

Faith Connection

November 2007

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...

From 1987 to 1997 our family lived in southern Michigan and northern Indiana where we experienced a lot of "lake-effect" gray weather. One year in January and February nearly six weeks passed with no hint of sunshine. We became creative during that time, sometimes closing the curtains and turning on lights in the heart of the day to chase away the gloom. One year the boys bought Gerald a canary for Christmas, after he heard one singing in a used-book store and became convinced of its therapeutic value.

When we moved to Minnesota we thought that moving west of the Great Lakes would automatically mean more continuous sunshine, but that has proven to be false. This October was especially rainy and gray even though November, according to the meteorologists, usually sets the record as the grayest month of the year.

As I prepare myself for the diminished light of November I wonder: is there any value in the gray days—and times—in our lives or are they simply something we must endure? I think many of us had a heightened appreciation for the brilliance of the sun and the beauty of October 20, our church retreat day at Villa Maria, because of its contrast to the previous sun-absent days. The gray can also turn our thoughts toward the inevitable cycle of life and death, reminding us that God is present throughout.

In the liturgical calendar, November 1 is All Saints day, a day to honor "all saints, known and unknown." Some churches dedicate the entire month of November to remembering those who died during the previous year. In the early church, Christians remembered martyrs with all-night vigils on the anniversary of the martyrs' death, followed by communion the following morning at their tomb or place of death. We will have the opportunity to join this ancient stream as we celebrate communion together on November 4.

Although I recently began to use a full spectrum light as an antidote to the lack of sun, I also believe that some struggles, some battles, are better won by moving into them than by resisting them. So this year, I am going to try to accept each gray November day as a reminder of those who live in far greater darkness – the 2 million Iraqi refugees displaced by war, the homeless who walk our streets and ask for aid at intersections, the people caught in the ongoing trauma of Darfur, people in overcrowded prisons, those who struggle with chronic illness, and those who are still feeling the raw grief of losing a loved one.

As I go about my daily activities, I will keep in mind the words from a song from Taizé: "Our darkness is never darkness in your sight..." Let us all be light to one another and to those with whom we work, play and simply pass along the street.

--Joetta Schlabach

"It is literally true, as the thankless say, that they have nothing to be thankful for. He who sits by the fire, thankless for the fire, is just as if he had no fire. Nothing is possessed save in appreciation, of which thankfulness is the indispensable ingredient. But a thankful heart hath a continual feast."

--William John Cameron

What's happening at FMC...

Update From Pastoral Discernment Committee

On Sunday October 28 the committee will seek input from the congregation during the Sunday school hour.

As you know, we have a three-fold task: to determine our church's leadership needs, to formulate a job description and to determine what kind of structure serves our needs, and (after January 1, 2008) to conduct a pastoral search based on those decisions.

The education hour discussion is your opportunity to share your concerns and needs with us. We also invite each person who attends Faith to fill out a written survey for our review and compilation.

A note about Joetta Schlabach's role: Joetta submitted her resignation to coincide with the time of Patty and Patrick's departure in September; she accepted the position of full time interim pastor from September 2007 through the end of May 2008. As the church continues through the process of pastoral discernment and search, she will choose whether to make herself available as a candidate for the permanent position.

Last year, the pastor parish committee conducted a congregational survey about 20 areas of importance to congregational life, their perceived importance to the church, and the extent to which we expect the pastor(s) to take the lead in these areas. Coming out of this were four tiers of expectations for pastoral leadership.

In the first tier were areas of universal expectation of the pastors(s)--these are the areas our church agrees on as "givens":

- performing dedications, marriages and funerals
- taking a lead in preaching and worship
- crisis visitation
- spirituality: teaching and modeling an authentic spiritual life

Since there is already near universal agreement on these, the committee felt that our discussion should center on the second and third tier of important tasks.

Second tier (high priority):

- Christian education, conference involvement, counseling ministries, church growth, peace and social concerns, teaching, noncrisis visitation, problem solving and conflict resolution, and developing the ministry of the laity.

Third tier (areas of high priority but with increasing expectation of lay leadership):

- involvement in community activities, small groups, missions and service, and youth/young adults activities.

Fourth tier (areas where we as a church have low expectation for pastoral leadership)

- music and finances

For the discussion on October 28, the committee formulated four questions for the congregation to focus their feedback and follow up to this survey. The first two relate directly to the above areas of focus for church life; the last two questions are ones to help the committee as we follow later stages of the process.

1. What do you personally need in a pastor? (excluding the four areas of universal expectations--ordinances, preaching, crisis visitation and spirituality)
2. What would you like the church to do differently? How could a pastor(s)' skills help us towards that goal?
3. Do you feel the church's needs are better met by a team or solo pastorate?
4. Would you like the committee to be open to nontraditional candidates? If so, what does this mean specifically to you?

By way of background for the last question, in the Mennonite Church USA, there is an official list of candidates who have made their names available for pastoral positions serving member churches. Our conference minister, Ed Kaufman, shares names and resumes from that list with our search committee. These candidates either are already credentialed by the Mennonite Church or would be expected to be able to get licensure and/or ordination without significant difficulty. As a congregation we can also seek "nontraditional" candidates from outside the Mennonite church, from persons we know of personally, through other organizations like BMC (Brethren Mennonite Council on Gay and Lesbian concerns), or from within our congregation itself.

The next steps for our committee will be to compile the feedback from Sunday's discussion, review comments submitted in writing, follow up with any individuals not able to be part of the group process, and then formulate a job description to be presented to church council in December. Thanks to everyone for your help in this process!! As always, feel free to speak with any of us at any time to share your concerns.

--Joan Kreider; chair, Barbara Beers, Arlene Geissinger, Orval Gingerich, Katie Hochstedler, Chris Jones, Michael Okerstrom, Cathy Smetana.

New Adult Education Classes

A new adult education class, focused on the concerns of the "sandwich generation," will begin on Sunday, Nov. 4 and run through Dec. 16. The "sandwich generation" is defined as those who are caught between caring for both children and aging parents. Join us for a discussion of concerns and resources we can draw on.

The ongoing adult education class on Anabaptism, led by Phil Stoltzfus, will also run through Dec. 16. New adult ed classes will begin again on Jan. 6, 2008.

--Pat Eliason

Nursery Notes

Now that it's fall and we're doing snacks again, I'd be grateful if parents could update children's information sheets with any new allergy or other food-specific information. Even if there are no concerns, it would be great if parents could simply write in "none" (many are just blank). This will help me provide healthy snacks that everyone can enjoy.

As photos are rotated on the photo board, I'll put the older photos in a pocket by the board. Feel free to take any photos you would like to keep.

I'll be posting a "Nursery Wish List" in the near future. If you have any items on the list you'd like to donate, we'd be grateful! Right now we're most in need of books. Any books age appropriate for the "under five" set would be welcome. We'd especially like some board books if you're cleaning out your stash.

Finally, I'd like to put out a friendly reminder that the break between the service and Sunday School is a perfect potty-break opportunity. It is difficult for nursery staff to take children during that time as volunteers change and there isn't always sufficient coverage (and I like to be around as children come and go so I can touch base with parents and children).

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to talk to me. You know where to find me :)

--Meagan O'Brien, Nursery Coordinator

November 18: Music and Membership

Our November 18 worship will be a celebration of thanksgiving in the musical language of gospel/jazz. Adam Nafziger and Neil Okerlund will be coordinating the music. We will also receive into membership any persons wishing to join the church that day. If you have interest in becoming a member, please speak with pastor Joetta.

November FMC Calendar

Tuesday, October 30

5:30pm Advent worship planning @ Adam Nafziger's

Thursday, November 1

1:00pm Deacons @Beth Richardson's

Thursday, November 1

7:00pm Missions & Service @ FMC

Monday, November 12

7:00pm Church Council @ FMC

Sunday, November 18

9:45am Gospel/jazz worship and membership Sunday, pie social

Sunday, November 25

No Christian education

The Start of Something Good

Last year at this time I was feeling lonely and not particularly full of joy. I needed more goodness in my life on a regular basis. I needed to be physically active on a regular basis, I needed to laugh with sisters on a regular basis, and I needed to make a difference in the world with others on a regular basis. I also needed all of these things to be really easy and close by where I live in Eden Prairie. Although I had girlfriends in town, there just did not seem to be the kind of consistent community that worked for me. So I decided to take a risk to find friends in my immediate neighborhood who were interested in taking care of themselves via fitness and laughter and by taking care of others via philanthropic service projects. I identified 68 households close by and mailed the following letter out to the women in these homes:

Dear Sister,

I love to move physically, laugh heartily, and hang out with other fine women who like to do the same. One of my life goals is to be as generous as I possibly can. Whenever I combine active play outdoors with other women and giving, ah how sweet it is!!!!

To this end, I would like to invite you to my home on Wednesday, November 15th at 7:30pm to hang out and chat about forming some variation of a Moms in Motion club in our neighborhood. Moms In Motion (MIM) is a national women's health & fitness community-based on Fun, Fitness and Philanthropy (www.momsinmotion.com). MIM provides a wide variety of fitness/wellness clubs or teams across the country for women of all ages, fitness levels and abilities. Members establish and

follow physical fitness/wellness goals agreed upon within the context of a “fitness club without walls” to prepare for a culminating event. Each culminating event helps support a charity decided on by the group. The essence of a neighborhood “fitness club without walls” lies in the experience, camaraderie, and support of a team working together toward a common fitness goal and philanthropic cause.

As a group we can decide if we want to join MIM officially (which of course costs \$\$) or develop our own neighborhood “fitness club without walls” that is essentially free membership. Our philanthropic focus could be local (e.g. purchasing a bench for the new Edenbrook Conservation Area nature trails after we achieve a certain number of miles walked) and/or for the wider western suburb or global community (e.g. offering time, talent, and/or treasure to a local food shelf, the Millennium Developmental Goals). We could also train for and participate together in community-based physical fitness activities that are fundraisers for important charities (e.g. the 2006 Bridge to the Gulf II 5k Run/Walk on the Lakewalk in Duluth, which raises money for Habitat for Humanity on the Gulf Coast and New Orleans). The possibilities are endless!!!!

So if this sounds intriguing and you want to help decide how it could happen here and now in our neighborhood, please plan to gather at my place on Wednesday, November 15 at 7:30pm. Call me with questions and if you plan to come. I hope you do.

With laughter, energy, schemes, and dreams,
Donna

The result of this reaching-out letter has been the formation of the F3 Group--Fun, Fitness, & Filanthropy (with bad phonics), which is a group of women who meet monthly who like to move and laugh a lot together while taking positive actions to benefit others. One of our on-going projects has been making Mennonite Central Committee health and school kits. To date, our group has sewn and filled over 200 kits! We have so much fun doing and it, and we feel good about continuing this project. In July, four of our group biked from Eden Prairie to the Mississippi River and back (36 miles) completely on bike trails with great stops at the Birchwood Café and Hopkins Depot. In September we staged a triathlon that allowed all participants to be successful. It was called the Lazy Ladies Triathlon (LLT) and included a 3 mile walk, 4 ½ miles of biking to the local Dunn Brothers for coffee, a 4 ½ miles return bike ride, and either a lap swim in a pool or a soak in

the hot tub of one of our members. The LLT was also a fundraiser that resulted in a \$200 group donation to Central Asia Institute (CAI), www.ikat.org, which builds schools for girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Several times we have helped package food at Feed My Starving Children, www.fmssc.org. Another regular activity has been the formation of a group that walks 4 miles every weekday in the early morning (as long as it is above zero degrees!).

On November 14th we will celebrate one year of goodness together as F3. We have accomplished much and have great plans for the coming year. This type of neighborhood-sisterhood-community continues to bathe me in goodness, and I see that the possibilities for making a difference in our corner of the world are endless as we work and play together. Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee F3!

--Donna Minter

Washington Update: Travel Edition

About a month ago, I flew to Toronto to attend the annual Christian Peacemaker Teams (made famous about two years ago when four of its members were kidnapped in Iraq) Congress. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the work one of MCC's more activist allies is doing in the world. And CPT certainly does good work, going to some of the most dangerous places in the world and acting as a witness to the injustices that occur there.

At the same time, some of the people at the conference provided an unintentional warning about one of the major dangers of activism: the creation of exclusive subcultures. I met a fellow Washingtonian at the conference, a military veteran who was discharged as a conscientious objector, who recounted several situations where he was clearly eyed with suspicion based on his appearance and background. It was an understandable reaction, I suppose, but it was also the kind of thing that often keeps social justice movements from becoming mainstream.

Two weeks ago, I had the chance to visit the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. It was one of the best times I've had since beginning the job, and not only because I got to have lunch with my parents during a three-hour layover in the Twin Cities. The land was beautiful -- seeing the Black Hills from the air, driving through the Badlands, etc. -- the people I met were kind and hospitable, and the experience helped me get my bearings on my Native American advocacy work in Washington. The MCC service workers I met there were a lot of fun: I got the chance to talk about situation

on the reservation and the situation in Washington. But most of all, I enjoyed the time there because it was a good break from the city. I had time to relax, slow down, sleep in, and not have to worry too much about time for a few days.

If you'd like information about my office and the work we do, feel free to visit our website:
www.mcc.org/us/washington.

Also, if you're interested in receiving our bimonthly newsletter (there's a free one-year trial), you can sign up at this address:

www.mcc.org/us/washington/resources/memo/
I typically write an article in each edition.

--*Gabe Schlabach*

A Day at Villa Maria

What fortune! Sun and a crisp breeze whipping waves at Sand Point on Lake Pepin. Crunchy leaves for stomping children. A sunny spot for a nap or an impromptu gathering of knitters and talkers. The riches were many as 30+ Faith folk spent a day at Villa Maria Retreat Center in Frontenac. With our focus on sensing and sharing the natural world as an evangelical outreach, it was any interesting twist to meld genesis creation images with hands-on 21st century urban realities. Our weekend guest speaker, Perry Yoder, prodded all of us to take our love of god's creation and share it with those who have less natural access. Theological message of the weekend.....plant a garden and invite them to come.

I'll put a bit of a personal spin on the day just because each of us brings our own "agenda" to retreat times. It's not easy taking a full day, let alone a weekend as we've done in the past, and place it aside on the calendar for retreat. I suspect that for many who were not able to attend, taking a whole day is a bit too much. Work, children or responsibilities take priority. Just to let you know, you were missed! The weather provided welcome opportunities to visit outside, to do biblical exegesis on a sunny picnic table, to join a group of a dozen or so on a walk after lunch....sand, wind, seagulls, waves...! I told Mike afterward that the best part of the walking was the talking-- catching up with people who I've known a long time, but with whom I can rarely chat for more than a few minutes after church. The small children who skipped and swam around us throughout the day, were all so beautiful. With my two sons grown and on their own, observing the children's fascination with brownies and rice krispie treats at lunch was downright fun. Our adult sessions

brought a mix of song and sermon, and our own special twist of being Faith....each of us discovering the nugget that is true for us and prodding us to find what we can actively do together.

A day together as a faith community is an opportunity to slow down, observe, participate, contemplate, challenge. We can move into or out of our comfort zones as we please, but still experience something that richly pulls us closer to each other.

--*Erin Geiser*

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting September 10, 2007 @ FMC

Present: Neil Okerlund, Moderator; Joan Kreider, Moderator-elect; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Minke Sundseth, Missions & Service; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Sandra Westby, Worship; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons.

Absent: Fellowship representative, Education representative.

Calendar review. Conference ministers will be here October 10, from 9 to 10:30am, as part of a round of listening visits. Discussion of who to specifically invite, being sure to include younger adults (can we provide childcare?).

Affirmations. Thanks to Neil for role in organizing Patrick and Patty's send-off. Thanks to the Deacons for their support for two members in the hospital. Affirmation of Joetta's sermon this past Sunday.

Pastoral Discernment Committee. Joan reports that this committee is currently meeting every other week. Had an exit interview with P & P, a very good discussion. Are now working on a congregational information sheet for the Conference. Will be meeting with Ed Kauffman in two weeks. Sometime in October will begin follow-up in-person surveys to last year's written surveys, perhaps during Sunday school hour. Also others in small groups or with individuals. Neil asks how we do reporting/wrap-up at the end of this stage? Joan will discuss with the committee. Patrick in his interview shared his perspective on power in congregations, ranging from one where pastor sets the agenda and leads, to one where the pastor is just one perspective, which is where he believes FMC is. He sees this as healthy. So we need to look for someone who is comfortable with that style. Minke says it is easy to identify someone who is bold and charismatic, but the quiet facilitator can only be identified over time.

Neil says the exit interview, which included Martha Mayou, Kathleen Harder and Ed Kauffman, discussed latitude in leadership roles—are we a “God,” “Jesus,” or “Holy Spirit” church? Patrick said he is Christ-centered, but FMC is more of a “God” church. One important concern is with young adults who bonded with P & P, we need to be intentional about keeping them connected.

Staff changes. Chris Jones needs to spend more time with his kids as Annette starts grad school, and is giving notice as church secretary. Aryn Baxter will fill in until she leaves the country for her studies in January. Should we change our staff configuration? Currently 8 hours for office, 10 hours for janitor. Building needs more than cleaning, needs some straightening, maintenance, etc. Can we combine a position requiring “custodial” skills with secretarial skills, that could be a twenty hour a week job? Hermann asks what we currently pay per hour? \$10 for secretary, \$11 for janitor. Trustees will begin to discuss this.

Framing a vision. Council spends time brainstorming questions for Education Commission.

Treasurer’s report. Jerry points out three major expenditures for August: \$3000 for tuition support, \$500 for the retreat, and \$2000 for new doors in the education wing.

Commission reports.

Trustees. Glenn reports they’ve ordered door for the education wing. Also cleaned out the balcony. There are four new renters in the parsonage. No further word from the Vietnamese Alliance Church on buying out the lease.

Deacons. Hermann says Deacons are planning quarterly small group meetings based on geographical locations, for January, April, July and October. Also worked on the Sunday morning schedule.

Missions & Service. Minke says M&S planned FMC participation in the Seward King’s Fair September 22. Katie and Minke will hand out the new congregational brochure (they found a union printer). Will need other volunteers. Also Melissa Hochstedler is coordinating CROP Walk participation and pledges. M&S would like Joetta to attend their meetings, as Patrick did.

Pastor/Parish. Committee will need some new members.

Fellowship. Joan asks whether anybody is organizing “fun” activities. Should we invite Fellowship Commission to next meeting to discuss?

Other business. Glenn says Orv and Cleta Gingerich suggested a small group from FMC go to Saskatoon for

Patrick’s installation there. Gregg suggests first asking Patrick if he wants that.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

What's happening here and there...

Make Friends, Not Enemies

Can war with Iran be prevented? What can you do to lessen the conflict between the people of our two countries? The Virginia Conference Peace Committee announces the launch of “Make Friends, Not Enemies.” Through MCC connections in Iran, we are linking individual Americans with individual Iranians in an E-Pal relationship (via email). No, you can’t control what either government does, but through this relationship, you have the opportunity to:

- Make Friends, Not Enemies. Show love to our so-called enemies. *Matthew. 5:44*
- Be engaged in real peacemaking, while engaging the other side as well. *2 Corinthians. 5:18*
- Learn to share your faith and views of peace more clearly, while learning more about their beliefs and understandings of faith and peace. *Hebrews 12:14*
- Respond in a tangible, personal way to a potential build-up toward war. You may not broker world peace, but you can be a diplomat for peace with at least one person. *Romans 12:18.*

If you or others in your congregation are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact us at ecopow@ntelos.net.

Live the call!

Breakfast!

Katie Hochstedler is currently studying culinary arts at St. Paul College, and is in the breakfast unit right now. As part of this unit, students (including Katie) will be serving breakfast (Monday-Tuesday 7:30 - 8:30am) and brunch (Friday 8:00 - 10:00am) to the public beginning Friday, October 26 until Friday, November 16. Prices are very reasonable. For more information see:

www.saintpaul.edu/services/cityview/grille/
or contact Katie at katie.hochstedler@gmail.com, or ph. 319-936-0495.

--Katie Hochstedler

National Donor Sabbath

The Minnesota Lions Eye Bank has set November 9-11 as their 12th annual National Donor Sabbath, inviting communities of faith to raise awareness about transplantation and the critical need for donated eyes, tissue and organs. More than 100,000 Americans are waiting for eye, tissue or organ donations now and one person can save or enhance up to 60 lives through the donation of organs, tissue or eyes.

Our family had a first-hand experience with organ and tissue donation three years ago when Gerald's 41-year old cousin died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage just three days before Christmas. Jaime's family kept him on life-support just long enough for his tissue and organs to be harvested. A plaque next to his coffin at the visitation noted that his donation had benefited some 60 individuals. Although our family's Christmas was saddened by his death, we couldn't help think about the 60 persons and their extended families and communities who received a gift of life from Jaime.

There is no financial cost to the donor or family related to eye, tissue and organ donation. Neither does it delay funerals or affect the type of burial one desires.

Information about donation can be found at:
www.Life-Source.org, and
www.MnLionsEyeBank.org.

People may register their choice to be an eye, tissue or organ donor at:
222.DonateLifeMN.org.

--*Joetta Schlabach*

Deadline for December newsletter items is noon, November 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.

Ghosts

So, don't you believe in things that are not real?
said my friend, piqued that I grinned at her house-ghost,
who rattled the dishes, and straightened the papers,
so maybe you go to church only for show?

Well..., I hedged, my smile
fading from her gaze, I believe in...
some things...that are not real...

knowing what she meant, "not real," perhaps,
not in the same way that love or beauty are not real,
and yet cut us like a knife that lays open the heart,
but "not real," in the sense of a presence,
as when we feel someone enter the room,
just before they appear,
as when we feel that someone is listening
to our imagined conversations,
someone who knows us better than
our lovers or friends.

"Not real," meaning just real enough,
that we are never quite alone.

Don't you believe in things that are not real?

she said, and I wanted to tell her,
No, I hardly believe in myself,
not until some presence confirms me,
the presence to whom I've prayed,
and sometimes even wept,
the one who vanishes like the
distant pool on the summer highway,
like the tears that dry up when the music ends,
the presence that lures me on,
only by its absence.

And so, this poem is for you, God,
who made me a little lower than the angels
(not quite real themselves);

You, whose still, small voice
was just a little too still and small for me to hear;
You, who didn't save the lives I prayed for;
You, who answered the night prayers of the boy
who cried out in the darkness for a sign,
with the sign of darkness;
You, hound of heaven, who pursued me when I fled,
and turned from me when I fell;
You, who loved me with a scourge,
with fire and despair,
who emptied me of tears,
who cleansed me of faith and hope,
until I was ready at last to be filled,
with the only love that could fill such desolation,
the love that is no more real than I,
and no less real than You.

--*Gregg Richardson*