

# Faith Connection

May 2014

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church  
2720 E. 22<sup>nd</sup> St. Minneapolis, MN 55406  
Ph: (612) 375-9483  
e-mail: [faithmc@faithmennonite.org](mailto:faithmc@faithmennonite.org)  
web: [www.faithmennonite.org](http://www.faithmennonite.org)

*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...

*To everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:*

*A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;...*

*A time to break down and a time to build up;...*

*A time to seek and a time to lose;...*

*A time to keep and a time to throw away... -*

*--Ecclesiastes 3*

Each year when the season of gardening arrives in my back yard, I don't simply begin planting. First I have to do some rearranging. About nine years ago we planted a maple tree to add some shade to the south side of our house. A few years later we added two plum trees – an Alderman for its exquisite flavor and a Toka for its pollinating capacity. Each year as these trees grow and spread, the patterns of sun and shade shift a bit. This year I moved a spreading *rudbeckia* (black-eyed-Susan) so I could put tomato plants in what has become the sunniest spot.

Churches are like my garden. We are always changing: as children grow, as people come and go, as those who remain face new challenges and/or move into new stages of life, as persons feel a new prompting from the Spirit to reach out in a new form of ministry, as we become aware of new—or old-become-visible—needs around us.

For some time I, too, have felt a season turning within myself. I am grateful for the almost 14 years that our family has been part of this congregation and the 7+ years that I have served in a pastoral role. Now, however, I think it might be good for me to move into a bit more shade and make way for other(s) who would like some direct sun for growth in ministry in our church garden. I anticipate that the coming months will be akin to spring gardening: we'll take stock of the quality of our soil (community), consider what it is we want to be planting and nurturing (mission), and pray for sun and rain (wisdom and God's guidance) as we

move toward harvest time (of a new leadership configuration).

Without realizing it, Rudy Okerlund set the stage for this process as he began holding the “What is this place” conversations last fall and winter. Now, at the request of the Church Council and with the collaboration of Karen Wiebe and Melissa Hochstetler, he'll bring that process to the entire congregation in three adult education sessions in May (see related article, “Adult Education in May,” page 2). This will be the first step of a longer discernment process regarding our future ministry leadership configuration. To everything there is a season. Spring is here and we have some work to do!

*--Joetta Schlabach*

## What's happening at FMC...

### May 18 Children's Day to Feature Canadian Singer/Songwriter

It's become a tradition here at FMC to conclude our Sunday School year with a Children's Day worship service and a potluck meal following the final education hour. We've tried to have a featured guest each year and this year we look forward to the participation of Canadian singer/song-writer Bryan Moyer Suderman. Bryan will be on a US tour, traveling by rail, which will bring him to the Twin Cities the weekend of May 16-18.

He enjoys participating in worship and providing family-friendly concerts. Singers, like farmers, sometimes find it challenging to make a living from their music. Bryan has taken the community supported agriculture (CSA) model and is trying to develop a CSM—community supported music. You can learn more about his music at [www.smalltallmusic.com](http://www.smalltallmusic.com). Children's Day worship will also feature some of our young musicians and teacher recognition.

*--Christian Education Commission*

## Adult Education in May: What is This Place?

The adult education hours on May 4, 11 and 18 will be devoted to discussions of how FMC can flourish in the coming years. The sessions are being planned by Rudy Okerlund, Karen Wiebe and Melissa Hochstetler

The agendas are yet to be worked out, but here are some questions we will discuss together: Is how we do church creating the assurance needed in order to allow us to flourish as an urban Mennonite church both within and outside our church walls?

Session focus:

Part 1: What is our current reality within our church walls and with the social forces outside our church?

Part 2: Why do we go to church: what do we hold to and what needs rethinking?

Part 3: What might moving forward look like?

We are hoping for the broadest possible participation in these conversations. Everyone is welcome—members and regular attenders. Your voice matters!

--Rudy Okerlund

## Leadership Reconfiguration Discussion Begins

*Note: This message was distributed to the congregation via email on April 17.*

For some months Joetta Schlabach has been in conversation with the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee concerning her ministry at Faith. On April 10 the PPRC presented to the church council a proposal which was heartily endorsed by the council. This would involve Joetta reducing her work to half-time and adding other staff. The council approved a plan to devote up-coming adult education sessions in May and September to addressing the question, "What will be the primary ministry of Faith to the community (inner and outer) in the next few years?" and then considering what leadership gifts we need to lead us in this ministry.

Following are portions of the proposal from Joetta that the PPRC brought to church council:

*"As I completed seven years of pastoral ministry at Faith Mennonite Church at the end of December 2013 and approach the completion of my second, three-year term as solo pastor at the end of May 2014, I have been giving thought to what the next period of my ministry*

*might look like. I have been trying to listen to the inner stirrings of my heart, which I trust are promptings of the Spirit.*

*"For some time, I have had a growing desire to work less than full time and to be in a collaborative ministry setting. When I was preparing for ministry I did not envision being a solo pastor. While the experience of the past six years has been positive and I am grateful for this opportunity for personal growth and service, I realize that I often do my best work in collaboration rather than alone. I also long for a less-demanding work life so that I have more time to offer hospitality and to work on one or two larger issues that interest me. Thus I would like to propose moving to a half-time position at FMC, preferably no later than early 2015.*

*"While I would like to be able to focus my ministry within FMC to several areas (to be determined in conversation with the congregation), I would be pleased to serve as a mentor to someone who is just beginning in ministry or to build a collaborative team with another ministry colleague(s).*

*"Following are two things that I would like to have more flex time to explore and address. . . . (1) A new opportunity has emerged to become more involved in a [Central Plains] conference-level activity: a volunteer is needed to assume responsibility for planning and leading the occasional Ecuador Fellowship and Learning Tours. I enjoyed my participation in this tour in January and have been affirmed for this role by the current leaders. This is an opportunity that reintegrates Gerald's and my earlier experience in Latin America and it would help us test an invitation that we received while in Ecuador to return in some type of teaching capacity in the future. I could not take on this role in addition to my current FMC responsibility load.*

*"(2) Building relationships of trust in a society where our racial divisions are not always obvious yet still deeply entrenched, requires concerted energy. I don't feel that I can continue to say I am committed to such relationships and change in the church unless I move from intention to action. I would like to have time to deepen my relationship with the Hmong Mennonite Church, with one of the churches of color in Greater Longfellow and perhaps to volunteer with an organization that is working at reform in the criminal justice system."*

The council felt this opens exciting possibilities for the ministry of Faith Mennonite Church. We encourage

persons with questions to speak with either of us or to other members of the council. Joetta is also glad to speak of her discernment process in this matter.

--Noah Skogerboe, Chair, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, Hermann Weinlick, Moderator

## Ecumenical Taizé Service – May 7

On May 7 FMC will be the host site for the final ecumenical Taizé prayer service of the year as part of our collaboration with Cabrini Catholic Church, Prospect Park United Methodist Church, and two smaller communities that meet at Prospect Park UMC. As the host church we will provide a simple soup meal at 6 p.m., followed by the Taizé service at 7 p.m. All are welcome to this service of song, scripture readings and silence.

Taizé prayer takes its name from a small village in eastern France. Since 1940 it has been the home of an ecumenical community of brothers whose life is centered around prayer three times a day. Founded by Brother Roger, a Swiss Protestant who moved there to help Jews escape the Nazis, the community today includes over 100 Catholic and Protestant brothers.

Their ministry is broadly ecumenical and focuses especially on young adults. Every year over 100,000 young people (and some older ones) come from all over the world to make a week-long pilgrimage to Taizé for prayer, Bible study, sharing, and communal work. The community's outreach is global, not only by welcoming pilgrims, but through meetings in cities in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

## Trustee Report

In the next week, work should begin on repairs to the church and education wing roofs. We have had leaking on the three corners of our roof where we have flat portions. The sections will be pulled off, new planking installed and a new membrane portion put on. It has been many years since this was done. At the same time, three sections of the asphalt roof on the church will be replaced. This is where individual shingles have come off over the past two years. Lastly, several spots on the education wing roof need sealing as water sometimes backs up and finds a way through the roof. The total bill for this work is approximately \$27,000. We received \$10,000 from Community of St. Martin as a partner in sharing space and the church will use \$17,000 from our budget for our portion. Additionally, once the roof repair is done, we will be contracting to have tuck pointing done in areas where the mortar has come out between the brick. This has allowed water to seep in and we believe this is a partial cause of the paint coming off in the entry way by the entrance on 28<sup>th</sup> street. If you have any questions please touch base with Bruce Brunner.

We will also be having a Spring cleanup day in May. The specific date hasn't been set yet but we will let everyone know and would appreciate help in getting the church and the grounds spruced up.

--Bruce Brunner

## Ecuador Fellowship & Learning Tour Report - Part 3

*This is the third installment of the report that I wrote following Gerald's and my January 17-28 trip to Ecuador. The report had three sections: Learnings, Fellowship, and Recommendations.*

Fellowship (part 1 – Riobamba) All of the information we received on the trip could no doubt be found in books and on-line resources. The greatest value of a trip such as this is meeting brothers and sisters in faith, receiving their hospitality and learning from their experiences. The hospitality we received came in various forms: church members taking time out of their schedules to accompany us at various times, welcoming us into their worship services, patiently listening to our less-than-fluent Spanish, taking the extra time needed for translation, individual families hosting us for 3-4 days/nights not only on the weekend but also during work days.



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 10<sup>th</sup>. (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).

May  
Birthday  
Brunch

Saturday,  
May 10<sup>th</sup>  
9:30-11  
a.m.

While we were in Riobamba we were fortunate to be housed together with Miguel and Santiago from Colombia. This made it possible for us to get better acquainted with both Ecuadoran and Colombian culture. Our hosts, Nancy Naranjo and Gerardo Rodriguez, were gracious and energetic. We had an interesting conversation on our first morning with the family, when Nancy's elderly parents who are deeply observant Catholics, joined us for breakfast. Her father asked, "What do Mennonites believe?" I gave the standard three-point response about "discipleship, community, and peace." Miguel added, "we believe that our faith needs to leave the church and be in service to others."

We learned that the Riobamba church has had its ups and downs, with a frequent turn-over in leadership: Don and Jan Reinheimer (2008-2010), Daniel and Beatriz Escobar (2010-2012), William and Luz Marina Valencia (2012-2014), and now Raul and Yvette Escobar are taking the role of pastoral coordinators. The church was begun by Catholic couples who had participated in a marriage encounter and were looking for ways to continue strengthening their marital relationships and deepen their faith. The church has developed with a specific mission of supporting and strengthening marriages. We heard several testimonies from young couples who were at the point of separation and divorce and how the church and their faith have sustained them.

Perhaps because the Riobamba church's mission is focused around personal issues such as marriage and because a number of the members are small business owners or professionals, I got the impression that there was less of an emphasis on social justice issues, which we witnessed strongly in the Quito church. As mentioned earlier, we found ourselves very uncomfortable when Raul spoke so critically of the indigenous population. Upon further reflection, I know there are many Mennonites in the US who would have similar thoughts (even though they might not express them verbally) about minority communities in our country. Promoting healthy marriages and families is clearly a matter of social justice in a society where there is a high incidence of family violence and oppression of women. We pray for the health and growth in ministry of this congregation.

--Joetta Schlabach

## January-March Financial Statement

<b>Income</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
Offerings	\$30,120
Rent	8,785
Investments	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$38,905</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Conference support	\$0
Deacons	(-40)
Education	2,241
FICA	482
Fellowship	50
Missions and Service	590
Office	1,544
Pastor/Ministry Staff	19,156
Trustees/bldg expenses	10,329
Worship	319
Mortgage	1,567
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$36,238</b>
<b>Income minus expenses</b>	<b>\$2,667</b>
<b>YTD budgeted offerings</b>	<b>\$35,625</b>
<b>Actual offerings</b>	<b>\$30,125</b>
<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>(-\$5,500)</b>

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

#### **Advent Evening Prayer**

Jerry Janzen will be performing with The South Metro Chorale in "Haydn: The Creation." Directed by Russell Adrian, with professional soloists and orchestra, this performance will capture the original excitement generated by this stunning music and share it with audience members of all ages and listening experience.

During the London premiere of *The Creation*, it is reported that the opening chorus created such enthusiasm in the audience that loud and extended applause prevented the orchestra from proceeding for several minutes.

More than two hundred years later, that magical feeling (as Haydn's music brilliantly transforms chaos into light), still endures. Performers and listeners often clearly remember the first time they experienced this moment and are still moved even after hearing countless performances. SMC is excited and proud to share this masterwork with our patrons.

Performances will be Friday, May 2, 7:30 p.m. at Glendale United Methodist Church, 13550 Glendale Rd., Savage; and Sunday, May 4, 3:00.p.m. at St. Richard's Catholic Church, 7450 Penn Avenue S., Richfield. Tickets are available online at: [www.southmetrochorale.org](http://www.southmetrochorale.org), or at the door.

### **Thank You, Thank You...**

On behalf of the Pillsbury United Communities Board of Directors and staff, thank you for your generous gift of \$700 to support the Cedar-Riverside New Year's Day fire recovery efforts. With your gift you have joined with many community members who are working together to bring relief to the victims of the fire and their families. Pillsbury United Communities-Brian Coyle Center has a long history of serving the Cedar-Riverside community, and will continue to work with those impacted by the fire to recover and rebuild.

*--Chanda Smith Baker, President & CEO, Pillsbury United Communities; Amano Dube, Director, Brian Coyle Center*

**The deadline for June newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</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.

### **The din of light in the top of your tree...**

heralds you as everything festive and vain--  
they find you only when the day fades.  
The twilight, the tenderness of their rooms,  
lays a thousand heads on a thousand hands,  
and beneath them murmurs this strange piety.

You would hold the world to yourself in  
no other way, but this gentlest of gestures.  
Out of your sky you catch the earth up in your arms,  
and feel it close under your mantle's folds.

You have so quiet a way of being,  
that those who loudly sanctify your name,  
have already forgotten your nearness.

From your hands, lifted like mountains,  
rises, to give law to our muse,  
your dark-browed mute power.

*--Rainer Maria Rilke  
(translated: Gregg Richardson)*