy has shifted from physical production to service and information technologies, manual labor has diminished in status. Some associate physical toil with a curse—the result of the sin of our earliest ancestors in Eden. Yet, Genesis 2 states that God gave the first beings the task of tilling and keeping the earth from which they were made *before* they were expelled from the garden. Digging in the dirt was part of the creative work we were originally called to.

One of the things I value about gardening is the way it ties me to my family's agricultural roots. My grandparents were all farmers and although my parents left the farm, they maintained a large garden and raised chickens when I was growing up. In their retirement they expanded their gardens and my father planted an orchard and took up bee-keeping. Today I have raspberry plants and several trees and bushes that he dug up and sent home with me before he died. Tending

these plants and picking berries that he loved to pick create an ongoing connection with him. My father loved a day of hard manual labor as much as he loved studying the Bible; the two were of equal value. My mother's form of evangelism was, and is, a visit to share garden produce.

Gardening also connects me with my neighbors. For ten years our back-yard garden has been the center of our relationship with our next-door neighbors, the eldest of whom speaks only Hmong. As I have slowly expanded my planting area, laboriously digging up sod and adding compost to the soil, Grandpa Vang has smiled, given me the thumbs-up, and pointed approvingly. We've passed vegetables back and forth across the fence, and sometimes our vining plants have intertwined through the fence. Together we've improved our properties, creating a bit more beauty along our not-so-attractive urban alleyway. Digging in the earth is our common language.

Digging in the earth teaches me again and again about the loving relationship God desires with each of us. A garden doesn't just happen; it requires an investment on my part—my willingness to hoe and sow and water and weed. I often end up exhausted, with aching shoulders and a stiff back. But when I witness seedlings emerge, watch blossoms turn to berries, and welcome the first swollen pea pods to my table I know that I have been only a collaborator, partnering with the Maker of soil, sun, water, and air. I feel humbled and loved.

Not everyone feels the draw of a garden, I know. Others work with wood, repair bicycles, remodel homes, cook meals, hang out laundry... All of us, I believe, find a grounding and an encounter with the Real, in the words of Simone Weil, when we take part in physical labor that employs a number of our senses, connecting us to our past, to others, and to the earth.

--Joetta Schlabach

## What's happening at FMC...

### Car Sabbath is Back!

Last summer the Missions & Service Commission invited the congregation to participate in several "Car Sabbath" Sundays as one way to reduce our congregation's carbon footprint. On Car Sabbath we encourage those who are able to give their car a day-long rest and consider other ways of getting to church: walking, biking, light rail, bus, or carpools. Some people might like the option of visiting a neighborhood church that's within walking or biking distance. This is not intended to keep anyone away – we all work at environmental issues in different ways and we will celebrate *all* the ways that people come to church. Car Sabbath dates for 2010 are May 30 and September 5.

### FMC to Participate in Seward Garage Sale, May 14-15

Here's a great opportunity to clean your closets and garage for a good cause! The FMC Missions & Service Commission has enlisted Dick Westby to coordinate FMC participation in the May 14-15 Seward Garage Sale. All proceeds from the FMC sale will be given to Community Emergency Service, a neighborhood food shelf and holistic service provider. CES is raising funds for a much-needed building renovation to better serve their clients. How can you get involved? 1) Start gathering things you'd like to donate for the sale; 2) Watch for a sign-up sheet to volunteer for a 2-hour shift (this could be a great service opportunity for older children and a parent); 3) Consider making baked goods to sell. Please contact Dick Westby if you have questions and/or wish to get involved.

Two other Seward churches will participate in the Garage Sale with these Saturday events:

- Seward Church (2011 21<sup>st</sup> Ave S.) will hold a pancake breakfast at 8 a.m. and an evening concert at 7 p.m. Proceeds from the concert will benefit the Seward-Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership.
- Bethany Lutheran (corner of Franklin & 25<sup>th</sup> Ave) will serve grilled veggie burgers during the noon hour.

### Patty and Patrick Visit

On Saturday, May 22, from 2 to 4 pm, Patty Friesen and Patrick Preheim, former pastors of FMC, will be hanging out at Sea Salt at Minnehaha Falls Park, if folks want to bike by. Look for the table with the Canadian

flag. (We'll be at the ball game Saturday night and in church Sunday morning as well.)

--Patty and Patrick

### Adult Education for May

May 2: Stewardship

May 9: Report from those who served with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in New Orleans

May 16: Sanctuary Design Ideas I--presented by the Trustees Commission

May 23: Sanctuary Design Ideas II--presented by the Trustees Commission

--Kathleen Harder



May  
Birthday  
Brunch

If you or a family member has a birthday in February, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on May 22. (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,  
May 22  
9:30-11:30  
a.m.

### Congratulations to Our Graduates

Jacob Schlabach and John Tamrat participated in the spring commencement ceremony at Goshen (Indiana) College on April 25. Jacob is participating in Goshen's Study-Service Trimester program in Nicaragua this summer and will return to the Twin Cities in the fall to complete the remaining hours for his double major in

English and Communication. John will do an internship over the summer and school year for Elkhart County Fair Grounds studying the economic impact of the fair. During the fall semester he will also be the General Manager for school coffee shop, and will complete to courses this fall for his double major in Business and Public Relations.

Madeline Kreider Carlson will graduate from Haverford (Pennsylvania) College on May 16, with a degree in History. Madeline will spend the summer visiting family and friends before launching her year of independent study abroad with a Watson Fellowship. Madeline will study the art and socio-economic importance of crafts, exploring women's craft cooperatives and the ways they create economic vitality and affect community value systems. She is interested in women's craft organizations that enact sustainability in multiple ways: by providing equitable livelihood, by sustaining cultural artisan traditions, and by incorporating sustainable materials. Her studies will take her to Egypt, Indonesia and Nicaragua.

### **Sign of the Times...?**

(Photo of a found sign, from [oddllyspecific.com](http://oddllyspecific.com))



### **Meet Your Fellow FMCers...**

In the last year or so, Faith Mennonite has been blessed with a wave of new attendees, many of whom are young adults. Among this vibrant and growing community is Matthew Thomas, a graduate student at the U. And while Matthew may be new to our church, he certainly is not new to our Anabaptist traditions.

Matthew grew up in the heart of Pennsylvania Amish country in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. There, he and his family attended several Brethren in Christ churches. After high school, Matthew attended Messiah College (a historically Brethren in Christ school his great-

grandfather helped found) and graduated with a degree in music education. After working as a high school band teacher for three years in rural Pennsylvania, Matthew heeded the call of bright city lights and moved to New York City. As a student at Teachers College, Columbia University, he pursued and attained a master's degree in international education development. It was in the program at Columbia that Matthew met Dr. Fran Vavrus, his academic advisor, and the primary reason he eventually moved to The Cities.

After completing his master's program, Matthew spent a year working in New York at the Education Development Center. During that same time, Dr. Vavrus accepted a position at the University of Minnesota, teaching in the international education development program. In August of 2009, Matthew moved to Minneapolis in order to continue his education with professor Vavrus and pursue a Ph.D. at the U.

When Matthew moved to the Cities, he knew he wanted to become invested in a church community relatively quickly, so he did as much online research as possible. Because he discovered no Brethren in Christ churches in the metro area, he turned his attention to Mennonite churches because the denominations are "similar in a lot of ways." He found Faith during his online searches as after attending several services, Matthew felt he found a good place to be during his time in Minneapolis. Primarily, he loves the emphasis on community at FMC, and also appreciates how genuinely concerned congregants are about each other and their experiences. At Faith, Matthew has become a "regular" on the musician circuit, lending his many and varied percussion skills to our hymn singing. Recently, he also joined the worship commission to help them with music planning and working with different music ensembles in the church.

In addition to being a full-time student, Matthew also works part-time as a research assistant in his doctoral program. He will travel to Africa twice this spring and summer, first to Tanzania for a two week trip, then a several month trip to Mali. During his unscheduled time, Matthew enjoys running, biking, making and listening to music, eating and traveling. Although he only lives two blocks from Lake of the Isles, he doesn't really have enough free time to fully enjoy the possibilities. "I often find myself longing to sit and read or throw a Frisbee by the lake," he said. As far as his life in Minneapolis goes, he loves the beauty, but really misses the buzz, lights, sounds and food of New York City. And even though he has found a good home at

FMC, he still misses old church, Redeemer Presbyterian, and his small group there.

We welcome Matthew, and all of the gifts and talents he brings, to our congregation!

--Adam Nafziger

## **Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 @ FMC**

**Present:** Joan Kreider, Moderator; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Melissa Hochstetler, Missions & Service; Adam Nafziger, Worship; Kathleen Harder, Education; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect.

**Absent:** Treasurer, Fellowship representative

**Affirmations.** Adam affirms Matthew Hendricks and John Ratigan for their surprise trip to see Alisa and Andy. Joetta affirms Hermann for his sermon. Glenn affirms Bob Brown's previous sermon too. Thaine affirms Joetta for her birthday gathering idea.

**Treasurer's report.** Jerry not present, but Glenn has a treasurer's report. Joan notes that we closed \$100 over budget for the year for giving, with \$27,000 in December. Calvert social responsibility fund increased from \$42,000 to \$51,000 for the year. Hermann asks for a separate budget line for the ministry staff position (it's currently under Pastor). Joan asks why housing allowance was under budget? Joetta is not sure, will look at housing allowance and pension amounts for the 2010 budget.

Glenn also distributes the revised 2010 proposed budget. Suggestions of Council: split salaries out. Increase medical for Corinthian Plan (Joan notes that this is really conference support, since we are not currently using the plan). Discussion of amount of pension contributions. Thaine asks about a line for the sanctuary renovation/ Melissa asks why the custodian salary is going down? Glenn says she is finishing in less time than scheduled. Melissa asks if we need to give her more hours? Joetta says Jerry will pay her if we need more work. Joan asks is she received an hourly increase? Glenn says yes, to \$12. Joan suggests that Tuition Support Fund should not appear under expenses, instead subtract out of the tuition support line. Joan asks why Education budget is down? Because there are few youth. Hermann asks where the deacons' fund is? Joetta says it is not on the budget, but is a

separate fund. Joan asks whether the Worship fund is adequate for the new sound system. Adam says yes. Joan asks to add a line for the sanctuary renovation. Joetta says the office photocopy budget should be raised to reflect actual 2009 expense. Gregg asks whether a natural gas increase of 25% over 2009 is realistic? Glenn agrees to a smaller increase.

### **Commission reports.**

**Trustees.** Glenn says interior committee will meet Sunday and for the next few weeks, to present about the sanctuary renovation. Joetta says last year they suggested lowering costs of painting, by inviting retirees from Central Plains (CPMC) to spend a week volunteering. We need to address liability, hire professionals to paint higher up. This may not save much. Thaine notes that this would be a good experience for the volunteers. Melissa notes that it is a favor we should be ready to return. Scott suggests congregation members to work with them. Glenn estimates that 8-12 working at a time might finish the job in a week. Melissa suggests feeding them lunches. Scott says this is a good way to integrate into CPMC, and for them to see the city. Glenn and Scott will work out the details. Glenn says its time for an internal audit, Darrell Martin and Pierre Gingrich Boberg have volunteered. Council approves.

**Missions and Service.** Melissa says they have interviewed two candidates for the ministry staff position, and will interview two more, and make a decision next week. Also discussed a response to the recent shootings in Seward, and discussed the restorative justice program and the upcoming Mennonite Disaster Service trip.

**Worship.** Adam says they are meeting this week to begin Lent planning. They are moving toward the next step on the sound system. Joetta suggests a speaker in the cry room.

**Education.** Kathleen says there are three new adult ed classes, one for parents of young children, to integrate with the childrens' Sunday school. Another on prayer, and one on Krista Tippett's new book, discussing what we believe and why. Joetta also wants a church membership class for new attenders.

**Deacons.** Hermann says they are working on adult Christian ed sessions

**Gifts Discernment Committee.** Joetta has an updated roster for approval. Council consensus is to approve for distribution.

**Pastor.** Joetta visited Community Emergency Services (foodshelf people). It gave her a good sense of what we can refer people for. They welcome volunteers.

**Old business.**

**Annual meeting.** Joetta suggests an “I come to FMC because...” component.

**New business.**

**Leadership seminar.** Scott, Joetta, Candace Lutt, Phil Stoltzfus and Katie Hochstedler attended. Joetta explains this was an annual CPMC event. A theological seminar on church discipline, marriage, sexuality, GLBT, coexisting with differences. Scott say some sessions were more theologically abstract, other sessions more experiential. The discussions next day were respectful. Joetta says the anxiety level seemed to be low.

*--Gregg Richardson, outgoing Secretary*

**Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting  
March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010 @ FMC**

**Present:** Scott Neal, Moderator; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Melissa Hochstetler, Missions & Service; Adam Nafziger, Worship; Kathleen Harder, Education; Matthew Blackwell Kinney, Moderator-elect.

**Agenda and Minutes.** Agenda was swiftly approved; no new items were added. Minutes could not be reviewed or approved as last Council’s Secretary was not present. Action items: Follow up with Gregg Richardson to retrieve the notes from last Council’s session—Scott.

**Old Business.**

**Deacons Commission Membership: Joetta**

The congregation has put the question to the Council as to whether or not membership is strictly required in order for any individual to participate in the role of Deacon. Greg Renstrom is an individual clearly dedicated to the Faith Mennonite community; however, as a former pastor in the Methodist tradition, the terms of his pension do not support formal membership in any congregation (including a Methodist church). Conclusion: According to the authority granted by the church constitution, all commissions are allowed to call/appoint members and non-members alike to serve with them in a supporting capacity. Through prayer, discernment, and consensus the Council has determined that it is within the authority granted to the Deacon’s Commission that they might call Greg Renstrom to serve with them in the duties held by that Commission, with two notable restrictions: 1) Greg may not be appointed as a Deacon’s representative to the Church

Council, and 2) Greg may not be appointed as a Deacon’s representative to the Discernment Committee, since both of these roles require formal membership. Action items: Joetta will communicate the Council decision to the congregation via the church newsletter.

**New Business.**

**Council Administration: Scott**

Discussed protocols for 2010 Council meetings: Scott, Joetta, and Matthew will be meeting prior to the Council to draft an agenda. (1<sup>st</sup> Wednesdays). This draft agenda will be sent out to the Council in search of feedback of additional items that need to be discussed. After a short period, a final agenda will be forwarded to the Council prior to the monthly meeting.

Council meetings will be moved from the second Monday of every month to the second Wednesday. Council meeting dates for the remainder of 2010 are as follows:

April 14  
May 19  
June 9  
July 14  
August 11  
September 8  
October 13  
November 10  
December 8

(May 12 conflicts with another planned congregational event, moving Council meeting to the following Wednesday, May 19)

**Pastoral Updates: Joetta**

Administrative updates: Kathleen Remund has gotten started. We’ll be hosting a worship arts tour for the Central Plains Conference.

Council discussion about membership growth over the last few years. In 2008, average attendance was 77; in 2009 it was 84; so far in 2010 attendance has averaged 90 per week. That’s a 17% increase in attendance over the past two-plus years. Council discussed how we might get the newer attendees more involved. There is a Sunday coffee group, initiated by Melissa Hochstetler and others, that meets at Seward Coop after worship and has been a good point of connection for many of the newcomers. Typically there are 6-10 people who attend on a weekly basis.

**Commission Reports.**

**Education: Kathleen.** Classes are in the 5<sup>th</sup> week and appear to be going well. Council discussed the need to create structure and continuity within the children’s

music time. Right now, children’s music time is a bit ad hoc—children trickle in during the 15-minute interval, and there isn’t necessarily a clearly designated music director and program. While the quarterly curriculum contains music that resonates with the lessons, we don’t seek to consistently integrate this into children’s music time. Action item: Kathleen will review the children’s worship/music program.

**Worship: Adam.** Commission reported that, while still in the middle of Lent, they will be working through Easter and Pentecost worship planning shortly and then moving on to our summer worship series focused on stories of faith. The Commission is also discussing having a consistent music leader for the church that would coordinate instrumentalists, music, etc. for worship. This is in alignment with their goal to create a longer view plan and rhythm in the worship calendar.

**Deacons: Hermann.** Men’s retreat will take place the weekend of March 12. Women’s retreat is tentatively being scheduled for Mother’s Day weekend.

**Missions and Service: Melissa.** Calendar Update: March 25—Day on the Hill; March 29 thru April 2: Mennonite Disaster Service trip; May 12: Feed My Starving Children. Commission reported that STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resiliency) training presentation from Donna Minter was well received at Augsburg College Nobel Peace Prize Forum. Four scholarships for Faith Mennonite members will be offered for the seminar. Still seeking some scholarships for the Somali community. Commission reported that the MN Council of Churches has a refugee settlement program. Looking for people to “sponsor” families. These sponsors will be part of a team that will support these families for four-month terms. Three volunteers from Faith Mennonite have already come forward. We are seeking to build a collaborative team with the Community of St. Martin and possibly the Oromo church across the street.

**Trustees: Glenn.** Commission reported that the Interior Committee will resume the change process. They have reviewed the new job description for the office coordinator and the congregational communication. They have made edits to the congregational communication and will prepare for publication within the church newsletter. Action item: Joetta will prepare communication via the email update and Sunday bulletin.

--Matthew Blackwell Kinney, acting, Secretary,(in Arlene Holdeman’s absence)

	January	February	March
<b>Total expenses</b>	\$12,048	\$15,533	\$21,878**
<b>Total income</b>	\$8,702	\$14,108	\$10,297
<b>Monthly budget</b>	\$12,775	\$12,775	\$12,775

\*\*March expenditures included annual contribution to Central Plains Conference and Mennonite Church, USA

### What's happening here and there...

#### Ordination Ceremony of Shuji Moriichi

Shuji Moriichi, a former FMC member and spouse of Ruth Johnston, will be formally ordained in the Minnesota Council United Church of Christ on Saturday, May 8. The service of ordination will begin at 3 p.m. at St. Mark's United Church of Christ; the address is 8630 Xerxes Ave. S., Bloomington; and their website is [www.stmarksuccmn.org](http://www.stmarksuccmn.org). Refreshments will follow. FMC members and friends are warmly invited to participate in this event. Shuji works as Chaplain/Director of Spiritual Care and Director of Organizational Learning at Cerenity of South St. Paul, a long-term care campus.

#### One Voice Mixed Chorus Present a Family Concert

Families will want to mark their calendars for the June 4 and 5 One Voice Mixed Chorus concert, “Different is GREAT!” Framed by the classic story “Ferdinand and the Bull,” One Voice presents a family-friendly concert celebrating what makes us all unique. Sing-alongs, puppetry, and music ranging from *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* and *De Colores* to highlights from “Carmen.” And best of all, it’s FREE for anyone under 18—and perfect for kids from 5 to 105! June 4: 7 p.m.; June 5: 11 a.m., 3 p.m., and 7 p.m., at the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, 1500 East Lake Street, Minneapolis. Tickets and info: [www.ovmc.org](http://www.ovmc.org) or 651-298-1954.

### From “The Book of Hours”

Do not be troubled, God, though they say “mine”  
of all things that permit it patiently.  
they are like wind that lightly strokes the boughs  
and says: MY tree.

They hardly see  
how all things glow that their hands seize upon,  
so that they cannot touch  
even the utmost fringe and not be singed.

They will say “mine” as one will sometimes call  
the prince his friend in speech with villagers,  
this prince being very great — and far away.  
They call strange walls “mine,” knowing not at all  
who is the master of the house indeed.  
They still say “mine,” and claim possession, though  
each thing, as they approach, withdraws and closes;  
a silly charlatan perhaps thus poses  
as owner of the lightning and the sun.  
And so they say: my life, my wife, my child,  
my dog, well knowing all that they have stiled  
their own: life, wife, child, dog, remain  
shapes foreign and unknown,  
that blindly groping they must stumble on.  
This truth, be sure, only the great discern,  
who long for eyes. The others WILL not learn  
that in the beggary of their wandering  
they cannot claim a bond with any thing,  
but, driven from possessions they have prized,  
not by their own belongings recognized,  
they can OWN wives no more than they own flowers,  
whose life is alien and apart from ours.

God, do not lose your equilibrium.  
Even he who loves you and discerns your face  
in darkness, when he trembles like a light  
you breathe upon, — he cannot own you quite.  
And if at night one holds you closely pressed,  
locked in his prayers so you cannot stray,  
you are the guest  
who comes, but not to stay.

God, who can hold you? To yourself alone  
belonging, by no owner’s hand disturbed,  
you are like unripened wine that unperturbed  
grows ever sweeter and is all its own.

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

**The deadline for June newsletter items is noon,  
Thursday, May 27<sup>h</sup>.**

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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.