

Faith Connection

May 2013

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

Pastoral Musings...

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:38-39

This scripture is in the “Top Twelve” scriptures that we identified in January as we participated in the “12 Scriptures Project” along with many other churches across our denomination. These verses will be the theme for our worship on May 5. We will use the all-church adult education hour that day to discuss the feedback we have received from Central Plains Conference with summary information from the fall 2012 regional listening sessions that were called in response to the marriage guidelines we adopted in early 2012.

Like the long winter that has persisted this year through much of April, when most of us are longing for signs of spring, some aspects of the conference feedback will likely feel like a late-winter snow fall. We may be weary of shoveling, but the work of discernment and understanding is not complete. While the feedback contains significant affirmation for Faith Mennonite Church, it also contains caution and even rebuke.

As you read the summary feedback, which can be found at www.centralplainsmc.org/discernment-resources.html (we will include a link in the May 3 Midweek Update), and as we share our responses with one another, I encourage us to consider several actions:

- 1) Read, reflect, and pray with Romans 8:38-39 as you read the summary feedback. Remember that *nothing* will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
- 2) Read, reflect, and pray with Matthew 5:1-12, remembering that in God's kingdom, resistance and conflict can be a sign of blessing. In the

spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, hold in prayer and love all of the members of our conference, including those who disagree with us.

- 3) Think of creative, life-giving ways that we can continue to support one another and engage with our conference. We have witnessed many examples as people have been coping with the April weather: wearing brightly colored clothes, pretending it's still March, sharing humorous cartoons and thoughts via Facebook, and celebrating the beauty of snow clinging to trees that we wish were showing some green by now.

Finally (and here I credit my husband, Gerald Schlabach, who shared the following from a commentary he recently read), while it is easy to despair of some aspects of our relationship with the larger church, lamenting the sharp differences of understanding around certain issues, the church may be one of the few remaining places in society where people are forced to relate to one another across the deep social, cultural, and ideological divides that have formed. People increasingly choose to live in neighborhoods with like-minded folks and to socialize with those of similar educational and political backgrounds. As hard as it can be to remain in relationship with others who seem to be at such different places of understanding, the church survives as perhaps the *only institution of choice* where this is still happening. As we stay in relationship we affirm, with the creation stories in Genesis, that *all things are good*. And we continue to live into the reality of the current season of Eastertide. God's love breaks the power of sin and death. Let us rejoice!

--Joetta Schlabach

“Somebody has to do something, and it's just so incredibly pathetic that it has to be us”

-- Jerry Garcia

Ministry staff report...

On April 13, the morning of the Neighborhood Sustainability Fair, I was down in the church basement opening up the door between the library and the fellowship hall. I was thinking, “I wonder if this next wall section opens up, too?” To my surprise, it slid over quite easily in the overhead track and could be completely pulled out and placed out of the way. And the next one, and the next. In a few minutes, the library and the fellowship hall were transformed into one contiguous, super-sized exhibition hall.

That was a good thing, too, because we had so many presenters this year, the second year of the fair. There were some 30 displays or activity stations that we packed in to the fellowship hall. Cooler weather and the CSA fair over at Seward Coop seemed to draw more people over to the church and down to the basement this year. At times we were downright crowded.

Outside, Sisters’ Camelot served about 200 meals of organic vegetarian fare between 12:00-2:15, and put out some boxes of free produce at the end. Dan Leisen set up some spiffy signs and streamers outside the church and down the street to draw people in. One presenter parked his hour car on the sidewalk in front of the door. (It was too cold, however, for Mennonite Worker to bring their chickens to show off!)

Inside, the organizations ranged from Seward Neighborhood Group environment committee, to the Sierra Club, to MN ASAP (Arms Spending Alternatives Project), to Xcel Energy which provided a bunch of free stuff to raffle off. Free Geek collected used computer equipment and small appliances. Activity stations included the bike repair station (thanks to Sam Reinert), clothing and toy/games exchange (Kristin Green and Karen Peterson), kids’ activities station (Shelly and Matthew Hendricks), green cleaning supplies station (Karen Wiebe and Wendy Brunner), firestarter making station (Joan Kreider, Kristin Green, and Heather Wengerd), postage stamp re-use display (Patricia Mack), and gardening station (Melissa Hochstetler and Teresa Wasick).

Special thanks to all the FMCers who went the extra mile to help pull this off. The planning team included Susan Weinlick, Laurie Kaufman, and Dick Westby. Set up/tear down specialists were Orv and Cleta Gingerich and Travis Lusk. Joetta Schlabach served as greeter, Dan Leisen as photographer, and Dick Westby, with his old-fashioned high school megaphone, as an energetic

MC for the periodic raffle drawings. Paula Okerstrom and Dick Westby helped beforehand with flyering in the neighborhood, Mike Okerstrom helped make and put up indoor signage, and Gregg Richardson loaned out his pickup. And many other helpers along the way—thank you!

On May 8, we are planning a Wednesday evening interfaith potluck meal, which gains added importance after the Boston bombings. The following week, May 15, we are expecting visitors from Woodland Hills Church to the Wednesday meal.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

CPMC Hosting Weekend

We had one visitor, Dennis Lehman, from Salem-Zion Mennonite Church in Freeman, South Dakota, who visited during our planned weekend for Central Plains Conference guests, April 13-14. Dennis was hosted by Dick and Sandra Westby and took part in a variety of activities: the Sustainability Fair, a meal at the Mid-Town Global market with several FMC members, a choral concert by *The Singers*, Sunday worship, education and a potluck meal. Dennis is a homemaker who is involved in church and community education around issues of peacemaking and rural agriculture and land-use. He sent the following note of thanks: “Thank you for your generous hospitality. I enjoyed getting to know the Faith Mennonite Congregation. My thanks to all for making me feel welcome.” We appreciate the coordinating work of Arlene and Glenn Geissing and Orv and Cleta Roth Gingerich in planning for the weekend.

Worship Workshop May 11

The following class options will be offered during the The worship commission continues to prepare for a morning (9:15-11:30) workshop on Saturday, May 11, for musicians, song leaders, worship leaders and readers. We have invited Bret Hesla and Mary Preus, music leaders at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church to serve as resource people for the morning. During a break-out time when Bret and Mary will work with our musicians and song leaders, Joetta and members of the worship commission will work with the worship leaders and readers to enhance our skills for leading the congregation in worship. *Anyone* who has led worship or taken a reading part in the past—or who is interested

in participating in this way in the future—is encouraged to come! We anticipate a wonderful exchange of gifts and learning from one another.

– *Worship Commission (Joan Kreider, Gregg Richardson, Donna Stucky, Kristi Zabriskie)*

March (1st Quarter) Financial Statement

| Income | Year to Date |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Offerings | \$26,689 |
| Rent | 9,615 |
| Investments | 1,909 |
| Total Income | \$38,213 |

Expenses

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Conference support | \$3,500* |
| Deacons | 2,488 |
| Education | 2,179 |
| FICA | 421 |
| Fellowship | 166 |
| Missions Service | 114 |
| Office | 1,943 |
| Pastor/Ministry Staff | 18,548 |
| Trustees/bldg expenses | 9,208 |
| Worship | 206 |
| Mortgage | 1,480 |
| Total Expenses | \$40,254 |
| Income minus expenses | (\$2,041) |

Quarterly budgeted

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| offerings | \$35,625 |
| Actual offerings | \$26,689 |
| Shortfall | (\$8,936) |

Note: Due to the first quarter shortfall in offerings, funds were withdrawn from the church’s investment account to cover April expenditures.

*This quarter’s “conference support” expense is our full-year gift of support to Shalom Mennonite Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Twin Cities Mennonites Gather to Eat and Sing

On Sunday, April 21, approximately 85 people from Twin Cities Mennonite (and other) churches gathered at Emmanuel Mennonite Church. We began by enjoying a sumptuous meal prepared by the women of the Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul, as a fund-raising event for their women’s group. They took in approximately \$1600 toward their goal of \$3,000 needed for travel to Colorado in August to attend a national Hmong Mennonite Women’s event. The meal time was filled

with conversation, connection, and reconnection. Then, on satisfied stomachs, we proceeded to sing together and enjoy several special numbers brought by each of the congregations represented: Faith Mennonite, Emmanuel Mennonite, Hmong Mennonite, St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship, and Shalom Mennonite of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The FMC vocal ensemble shared the anthem they sang on Easter, “On This Day,” and also led the group in singing two songs from the Bret Hesla anniversary song collection *River of Gladness*. Karen Wiebe directed the ensemble, Phil Stoltzfus led the Hesla songs, and Sandy Westby and David Mayou provided accompaniment.

-- *Joetta Schlabach*



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 18th. (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.

May
Birthday
Brunch

Saturday,
May 18
9:30-11
a.m.

Spirituality journal...

From *New Seeds of Contemplation* (pp. 14-17) by Thomas Merton:

“Every moment and every event of every [person’s] life on earth plants something in his [or her] soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of [humans]. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because [people] are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of freedom, spontaneity, and love....”

Recently I’ve been reading from the thoughts of Thomas Merton and this quote struck me. It made me wonder what “seeds” are floating around me without my

perceiving them. It also made me think about the soil of my own life and whether it is hospitable to these germs of spiritual vitality I so crave. I love the way Merton characterizes good soil. It is not laden with more effort, more discipline, more organization, more plans. It is full of freedom, spontaneity and love. In these three things what is most vital can germinate. In our modern lives we may have to write these in on our schedules and then respect them—time to dream, time to sit in the garden and breathe, time to play. Where in your life this week, can the seeds of the Spirit find freedom, spontaneity and love?

--Ruth Johnston

What's happening here and there...

New SCN Congregations Welcomed

BMC (Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests) is pleased to welcome two new congregations to the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) as congregations who publicly affirm lgbt people as full members. The are: Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Canada and Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Indiana. Hope represents the first congregation in Manitoba to come out as a publicly affirming congregation. The congregation has taken a very long and thorough path, engaging in an extensive process of education, dialog and discernment.

Prince of Peace is the eighth congregation in Indiana to join SCN. After a very intentional process of discernment, the congregation moved by unanimous consent to join SCN. With the addition of Hope Mennonite and Prince of Peace, SCN has grown to a total of 67 congregations and/or groups. More significant, from February 2011 to February 2013, SCN has grown by 36%.

Also, the Pink Menno campaign has begun planning for a presence at the Mennonite Church USA conference in Phoenix, Arizona this summer. They will hold worship services, seminars, and other events continuing their work to make the church welcoming and affirming of lgbtq people. Pink Menno is looking for more people to get involved for the next convention. If you are interested, contact bmc@bmclgbt.org.

Love the Living One

To love merely for the sake of outer beauty and color is not love but disgrace.

The peacock's plumage is its enemy.

How many kings have died for their kingdoms?

They kill the musk deer for its scent.

They skin the fox for its pelt.

They take down the great elephant for its ivory.

They may kill you for what is not really yourself.

And they think your blood will lie quiet.

Today it lies on the victim;

tomorrow it will be on the killer.

However long the shadow cast by the wall,

the shadow returns to what cast it.

This world is the mountain; each action

is like a shout that echoes back.

Love of the dead does not last,
because the dead will not return.

But love of the living

is in every moment fresher than a bud,
both to the inward and the outward eye

Choose the love of that Living One

who is everlasting, who offers you

the wine that increases life.

Do not say "We have no entrance to that King."

Dealings with the generous are not difficult.

--Rumi

The deadline for June newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, May 29th.

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.