

Faith Connection

May/June 2011

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...

*But you, O GOD, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
– Psalm 22:19*

*You are those who have stood by me in my trials...
– Luke 22:28*

One of the hardest things we ever do is ask for help. A clutter of cultural messages instills our reticence to admit we need assistance. Little voices whisper: “God helps those who help themselves...” “Smart people don’t get into situations like this...” “If I only worked harder I could figure this out...” Yet, despite the voices, each of us knows that we *do* need help, *often* and *throughout our lives*.

In the summer of 1972 Bill Withers’ hit song “Lean on Me” soared to number one. The simplicity of the lyrics and music struck a chord within our individualistic society. The song became an enduring favorite, with several other groups doing covers in recent years that also climbed up the charts.

*Sometimes in our lives
We all have pain
We all have sorrow
But if we are wise
We know that there's always tomorrow.*

Withers said that his memories of growing up in a West Virginia coal mining town inspired the lyrics: “Times were hard and when a neighbor needed something beyond their means, the rest of the community would chip in and help.”

*Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on.*

This spring as I read the Gospel narratives of the final days in Jesus’ life, I was struck by his need to lean on others. He entered Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey. He shared the Passover meal with his disciples in a room that belonged to someone else. In the garden on the night of his betrayal, he asked the disciples to keep watch and pray with him. He prayed fervently for strength from God and looked to his disciples for help, even when they weren’t up to the task. In Luke 22:28, Jesus commended the disciples for standing with him—even after they had just engaged in a petty dispute about which of them was greater than the other. One aspect of Jesus’ humanity was his willingness and his ability to ask for help. The one who so many people turned to for help also depended on the help of others.

*Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For no one can fill those of your needs
That you won't let show.*

While asking for help is one of the hardest things we do, being given an opportunity to offer help is one of the most satisfying things we experience! But as Withers sings, we can’t fill the need of another unless the other shows us the need. So, if we don’t ask for help, we continue to carry our burden alone *and* we deprive a brother or sister of the joy of coming to our aid!

I am glad that people freely share prayer concerns on Sunday morning for this is certainly a beginning point for offering prayerful support to one another. But there are also many practical things we do for each other. We have assisted each other with home repair projects, moving, child care, meals, and more. Our Deacon Fund is available when unexpected financial needs arise. Parenting partners are there to support our families. The weekly Soup Groups are a good place to deepen friendships, which makes asking a little bit easier.

I hope that each person, no matter if you’re a relative newcomer or one of the “fixtures,” will feel confident to

let someone know if you need to “lean on” the rest of us. Our neighborhood deacon groups are a good place to begin asking for help. The next time you’re in need of assistance, remember, asking for help is one of the ways we follow Jesus!

--Joetta Schlabach

“Live so you kin at least git the benefit o’ th’ doubt.”

--Abe Martin

What's happening at FMC...

FMC Summer Worship Explores Food and Faith

For the past four summers we have designed our summer worship theme using the summer Gather ‘Round Sunday School curriculum, since we don’t have a summer Christian education program. This year the Christian Education Commission recommended that the Worship Commission consider using the denominational Vacation Bible School (VBS) curriculum “Taste & See: God is Good.” Although we had a positive VBS experience last summer, there was not adequate volunteer support to organize a VBS program this summer, but the curriculum looked too good to pass up!

So the Worship Commission took up the idea of using the theme of food and faith, and the Education Commission agreed to coordinate several intergenerational, 2nd-hour experiences during the summer that will incorporate activities from the VBS curriculum. Minke Sundseth, children’s education coordinator, and Kathleen Remund, ministry staff person, are coordinating the 2nd-hour events. Alisa Bardo-Martinson, Thaine Dirks, Marybeth Luing, and Annette Semanchin Jones are assisting Joetta in planning the worship services. Families will be invited to take turns leading worship.

The summer worship series will begin on June 19, following our special 50th anniversary of the FMC founding worship service on June 5, and the celebration of Pentecost on June 12.

Three to Represent FMC at Central Plains Conference Annual Meeting, June 16-19

The annual meeting of Central Plains Mennonite Conference will be hosted for the first time by the Spanish-speaking Mennonite Churches of eastern Iowa and Moline, Illinois when it meets in Moline June 16-19. The theme for the meeting is “Guided by the Spirit: Brought to Complete Unity.” The guest speaker will be Juanita Nuñez, a Mennonite pastor from Miami, Florida. She is a past moderator of the Iglesia Menonita Hispana and sits on the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA.

Aryn Baxter, Leslie Minkler and Joetta Schlabach will serve as delegates from FMC in the business and discernment sessions. According to conference moderator Diane Zaerr Brenneman, the morning delegate sessions will focus on business items and afternoon sessions will be spent in discernment, particularly around the question: What are the activities, practices, programs, and behaviors that will help our conference be *faithful* and *united* in mission? “We are responding to the delegates’ request for more discernment and less business,” said Brenneman. The annual meeting will also include times of worship and workshop sessions.

June Soup Gatherings

Monday, June 6. Joan Kreider's home.

Tuesday, June 14. Matthew and Shelly Hendricks' home.

Thursday, June 23. Dan and Terry Gerber's home.

Friday, June 30. Powderhorn Park picnic.

May Deacons’ Meeting Summary

The deacons held their monthly meeting on Wednesday, May 25th. Topics addressed included the pastoral care needs of those who cannot come to church regularly, the role of deacons in supporting mental health within the church community, and upcoming events. The next meeting will be held on Sunday, June 19th, from 7-8:30 PM at the Richardson's home.

--Aryn Baxter

Comings and Goings

We extend a warm welcome to those who have recently visited or begun attending worship:

Jody Deloria & Angelica

Brian Keen & Kimberly Hunter

Michael Moore

Jen Weber & Sonja

Spring Graduations

We offer our congratulations to all who are graduating this spring/summer or who are almost finished.

Wendy Brunner participated in the U of M's School of Public Health commencement on May 16. "It was great to walk through with Yeshi!" Wendy is working on a PhD in epidemiology and hopes to defend her dissertation this August. "I'm currently about 2/3 of the way through. My research topic is risk factors for adult-onset asthma. I am planning to continue in my job as asthma epidemiologist with the Minnesota Department of Health for the foreseeable future (as long as our CDC funding is still in place)."

Laura Janzen graduates on May 29 from Gustavus Adolphus College with a degree in Psychology.

Yeshi Lemu also participated in the U of M's School of Public Health commencement on May 16. Yeshi is receiving a Masters degree in Public Health and Environmental Education. She is currently doing an internship and also needs to complete a thesis. She thanks everyone who has encouraged and supported her.

Callie Martin is graduating from the Evergreen State College on June 10th, 2011, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in ethnobotany/food politics and field plant taxonomy/botanical illustration. Callie writes: "Because we don't have majors at Evergreen this probably seems disjointed. But my areas of study are (in fact!) related and one of these days I'll come up with a succinct title for my skill-set. Until that day I'll just be a self-proclaimed plant nerd. Haha.

"Currently, I am finishing up my last program here, called Field Plant Taxonomy. As a class we are creating a flora/plant identification guide for South Puget Sound prairies. I am one of the illustrators for the project and we are hoping to have it published in the next year or so. This has been a very exciting opportunity for me, as we have gotten to collaborate with a lot of amazing organizations, communities and individuals who are working to preserve and protect this extremely important ecosystem. And I'm also enthusiastic about becoming a published botanical illustrator! I'd be happy to bring in some of my illustrations if folks would be interested in seeing them.

"This summer I'll be working as an intern at the Women's Environmental Institute (www.w-e-i.org) in

North Branch, Minnesota, starting on July 5th. I'll be living there for six weeks, working on their CSA farm and creating an individual project. For my project I'll be doing a floristic study of the Institute, compiling a list of invasive and native plants on the property. I feel very lucky that I'll be able to put my skills to use right away!

"After the internship is over, I have no plans except trying to find a job and a place to live.... I would like to save up money so that I can go back to school in the next few years. Thank you all for the lovely cards and packages that you have sent me over the last four years. They really helped me know that I have love and support while I was feeling stressed out and working hard in school. I look forward to seeing you all in June!!

--Love, Callie

Hillary Richardson graduated from DePaul University College of Law on May 15th. She is currently taking an intensive two month course to prepare for Illinois bar exams in late July, and is also job-searching. She intends to continue to work in the non-profit sector, focusing on human rights advocacy for immigrants and refugees.

Jacob Schlabach will complete a communication internship this summer and receive his diploma from Goshen College at the end of the summer with a BA in English and Communication. He continues his secondary education licensure studies at the University of St. Thomas.

Haven Schrock took part in a film internship in Los Angeles during the winter semester for his Communication and Film Studies major at Goshen College. He is staying in Goshen for the summer and looking for work for the coming year since he has one last class to take next spring. After graduation he thinks he will head to Korea to teach English.

Ben Zeug graduated from the University of Arizona (Tucson) with a double major in History and Political Science. He's staying in Arizona to work for part of the summer and then will return home to work and apply to grad schools.

Pen Pal Request

The Church office recently received a request from an inmate at Minnesota at Correctional Facility Lino Lakes, who would like to correspond with one or more pen pals at FMC. For more information, please contact the church office.

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

| | January | February | March |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Total expenses | \$11,698 | \$11,656 | \$15,3712+ |
| Total income | \$13,872 | \$21,640* | \$23,122# |
| Monthly budget | \$14,850 | \$14,850 | \$14,850 |

*Includes \$7,763 insurance payment for interior water damage

+ Includes a payment for bell tower/roof repair

Includes \$10,300 for sanctuary painting fund

Library Corner

A new addition to the church library collection is Richard Rohr's book *On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men*. Rohr is a Franciscan priest known nationally for his retreats and lectures on male spirituality and is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

One aspect of Rohr's work has been to develop rites of passage for men. He describes our culture as one that encourages and rewards men and boys "for living an 'outer' life of performances, which are usually framed in terms of win or lose...In such a worldview there are only winners or losers, no in-between, and little chance for growth or redemption once you are deemed-- or deem yourself-- a loser." He considers it part of the work of the church to "validate, encourage, structure, and teach men an inner life".

This book encourages an inner life by suggesting that acknowledging suffering and failure can be a doorway to transformation and wholeness. The readings have been compiled from Rohr's books and talks and from daily meditations from the Center for Action and Contemplation Web site. Each daily reading includes a question for reflection. The book can be found in the Spiritual Growth section of the library.

--Cynthia Miller



June
Birthday
Brunch

If you or a family member has a birthday in June, pastor Joetta invites you to her home,

248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on June 25. (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,
June 25
9:30-11:00
a.m.

Spirituality journal...

As many of you know, on the evening of April 15th I lost my dad to pneumonia. We, his family, had changed his treatment to be "comfort care only" earlier that day. This was done only after he became unconscious, and in his eleventh hour. By his own choice, he had been through torturous treatments—deep suctioning that brought the staff involved to tears, and a vest that pummeled his back that eventually became extremely painful. He always said he wanted everything done to be kept alive, he grew angry when doctors tried to talk to him about a Do Not Resuscitate order, he was NOT giving up.

My dad had many trials in his life. He lost his mother at the age of 12. He contracted polio at 21 and spent 6 months in the University of Iowa hospital with a ward full of other polio victims-- people on iron lungs, people who died. But he did not die. Somewhere along the line he grew as strong-willed and tenacious about life as anyone I have ever known. Shortly after he got out of the hospital, thin but still handsome, he met my mom and they began their 59 years of marriage. They had four kids—which I have no doubt would be what my dad considered his crowning achievement. Now they have grandkids and great grandkids. My dad was a farmer, but after he retired and despite his handicap, he got his pilot's license. He loved to fly. He never attained more than a high school diploma but he took college courses on and off throughout his life, dipping into all different subjects, whatever he was curious about at the time. He dabbled in photography and woodworking, and

even in his later years studied Spanish and math. He was active in the United Methodist Church and was, for years, a lay speaker, preaching sermons at churches as pulpit supply.

To me, my dad could be the most aggravating person in the world, sometimes saying things without considering them first to make sure he wasn't hurting others' feelings. He was not the easiest person to be around at times. But since losing him, I've found myself freed up to see more of the gifts I received from him. There are many things dad passed along to his kids, a lifelong love of learning, a valuing of things like faith, education, travel and learning over material things, a love of family. These things are important but hold no surprises for me. However, I have been surprised that what I considered his weakness, I have come to recognize as partly a gift to me. The very thing that I found so hard to tolerate in him—a blurting out of the truth as he saw it, and a suspicion of, if not outright rejection of, pretense and sentimentality—are impulses I carry too. I think (and hope) I carry them a little more softly than he did. But I now realize that the difficulty I have being in the presence of pretense or unspoken truths comes partly from my Dad—and it is a trait that does not necessarily lead to one's popularity—his or mine.

When we arrived at the hospital the evening of April 15th, I immediately went to Dad, held his hand, and told him we were there, bringing Micah into the little circle both for Micah's benefit and my dad's, because my dad dearly loved Micah. I believe now it was that impulse toward truth that made me want to help Micah experience this part of real life, the final hours of Grandpa's time with us, and a moment to say good-bye. Two hours after our arrival at the hospital, my dad left us and flew solo one more time.

--Ruth Johnston

What's happening here and there...

Thank You from Mennonite Mission Network

Mennonite Mission Network thanks Faith Mennonite Church for contributing \$3,980 received from February 1, 2010, through January 31, 2011. These gifts, along with your prayers and participation, help to create ministries of healing and hope across the street and around the world. May you experience God's blessings as, together, we seek to share all of Christ with all of creation.

--Stanley W. Green, Executive Director and Sandy Miller, Director of Church Relations

Update from Wilderness Wind

Wilderness Wind offers group canoe trips in the Boundary Waters Wilderness Area or a relaxing time at their Lakeside cottages and yurt outside of Ely. We can create a canoe trip for a group, or you can join one of our scheduled events:

- A birder's retreat, June 14-19
- A father/son fishing trip, July 4-9
- The fund-raising Paddle-a-thon, August 6 (paddle or pledge!)
- Laugh and create with the Creator's Retreat (quilters & others), September 2-5
- Work and play fest, September 7-11.

There are also plenty of opportunities to volunteer for a few days or a week. Wilderness Wind has been shaped by volunteers in such life-giving ways that it is hard to imagine what a summer would be like without them. Cooks, office assistance, and assistance with buildings and maintenance are always needed.

We hope to see you in the north country. Visit our website: wildernesswind.org and follow us on Facebook.

--Kathy Landis, director

MCC Open Letter on Sustainable Peace

They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11)

At this time of great change in North Africa and the Middle East, Mennonite Central Committee applauds the courage of those who are speaking out for basic rights and working for more just societies in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere.

We lament the suffering of all people and are dismayed by the actions of governments that disregard the rights of their own people. We share the concern, stated by numerous governments, the Arab League and the United Nations, of protecting civilians at risk of harm.

However, the history of military interventions, even those carried out for "humanitarian purposes" or because of a "Responsibility to Protect," has shown that there are very often unintended consequences. Thus we have serious concerns about the current U.N. mission in Libya, and we cannot support the use of our countries' militaries to purportedly bring peace.

In our experience as Christian peacebuilders, it is only nonviolent actions that provide the critical impetus for long-term, sustainable peace. Peace that endures also requires a just society in which basic rights are respected and human needs are met.

Jesus said that those who work for peace will be blessed and will be considered children of God (Matthew 5:9). The Scriptures are clear about God's displeasure with those who claim to have achieved "peace" in the midst of unjust circumstances (Jeremiah 6:13-15).

Therefore we call on all church members to pray for peace and encourage them to engage and discuss these important issues in their congregations and communities and with their government. Our hope is that these conversations will promote peace and understanding with one another, as well as around the world. Additional resources are available at peace.mcc.org.

--Don Peters, Executive Director, Mennonite Central Committee Canada

--J. Ron Byler, Executive Director, Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Thank You from Lois and Wayne Hochstetler

We missed the Easter services this year because we were on a 13 hour bus trip to Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia. Since Mongolia is a largely Buddhist country, Easter was certainly not on the national calendar.

We came home tired from a demanding journey. It was with delight that we found your Easter greeting in our mailbox at the London Mennonite Centre. All your personally signed names was an added touch. No, we do not know all of you, and some of you don't know us. Even then, we are aware that you are sending financial support to Mennonite Mission Network to support our ministry, and we are most grateful. I hope we can come by for a visit on one of our yearly visits to the US.

We had the pleasure of meeting Eric, also Natalija and her husband at Lithuanian Christian College in March. It was a long distance connection, but what we had in common was Faith Mennonite, Minneapolis!

Thank you for remembering us, for supporting our Mennonite Mission Network ministry, and for your part in the Kingdom of God.

Follow our travels at www.loisandwayne.blogspot.com.

--Sincerely, Lois and Wayne Hochstetler, London

The deadline for July newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, June 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.