

Faith Connection

November 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...

I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world! - John 16:33

These words of Jesus, from the farewell narrative in the Gospel of John, are centering words for me as I anticipate the second regional Central Plains Mennonite Conference listening session with South Dakota churches this Saturday (October 27) and the November 6 election in two weeks. They remind me that even as Jesus faced death, he trusted in God's ultimate victory. And the community of Jesus' followers who experienced persecution in subsequent decades took courage from this same hope.

Two days before the election we will celebrate All Saints Day and share in communion. All Saints is an occasion to gratefully reflect on the lives of loved ones we have lost in the past year and longer ago. It is also an occasion to remember the "communion of saints" or "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) that spans centuries and millennia, connecting us spiritually with our earliest spiritual ancestors. In this communal cloud are many who died prematurely and unjustly. Their deaths were surely a blow to their communities as untimely deaths and persistent injustice are to ours. Yet, we have received a tradition of faith and hope precisely because people continued to take courage and didn't give in to defeat.

Many of us have worked in a variety of ways to encourage the defeat of the two constitutional amendment proposals on the ballot this fall. The ill-defined requirement of photo identification to vote and permanently prohibiting same-sex couples from the right to marry each places limitations and exclusion on minority groups that have historically been marginalized in our society. If either of these proposals passes, especially by only a thin, simple majority, people will be harmed, and many of us will identify with the words of the prophet Isaiah that "justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance..." (59:14).

I recently saw a quote attributed to John Wesley (1774) in which he gave the following advice to those who planned to vote. He encouraged people "1) to vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy; 2) to speak no evil of the person they voted against; and 3) to take care that their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side." Wesley's second and third points are timely reminders in our sharply divided context. Caring for our spirits, by trusting that Christ's peace will remain with us regardless of an election outcome, is critical. When we fall into the temptation of dehumanizing our opponents we, in essence, concede victory to them. But when we remain hopeful, even in times of duress, we confirm our ultimate trust in the kingdom of God—here yet not fully realized—a kingdom that will endure beyond any current government configuration.

In addition to electoral activism, a number of FMC members have been generously giving their time to our conference listening process this fall. I appreciated the careful preparation and sensitive participation of Jerry Janzen, Orv Gingerich, Joan Kreider, Donna Minter, Phil Stoltzfus and Karen Wiebe in the first gathering in the Twin Cities on September 29. Glenn and Arlene Geissinger are joining Karen Wiebe and me in South Dakota this weekend. On November 16/17, Matthew Hendricks, Donna Minter, Karen Wiebe and I will travel to Nebraska for the next session. Unlike the elections, which will have a definitive outcome, these conversations are aimed at deepening understanding and continuing in conversation even when we disagree. They draw us into the imperfect communion of saints in the here and now and help build relationships that make it harder for our spirits to be "sharpened against those...on the other side." Please continue to pray for us and all who are participating in the conference discussions. And may we all be at peace and take courage as we vote and as we continue in the path of mercy, justice, and humility.

--Joetta Schlabach

What's happening at FMC...

Ministry Staff Update

Rake for the River. Last Sunday we held a “Rake for the River” clean-up. This is a program of the Longfellow Community Council River Gorge Committee. The goal is to keep phosphorus from fallen leaves out of the storm drain system which, when reaching the river, causes excessive algae growth and oxygen depletion that harms aquatic life. The city comes through and cleans the streets in November but until then, as the leaves fall, they collect and get ground up along the curbs, eventually fouling the river.

Four of our youth, Hannah Dirks, John Mayou, Sophia Harder, and Anthony Beerswing, met beforehand for pizza and to organize the supplies. Four members of the Community of St. Martin, as well as David Mayou, Thaine Dirks, and David Reis, joined us for the raking, as well as a neighbor, Mary, from across 22nd St. We filled 29 bags with leaves from along the street and boulevard areas near the church building.

Another team went up to North Minneapolis to help Dan and Terry Gerber with their leaf-raking and bundling of branches. That added another fifteen bags and seven bundles to the tally. Thanks to Dan Leisen, Darrell Martin, Orv Gingerich, and Gerald and Joetta Schlabach for their labor!

Sustainability Fair. Speaking of ecological matters, it's time to start thinking about pulling together a planning team for our sustainability fair next April. If you have some ideas for the fair or would like to help organize it, let me know.

Community Emergency Service. With the holidays coming up, there are a variety of volunteer opportunities available at CES. Help pack holiday parcels on November 15, 9am–noon; December 1 or 8, 11am–2pm; or December 16, 1–4pm. Help host neighbors, provide music, and distribute parcels on November 17 or December 15, 9am–1 pm. Deliver parcels in the neighborhood on November 21 or December 21, 6–8pm. Host Friday kids' activities, December 21 or 28, noon–2:30 pm. Or have kids make Thanksgiving/Christmas cards for shut-ins and bring them to CES by November 12 or December 10. Contact Pastor Lynn Peterson directly to reserve your slot during one of the above volunteer times, lpeterson@cesmn.org, 612-870-1125.

Website: One other thing I've been working on is our church online presence. Did you know that both our church Facebook page and the church website

(www.faimennonite.org) are continuously updated with material about our church life? On Facebook and the “Events and News/Recent Events” tab on the website you can find photo collections of recent church programs. On the homepage are links to the FMC events calendar, information on worship at our sister Twin Cities Mennonite congregations, and a new donation page. On the “Building Use” tab you can find another calendar listing reservation times for rooms in the church. In the members area of the website (contact office for username/password) you can find, among other things, an archive of church council minutes and the most current (and printable) long directory of our phone numbers and email addresses. With a little searching on the website you will also find our bulletin archive, sermon archive, and monthly newsletter archive. Let's keep connected!

--Phil Stoltzfus



If you or a family member has a birthday in November or December, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on December 1st. (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@faimennonite.org.

November-
December
Birthday
Brunch

Saturday,
December 1
9:30–11
a.m.

Thanksgiving Day Potluck With The Mennonite Worker (Formerly Missio Dei)

Last Thanksgiving Day several FMC households joined forces with our friends at Missio Dei and shared a potluck meal, with all the trimmings of a traditional Thanksgiving meal in the FMC Fellowship Hall. Plans are underway to repeat that event this year. If you are in town for the holiday and do not have other plans, please consider sharing the day with friends and feel free to invite others to join you. More information will be forthcoming.

Welcome to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance

On October 8, a new tenant moved into the space formerly occupied by ISALAH in the lower level of the education wing. The nonprofit Institute for Local Self-Reliance, born in 1974, seeks to advocate and explore the concept of local control, humanly scaled economies, and policies designed to emphasize benefits for all local citizens. You can learn more about the Institute and its mission at www.ilsr.org.

With offices in Minneapolis and Washington, D.C., the local staff includes co-founder and Vice President, David Morris; Christopher Mitchell, Director of the Telecommunications as Commons Initiative; John Farrell, Energy Senior Researcher; Lisa Gonzalez, Telecommunications Research Associate; and our Energy Research Intern, Wade Underwood.

For over 20 years, the Institute was located in Dinkytown. Plans to raze the office building for student housing led ILSR to their new home at Faith Mennonite Church. While you can expect the lower level to be pretty quiet, you'll eventually see ILSR venture out into the neighborhood in a never-ending search for the perfect local donut.

-Lisa Gonzalez, Telecommunications Research Associate, Institute for Local Self-Reliance

FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	July	August	Sept	YTD
Total Giving	\$9,719	\$11,200	\$9,269	\$92,487
Total Budgeted Income*	\$11,769	\$13,439	\$13,920	\$120,833
Budget Target	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$126,000
All Expenses	\$11,748	\$14,366	\$11,370	\$123,644

*Includes rental and investment income

Comings and Goings...

Eric Kasper wrote earlier this fall from the University of Sussex, in Brighton, England: "I finished my first year of the PhD, gave a research outline seminar, and

am preparing to spend the next 10 months, beginning in September, in Raipur, India. I'll be working with a civil society NGO trying to connect with slum leaders for the purposes of community organizing and social change. I'll also be trying to look at the social networks of the poor and civil society actors." Eric enjoyed a visit from **Lis Wilson**, during her around-the-world trip, following the completion of her PhD in May.

Gerald Schlabach writes: If anyone notices that I am becoming more scarce at FMC worship, I want you to know why. In the coming months I will systematically be visiting congregations and parishes of diverse ethnic, cultural and national character. I am doing this in preparation for a new class that I will begin teaching at the University of St. Thomas in the spring. The class is called "The Church Goes Global" and is about the changing face of global Christianity as its center of gravity shifts toward the global South. The Twin Cities offers a laboratory in globalization, and I will be requiring students to attend Christian worship services in at least two cultures other than their own. But the more I know and experience myself, the better guidance I will be able to give to students as I nudge them out of their comfort zones. So for the next three to six months I will be making church visits around the Twin Cities myself.



This year's MCC Relief Sale brochure and poster are now available for download on the sale website: tcmccreliefsale.org.

Volunteers Needed! If you've never been to an MCC auction / sale OR if you've only attended as a shopper, we still need fresh volunteers to help staff this year's event. If you'd like a peek at how this festival happens, get personally involved by volunteering for a two-hour slot in one of the many areas staffed entirely by volunteers. Contact Karen Linn Peterson, volunteer coordinator, cbkoolmom2@aol.com or 612-250-2327. Do you have friends who'd like to volunteer? Share your friends' contact information with Karen.

Baking: We are looking for donations of your favorites or Mennonite favorite recipes: breads, rolls, zwieback, nut breads, cookies, bars, cakes, coffee cakes, pies, peppernuts, etc. Quantities should be 1/2 or 1 dozen sized bags of such things as cookies, bars, zwieback or rolls. Peppernuts should be packaged with about 1 1/2

cups per bag. Your donations can be brought directly to the sale on the day of the sale, or can be left at church by Friday morning, November 9. Questions? Call Arlene Geissinger, phone 952-470-1847, or email at: arlene.geissinger@gmail.com

Water/Soda Donations. As in past years, people can bring donations of water bottles or cans of soda for the food court.

MCC Mugs will be available this year. Purchase a mug for \$10 and get free coffee refills on sale day.

Spirituality journal...

This fall I have been thinking about love. I'd like to share a few thoughts.

On my son Micah's first day of Kindergarten in late August, he was very happy and excited to be going to school. As we waited at the bus stop he was all smiles. But when a very large bus with dark windows roared up and stopped right in front of us, he suddenly attached himself to my leg in tears. I was just grasping for what to do when seemingly out of nowhere our little neighbor girl, who is ten years old, came over to Micah and asked him if he'd like to get on the bus with her. Immediately Micah's tears stopped, he took her hand and they got on the bus. Later I found out she also took him down to his classroom once they got to the school. I cannot think of a more loving gift than this simple gesture that our neighbor gave to us.

I just finished reading a travel memoir written by a single mother of two boys. After her kids had grown and left home, she decided to take a leave of absence from her job as a newspaper reporter and spend several months in Europe, staying for a month or more in three different places. Over the course of her travels she told about three moments when she felt threatened by strangers, luckily each time she escaped unharmed. More amazing were the untold number of people she met along the way with whom she shared time, meals, life stories, glasses of wine, and cups of tea. In one case, three kind women took turns caring for her when she suddenly became ill with a virus. The stories of all of these wonderful and enriching travel relationships are ninety percent of the make-up of her book.

This summer as Micah and I were in the car heading somewhere, I heard an old rock and roll song on the radio. I've known this song for many years but this time it was like a light went on inside me. A part of the song's lyrics are, "without love, where would you be

now?" This simple but profound truth moved me. Yes, without love where would any of us be, from our original family, to our teachers, pastors, doctors, counselors, neighbors, mentors, friends, partners and children. Indeed even down to strangers who have held doors for us, given us directions, had a kind word, or greeted us on our walk around the lake.

In our media, we hear a lot about hate. But for me talking, thinking, and reading about stories of love multiplies love's power and presence in our world.

--Ruth Johnston

O You Who've Gone on Pilgrimage

O you who've gone on pilgrimage -
where are you, where, oh where?
Here, here is the Beloved!
Oh come now, come, oh come!
Your friend, he is your neighbor,
he is next to your wall -
You, erring in the desert -
what air of love is this?
If you'd see the Beloved's
form without any form -
You are the house, the master,
You are the Kaaba, you! . . .
Where is a bunch of roses,
if you would be this garden?
Where, one soul's pearly essence
when you're the Sea of God?
That's true - and yet your troubles
may turn to treasures rich -
How sad that you yourself veil
the treasure that is yours!

--Rumi

The deadline for December newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, November 28th.

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.