

Faith Connection

May 2012

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church
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Faith Mennonite Church is a Christ-centered community which seeks to be a place of welcome and nurture for all. Our lives are guided by the life of Jesus and the historic peace position of the Mennonite Church. Our members are people from varied religious backgrounds, and diverse cultures, gay and straight, young and old. We invite you to join us in being a sign of God's healing and hope in our community and world.

Pastoral Musings...

Totally surrendered to the love of Jesus, we are free to love all those who come our way, for our Lord breaks down all barriers and makes our heart as large as His.
– From the Rule of the Sisters of Assumption

Cleta Roth Gingerich shared this quote at the April Deacon Commission meeting as we were discussing what it means to be church with one another. Much of our energy naturally goes into caring for those within our community, but as this quote reminds us, surrender to Jesus and letting Him enlarge our hearts means that we will care for those beyond our community as well. This is the essence of being a “missional” church—sharing life and hope with those on both sides of our walls.

Recently I came across some notes I had taken when Donna Minter and I were in Pittsburgh last summer at the Mennonite Church convention. One of the documents we discussed there described these characteristics of a missional church:

- it continues the reconciling work of Jesus, engaging the world with the attitude of a servant
- its programs and finances are directed outward, and
- it embraces the social and ethnic diversity of the community in which it is located.

This past week, I witnessed the fruit of our missional activities of the past several years in which we've invited the neighborhood into conversation and activity through the neighborhood forums, the benefit concerts, strawberry picking, the anniversary service projects, and the sustainability fair. Within just several days two different people from the community contacted the church for support – one sought a place and guidance for a funeral; the other was looking for a referral. In both cases the person making the contact had never

come to worship but had the impression that our church is a “place of welcome and openness.” That impression doesn't just happen. A reputation is almost always based on actions that are observed by others.

The gathering of people who came to the funeral last Sunday afternoon had never been in our church before. Bagpipe music rather than four-part singing filled the air. As many stood outside on the corner before and after, it appeared that was the more comfortable place, yet at a time of grief they came and found comfort in our sanctuary. While I presided at the funeral and had first-hand contact with the family, I felt that I was ministering on behalf of our entire church for it was the cumulative actions of everyone that created the invitation and hospitable space.

When I was in Honduras during my sabbatical, one of my hosts, a former president of the Honduran Mennonite Church, asked me: “How does your church evangelize?” I was glad to share the different ways we've been engaged the community. We might not use the language of evangelism, but it certainly appears that we are leaking the “good news.” And for this, I give thanks

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry Staff Update...

This past month we held another Creating a Culture of Peace nonviolence training at FMC. On April 13-15, Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon, 16 participants went through a popular education process of learning and discovery about the dynamics and practices of active nonviolence. I was co-facilitator along with CCP founder Janet Chisholm, in her last training before moving away from Minnesota.

Four people from FMC participated: Andrew Jilani, Aryn Baxter, Joan Wing, and Dick Westby. One difference from last year was the number of people from

outside of the Twin Cities. There were eight from Wisconsin, including several members of the board of directors from the organization Many Ways of Peace (Eagle River, Wisconsin), as well as two from Duluth and one from Mountain Lake. Three of the out-of-town participants had Mennonite connections--the rest did not. Thanks to Katie Hochstedler, Cori Skogerboe, and Candace Lutt for providing food for the weekend!

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Adult Christian Education Session in May

For the past several years we have set aside September, January, and May as times for all-church discussions during the adult education time. Three sessions will be held in May as follows:

- **May 6.** Joetta Schlabach will share experiences from her sabbatical earlier this year.
- **May 13.** Either Tyler Zabriskie will speak about his experiences with humanitarian relief in various countries **or** there will be a session focusing on Bread for the World (arranged by Hermann Weinlick). The date will be determined after final travel times are known later in April.
- **May 20.** Session led by Tyler Zabriskie or Hermann Weinlick (see May 13).

--Kathleen Harder, adult education coordinator

May 20 is Children's Day

We will conclude our September-May education year with our annual Children's Day celebration. Plans for the day include a worship service that will highlight the participation of the children's classes as well as individual musical offerings, and recognition of our Sunday School teachers. Rumor has it that a couple of Jesus' disciples may make an appearance and that a miracle might occur. During the last half of the education hour, the children's classes will get a chance to plant our church garden, which might expand in size. The morning will conclude with a picnic at Matthews Park, weather permitting.

--Christian Education Commission

Save the Date!! Fall All-Church Retreat, October 5-7



Camp St. Croix, a YMCA camp in Hudson, WI, just 40 minutes from Faith Mennonite Church, has been selected as the site for a weekend, all-church retreat, October 5-7. The camp, located on the bank of the St. Croix River, offers renovated facilities, hiking trails, outdoor camp fire rings, and a food service that accommodates a wide range of dietary concerns.

The planning committee (Wendy Brunner, Adam Nafziger, Donna Stucky, and Joetta Schlabach) will be providing more information soon but invites everyone to put the date on your calendar and plan for a great weekend of community building and relaxation in nature.

Congratulations Graduates!

We have tried to collect information from each of our students who are completing study programs this spring. If you are aware of anyone we have overlooked, please let us know so we can include in the June newsletter.

Mark Kaufman is graduating with a Master of Social Work degree from University of St Thomas/St Catherine University and will continue to work in Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) at Touchstone Mental Health.

Greta Kreider Carlson is graduating as a pre-med student from Lewis & Clark College, in Portland, Oregon, with a BA in Hispanic Studies and a minor in Chemistry. Greta writes: "I just got a dream job as a field instructor working in St George, Utah at Second Nature, a wilderness therapy program. I'll be backpacking with adults and adolescents with behavioral or substance abuse issues for at least a year. Then who knows—long-term plans still include medical

school, though! I'm moving in three weeks and am excited to visit Minnesota soon!"

Yeshe Lemu completed and defended her thesis this spring, finishing her Masters degree in Environmental Health at the University of Minnesota. She is returning to a part-time lab technician job and also does some interpreting work.

Rachael Okerlund, daughter of Neil and Debbie, graduates from Augsburg College in May 2012 with a BA in Education, certified to teach K-8. She will be working this summer as a teacher in the new Children's Defense Fund Freedom School at Park Ave Youth and Family Services. This fall, Rachael begins a one-year contract with the AmeriCorps College Possible Program in Minneapolis Public Schools.

Jacob Schlabach has been student teaching at Southwest High in Minneapolis this semester as a final requirement for completing his education studies at the University of St. Thomas. St. Thomas will be "endorsing" his credentials for his state teaching license in Communication Arts and Literature 5-12. He will be looking for a teaching position for the coming year.

Haven Schrock graduated from Goshen College this spring with a degree in communications. He is heading to Nashville for the summer "to live with my friends' band and figure out what I want to do from there."

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	January	February	March
Total Giving	\$11,521	\$10,414	\$11,349
Giving Target	\$11,667	\$11,667	\$11,667

Coming and Going...

William Chittenden has informed us that he is feeling drawn to explore his spiritual pilgrimage in another setting. He expressed deep appreciation for the welcome and support that he experienced during his brief time with us, especially as he worked through his grief around the anniversary of his mother's death. He was also glad for the opportunity to learn more about the Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding and experience of faith.

Yeshe Lemu reports that her daughter **Messay Tamrat**, who lives and works in Chicago, has taken a two-month leave to spend time with her family in Ethiopia. She departed on March 30 and reports having an excellent time.



*May
Birthday
Brunch*

If you or a family member has a birthday in May, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on May 19th. (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.

*Saturday,
May 19
9:30-11:00
a.m.*

Deacons Update

The deacons met on April 18th. Discussions centered on how the deacons can facilitate longer-term support for members of the congregation as needed. The fall retreat was also discussed and Joetta shared some ideas for focusing on deepening our relationship with the Bible in the upcoming year. Cleta Roth Gingerich will serve as the Powderhorn/Longfellow neighborhood group deacon from May – December 2012, replacing Aryn Baxter for the last three months of her term. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 30th at the Nafziger's home.

--Aryn Baxter

War Tax Resistance

Melissa Hochstetler is sharing her war tax resistance letter to the IRS in this month's newsletter. Besides the IRS, the letter was copied to President Obama, Senators Klobuchar and Franken, and Representative Ellison. The following is the text of her letter:

We are being overwhelmed with rhetoric this year, about how much we should pay in taxes, and who should pay more or less of them. Tax season can be a stressful time, as we notice how much we pay to the federal government, without necessarily remembering all of the good things that our tax dollars pay for.

What's happening here and there...

I am in favor of higher taxes. I am grateful for the good things that my government does. However, in light of all of the unmet needs in our country, I am very concerned about the high percentage of tax dollars that go to the military. According to a Brown University study, the estimated total cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be between \$3.5 and \$4 trillion. This is in addition to more than 200,000 lives lost, which is beyond a price tag.

The benefits of these wars are in doubt. If we would spend \$4 trillion on clean water, hospitals, and education in Iraq and Afghanistan, we would have built up enormous goodwill toward our country, and eradicated the threat of terrorism. Lives would be saved instead of lost. If we had stayed out of these wars completely, we could have spent \$4 trillion on educating and feeding the children of our country, thus ensuring our future security. Instead, we spent them on bombs and warfare. Through my tax dollars, I am supporting the military in a way that I never would as an individual.

I believe that violence will never bring security. I believe that violence will never bring justice. As a citizen in this democracy, it is my responsibility to let my elected officials know that I do not support the way my tax dollars are being spent. If necessary, it is my responsibility to do this through civil disobedience. That is why I am withholding \$36.36 of my tax dollars.

I am in favor of higher taxes, and so I will not keep this money for myself. I am sending it to Voices for Creative Nonviolence, an organization which has been working for peace and justice in Iraq for years. They are part of our true hope for peace and an end to terrorism, and they will be responsible stewards of my tax money.

I understand that this will create a hassle for employees of the IRS who are no more responsible for our country's spending decisions than I am. I apologize to them, and wish them well.

--Sincerely, Melissa Hochstetler

Space and Scholarships Available for Next STAR Workshop, June 20-24

Space is still available for the upcoming Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) training that will be held in Minneapolis June 20-24, 2012. STAR integrates concepts of trauma healing and resilience, neuro-psychology, restorative justice, nonviolent peace building, conflict transformation, and broadly defined spirituality to respond to the full spectrum of violence and trauma and to implement alternatives to revenge. Generous donors, who understand the power of STAR, have provided scholarship assistance for Minnesota participants who have the interest and time to participate but lack the financial resources for full tuition. 27 hours of professional continuing education are available for an additional fee.

Detailed information at: www.starmpls2.eventbrite.com and www.emu.edu/star or contact Donna L. Minter at STAR.Mpls@gmail.com or 612-377-4660 to receive a scholarship application and registration, which are due by May 5, 2012.

Faith Mennonite Church has been one of many partners supporting Donna in bringing STAR to the Twin Cities. Developed and offered through the Eastern Mennonite University Center for Justice and Peacemaking, this will be the fourth time that STAR is offered locally.

The deadline for June newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, May 30th.

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.