

Faith Connection

November 2009

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...

"Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Mark 10:14

In the September 13 adult education session, people gave feedback to the initial work of an ad hoc "Safe and Welcoming" taskforce that formed after the protest visitor disrupted worship in July. In a follow-up meeting in October, the taskforce discussed the suggestions and concerns that people had raised in the September 13 session on two separate issues: how we relate to disruptive persons from outside, and what additional safeguards might be needed to protect children and vulnerable persons on a regular basis. The taskforce will soon propose a set of guidelines to the Church Council to be added to our church Handbook.

A predominant theme that surfaced regarding safety for children as we met in October was how to develop guidelines to protect our children that do not change the caring and trusting character of our community or place difficult burdens on parents. We do not want children moving unattended in areas of the church (or outside) where adults or a responsible adult are not present, yet we recognize the need for parents to engage in fellowship conversations that sometimes, momentarily, take their eyes off of their children.

We reaffirmed the fact that "it takes a village" to raise our children. We hope all adults, whether or not we have young children, will join our parents in being vigilant for our children. This means that if we see a child slipping out a door or heading down a hallway and their parent isn't with them, we will call them back and help them find their parent. This means we will conclude our adult education classes at the specified time so that parents can proceed without delay to pick up their children from their Sunday school rooms and nursery. The parenting partner relationships that we have begun in the past couple years are one concrete step we have taken.

Each of us grew up in homes with distinct parenting styles and we hold varying ideas of what behaviors are appropriate and safe in our homes and in our church. I remember reading once about a woman who, as a child, loved to play in the sanctuary with other children when their mother's brought them along to a mid-week women's meeting. The children had sliding races under the pews, from front to back of the sanctuary. It was a rather unholy activity, yet it reinforced for her and her friends that church was a good place to be. This was a sanctuary for their parent's largely motionless worship as well as this fairly harmless but active game. Later in life the woman attended a church that restricted any playful behavior in the sanctuary and she wondered whether children growing up in that church would develop the love for church that she had developed.

Jesus welcomed children and blessed them. We continue offering blessing as we respect our children's personal space through appropriate touch, guard against activities that might cause physical injury to them or others, and model relationships of deep respect throughout our community.

--Joetta Schlabach

"I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."

--Martin Luther

What's happening at FMC...

November Worship Preview

After a month-long worship focus on hope in October, our November worship palette will be a bit more varied. November 1 is All Saints Day. Mennonites have not traditionally observed this day, although our greater openness in recent years to the liturgical practices of

other Christian traditions has enriched us. Gene Stoltzfus, the founding director of Christian Peacemaker Teams (and uncle of Phil Stoltzfus), will be our guest preacher on November 1.

On November 8 our worship emphasis will be on stewardship. We will have two guest speakers from MMA Stewardship Solutions (formerly known as Mennonite Mutual Aid). In some churches stewardship is thought of rather narrowly as raising money to meet the budget. MMA representatives Rhoda Blough, from Colorado, and Dan Haggerty, from South Dakota, will invite us to think of managing our financial affairs throughout life in a way that is consistent with our faith. In addition to preaching a joint sermon, they will each lead an adult education session.

On November 15, the day after the Twin Cities MCC Festival and Sale, our worship will celebrate the global work of compassion and justice that we are part of through our international mission partners such as Mennonite Central Committee. Our November 22 service will be one of Thanksgiving, including a time of appreciation for the work of Michael Bischoff as our Ministry Staff Person this past year.

The final Sunday of November will be the first Sunday of Advent. The committee that has formed to make plans for Advent Worship includes Bob Brown, Arlene Geissinger, Matthew Kinney, Adam Nafziger and the pastor. Neil Okerlund will direct choral music.

--Joetta Schlabach

“Who Are The Mennonites?” Open House

There was a good attendance at the open house, which happened on the afternoon of October 25. The event was composed of several table displays in the basement's large room, library, children's area and upstairs in the sanctuary. Mennonite history, missions, churches, along with other peace and non-violence themed organizations, children's activities, and traditional Mennonite food and drink were offered and well-received.

A Faith Mennonite choral group sang in the sanctuary and basement and were greatly appreciated. Music from Chris Jones and a group from Emmanuel Mennonite Church was also well received. Warm bread with butter and preserves, coffee, tea, and snacks were eaten. Today's Mennonites, obviously have a sweet tooth!

The Mennonite history display in the library, with several books and time-lines was quite interesting.

Thank you for the planning, for volunteering time, materials, and food. It was a good afternoon.

--Rich Deming

Sound System Update

If you have been attending services regularly during the last several months, you may have noticed that the sound system seems to be failing more and more frequently. You are not imagining this! Since the nationwide switch to DTV, the bandwidth that our wireless microphones operate on has been actively taken over as the FCC sells it to various emergency services and other customers. Our sound system in general is aging and has been in need of a major upgrade for a while and now that our mics are clearly not working as they should, the Worship Commission along with the Trustees, has decided to begin the process of installing an entirely new sound system. Just this week, two new handheld mics were purchased and installed. We will soon be purchasing a new lapel mic, as well as the other components including a mixing board, amplifier and speakers.

Our plan is to begin working on speaker placement in the next couple of weeks and this may involve several Sundays in a row where speakers are placed one place and then another series of Sundays where the speakers have moved. We would like to know where we will have the best sound before permanently fixing speakers to our walls and running wires around the sanctuary. Most noticeably this week, our upgraded microphones have exposed other background noises in the system that may not have been noticeable before. As we replace the other components and wires in the next month, these should disappear.

We ask for your patience and understanding as we work through this process and know that we are on a path to having a good, functional, and simple sound system for our church. If you have questions about the progress of this project, please ask myself or Bob Brown, who is graciously lending his expertise to this project.

--Adam Nafziger, Worship Commission

Deacons' Report

Since the last newsletter, the Deacons' Commission has met twice—once for their regular, monthly meeting and once for an enriching, daylong retreat.

Hermann Weinlick opened our September 30th meeting with a few apt observations from chapter 5 of *Don't*

Call Them Jerks by Arthur Paul Boers. The first was the importance of having grievance procedures in place before difficult behavior arises within a congregation. The second was the recognition that, while we need to respond to needs, we should frame our primary work around encouraging and using the gifts of those who are “healthy.”

We spent a fair bit of time discussing the role of deacons in welcoming new people and exploring how to integrate them into the church. We agreed to send a copy of the flu guidelines from the Minnesota Council of Churches to all attendees, along with contact information for the deacon in charge of each geographic deacon group. Our purpose in doing this is to make sure people have someone to call for help in the event of illness.

We began a conversation on the topic of faith development in the family setting, which we continued at length during our October 21 retreat. Joetta is on a conference committee that has been discussing the same topic, so she shared some of the insights gleaned at those meetings. For instance, while many people assume that church and Sunday school are the biggest influences on spiritual development, survey responses reveal that people who stay in church list home/parents and service experiences as the two things that most shaped their spiritual life. In light of this fact, we are exploring how we, as deacons and as a church, can support parents and provide service experiences.

Not only did we nourish ourselves spiritually at the retreat, we nourished our bodies with a delicious meal prepared by Judah Nataf and Karen Franzmeier, former staff at St. Martin’s Table. We also reflected on our charge as deacons to “provide leadership and guidance in partnership with the pastor in the spiritual nurture and growth of the congregation,” evaluating how we have done that in the past and how we want to proceed in the future when it comes to fulfilling this mission in light of our evolving congregation.

--*Kami Blackwell Kinney*

Meet Your Fellow FMCers

Most of you know Leslie Minkler as a familiar and friendly presence in our church life. For the past several years, Leslie has done everything from organizing fellowship to weeding the church grounds to representing Faith at the Mennonite General Convention. Like many others at Faith, Leslie is more likely to pitch in than ask for her own way, more likely to listen thoughtfully than to chatter on. And like so

many of us, her path to Faith Mennonite and to spiritual faith was by turns bumpy, serendipitous, intentional and grounded in a deeper search for meaning and community.

Leslie spent her childhood in Waukegan, Illinois, in the same town in which her Dad grew up. Her parents weren’t religious, though she did have a grandmother that had grown up Mennonite but had left the church. For a long time, Leslie didn’t have much use for the concept of God, thinking as she’d been taught that perhaps religion was just a crutch. After a stint in New York, she and a partner moved together to Minneapolis, where Leslie also has a sister. The relationship didn’t last, but Leslie loved Minneapolis, with its small-town feel and easy access to natural areas. In New York, she had to go way out of town to hike in the woods, but here, she can do that within easy distance of her Whittier apartment. She loves to bird-watch, especially at Carver Park. She lives a block from Eat Street, works at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage just down the street from her apartment, and often drinks good coffee at Common Roots Café.

When Leslie first began attending Faith, she was in a rocky place, struggling with both depression and a deep desire for more meaning in her life. She eloquently described to me how she began to consider that perhaps she wasn’t meant to carry all her burdens alone, and that perhaps she could be open to the concept of God and the community of God’s people. She met with Patrick Preheim several times, attended regularly, received a clearer sense of God’s presence in her life, and was eventually baptized. Her family is supportive of her choice.

Leslie was one of my more reticent interview subjects, at least when it came to talking about herself, but when asked what she appreciates about Faith, she didn’t hesitate. She described our community with love, as a place where she feels welcome and fits in, and where people can come as they are and be accepted. She is particularly impressed that so many heterosexual members of the church take GLBT issues and rights seriously and are willing to work to support them.

Attending the Mennonite USA General Convention this past summer was another new and welcome experience. While her fellow representative Rhonda Martin seemed to know scores of people, Leslie knew no-one, and admits to having some preconceived stereotypes of who she would encounter. Those stereotypes were diminished by how welcoming and diverse people actually were. Leslie sat at a randomly assigned meal

table that turned out to be a fairly representative cross-section of our denomination, and while there were definitively areas of disagreement, the discussions were respectful and interesting. Along with many others, Leslie wore pink to represent support for full GLBT inclusion as part of the Pink Menno presence there.

While Leslie still struggles with depression at times, she has a broader outlook and more support than she did a few years ago. She is in a better place, and shared with me just how comfortable and at home she feels at Faith by now. She has faith and a community of people who love her, and many opportunities to share her time and talents. And we have Leslie, a sure sign as anything of the many, many blessings at Faith.

--*Minke Sundseth*

A Welcoming Building

Significant changes are coming to the lawn area in front of the sanctuary; the Missions & Service Committee came to the trustees about 2 years ago asking for our assistance in developing a plan for a new public church sign out front between the two sidewalks leading up to the front doors of our building. Through various fits and starts, the Committee and the trustees (with Bob Mack's assistance) have finally arrived on a design that will be implemented within the next month. We have signed a contract with a local contractor (Wonderwoman Construction) to remove sod and soil between the two sidewalks, install a low decorative block retaining wall and mount a new illuminated church sign board just behind the retaining wall for easy public access to information.

The plan creates an inviting, walk up area between the new sign and the public sidewalk to be planted with sod; random stepping stones will be added to the sod area when our SS children create unique color designed stones. The plan also includes two new ground lights to illuminate the front façade of the church for a few hours each evening while removing the old, wall mounted sign on the front of the church. Next spring, we will be planting shrubs and two new trees as part of this project to create a more welcoming façade to the neighborhood. We anticipate the completion of this fall's work by Dec. 1. Per Erin's request, Mike Schrock's memorial fund money will be used to pay part of the cost of this project with the remainder covered through the trustee's budget.

--*Glenn Geissing, Trustees*

Seeking Unity in Central Plains Mennonite Conference

At both our regional Central Plains annual meeting in June and the national assembly of Mennonites in Columbus in July, grassroots efforts led to resolutions and or actions calling for new efforts to live with difference in our denomination, particularly with regard to the inclusion of glbt persons. Two initiatives are underway in Central Plains Conference (CPMC). A Unity Task Group has been formed and will meet for the first time on November 6 and 7. Katie Hochstedler and Joetta Schlabach from FMC and Lisa Pierce from St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship have been invited to be on the task group. The goal of this Unity Task Group, as stated by our conference moderator Diane Zaerr Brennehan, "is to preserve and enhance our unity so we can be the church of Jesus Christ together even though we don't agree on everything. We want to seek ways of living together that empowers our fellowship, worship and mission rather than being about an absorbing focus on differences." The Task Group will bring a recommendation regarding implementation of the existing document "A Mission-Focused Approach to Congregations at Variance with Conference" to the June 2010 annual meeting. (This document can be found at http://centralplains.mennonite.net/Home/Documents/Variance_Policy.)

The other initiative will take place at the annual CPMC-sponsored Pastor/Elder/Deacon workshop in January. The focus of this workshop will be to engage in theological reflection and conversation around issues of "at-variance," especially as it relates to the issue of homosexuality and committed same sex relationships. This event is seen as a complement to the work of the Unity Task Group, offering pastors and leaders an opportunity for theological reflection and conversation around this issue. The planners explain that "this forum will be designed to help deepen a common Biblical understanding for how we claim Christ as the authority for our faith and life in a Mennonite/Anabaptist perspective." Please pray for all who are planning for and participating in these initiatives

--*Joetta Schlabach*

Sesame Kale Salad

1 pound fresh kale (or chard, spinach or other greens)
1 clove garlic, minced
2 T soy sauce
2 t honey or other sweetener
2 T toasted sesame oil

1 T apple cider vinegar
1 T toasted sesame seeds (crush into powder if desired)

Separate kale leaves from stems. Chop stems and greens. Steam stems a couple of minutes, then add the greens and steam until just tender. Drain; let kale cool enough to handle it. Squeeze out as much water as possible. Place in serving bowl. Mix the remaining ingredients in another bowl; add to greens. Mix, chill and serve. Makes 4-6 servings.

From Asparagus to Zucchini-- adapted from Extending the Table: A World Community Cookbook

--Cynthia Miller

[Do you have a favorite recipe, especially one that reflects values of good health, simplicity, sustainability?—and don't forget good flavor! Send them to your newsletter editor at: greggrichardson@movingtominnnesota.com]

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting September 14th, 2009 @ FMC

Present: Joan Kreider, Moderator; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect; Adam Nafziger, Worship; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service; Thaine Dirks, Pastor-Parish.

Absent: Pastor; Trustees representative; Fellowship representative; Education representative; Treasurer.

Affirmations. Glenn affirms all the people who filled in when Joetta was gone in August. Joan affirms Cleta for planning the Labor Day picnic.

Treasurer's report. Jerry notes disbursements were down, and income was up. August giving was still a little low, though. The question of copier fee still not resolved.

Commission reports.

Trustees. Replaced the glass in the office, new whiteboards in the library and chapel. Bob Mack will be submitting 2-3 bids to do landscaping in front of the church this fall. Permeable pavers, sign, illumination for the front of the building, and two new trees. Should only take 2-3 days.

Missions and Service. Talked about the kiosk and other signage, including a peace message on the main church sign. Also planning the "Who are the Mennos?" event for October. Had a table at Seward King's Fair. Hermann notes that we gave away lots of produce.

Worship. September theme will be from the Columbus

conference. October theme is hope. November will be "giving thanks." Advent starts November 29th. Jenny is taking leave from the commission to care for her mother; Erin may too, for the same reason. Now with just Adam and Joetta, we may need temps. Working on integrating the children into worship more. Possible Christmas Eve service. Have two bids for the sound system, trying to get one more vendor. Hard to find a vendor that sells both system and service. Joan asks if the new sound system will be able to record? Adam says yes. Adam says sound system is getting worse because our bandwidth is being sold. Many churches facing the same problem. New mikes should be at different frequencies.

Deacons. Had many visitors and new attenders in the past month. Rescheduling the deacons' retreat, due to Joetta's absence. Considering the role of deacons. Also how to help people with financial needs.

Pastor. Joetta is absent due to death in the family. Joan reads her written report. Many new visitors, and several have remarked on how welcomed they felt. Participating in the Interfaith Coalition for Humane Immigration Reform, met with Amy Klobuchar's staff. Also meeting with pastors of Emmanuel, Missio Dei, and the Third Way, once a month to consider collaboration. Joan notes that she is impressed with how Joetta maintains relationships with other groups.

Old business.

Corinthian plan. Scott answers the questions from last month. Will this plan be available regardless of denominational voting status? Yes. Are dependents covered? Yes. Hermann asks about the cost? If we opt in, we pay the Mutual Aid fee, estimated at \$2300 or slightly higher in 2010. Access fee is \$250 plus \$10 per member, for a total of \$3500-\$4000 per year. If the pastor gets insurance, the mutual aid fee goes away and is replaced by the insurance premium. Joan says we need to consider where in the budget this fee will go? Adam asks what the \$2300 gets us? Scott replies it provides the ability for Joetta or a future pastor to buy into the program, even with a pre-existing condition. Other employees of 20-plus hours may buy in, but congregation would need to pay 50%. Council votes unanimously to sign on.

Safety discussion. Report on the discussion about how to deal with potential disruptions of worship in the future. Lock the east door. Parental control of kids. Suggestions were posted. Katie asks if there is someone at FMC with experience dealing with this? Deedee Neal or Kristen Green? Ushers group and Christian Ed will continue to discuss.

Ministry staff position. Commissions should each consider how they could use a ministry staff position as Michael's contract comes to an end. Deacons and Worship have discussed, but no conclusions. M&S talked about forums and events using staff time. FMC has started to make local connections through Michael's work, should follow through. Michael thinks the staff person should have more reporting and accountability to Joetta or someone else. Also the idea of having the staff person invite the community for regular events like a meal. Joan feels it doesn't make sense to change the focus of the position every year—we should continue this focus at least one more year. Possible FMC recognition for Michael November 1.

Mennonite Weekly Review wants the church directory so they can send a special edition to each household. We will give members the choice to opt out.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

What's happening here and there...

Writing Cheerfully on the Web

In the spring of 2009, Liz Oppenheimer compiled more than 50 essays from Quakers around the country--and one from the U.K.--who have written on the Internet about their faith, their practice, and their seeking to live faithful lives as Friends. Liz will describe the call she felt to write this book, read an excerpt, and answer questions. The nearby Quaker worship group Laughing Waters is sponsoring the event, Friday November 20, from 7-8:30pm in the fellowship hall at Faith Mennonite Church. Books will be available for purchase. All are welcome.

The book offers a sampling of some of the best contemporary writing about Quakerism by Quakers. Quakerism is part of the Anabaptist tradition and Quakers, like Mennonites, are a historic peace church.

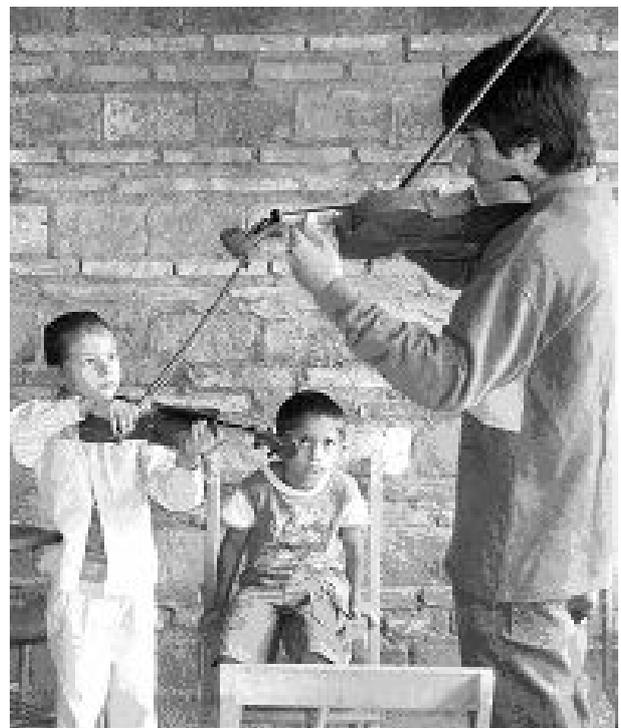
For more information, please contact Sarah Marquardt, 612-216-8637 or sarah.marquardt @ gmail.com.

"For those of us who still really enjoy cracking open a book, feeling the paper, and smelling the ink, Liz has compiled a sampling of some of the best of Quaker blogs in a more traditional format." --Quaker author Brent Bill, from the Preface.

From Minnesota to Bethel College to a Dump in Paraguay

Centro Evangelica Mennonite de Teologia Asuncion, the Mennonite Seminary in Asuncion, has a very practical and creative ministry to the larger community. They provide free music lessons to poor children, including the children of garbage pickers who live at the huge local dump. At the Congreso Mundial Menonita-- aka The Mennonite World Conference--in July, people were invited to bring musical instruments for the program.

At a reception during the Congreso, I met Arlo Kasper, retired professor from Bethel College who had had a splendid idea: Conference attendees were invited to bring used (or new!) instruments for the students. About 37 instruments were brought and on display--from trumpet to violin, all appreciated. I asked Arlo if the project was going to be continued and he said that it had not occurred to him. I noted that Mennonites seem to like to visit each other---a lot! Perhaps those visits and the denominational interest in music could benefit the Seminary's program. After the conference, Arlo and I sent emails and spoke on Skype and decided to try to continue the project. The idea is a two year experiment with cooperation from Bethel College in Kansas. We now have a contact at Bethel who will be responsible for storing instruments as they await transport to Paraguay.



There are some more interesting aspects to this little project. First, the program actively solicits damaged or broken instruments as well as those which are usable because they are starting a musical instrument repair school. Second, for over 40 years, Paraguay and Kansas have had the equivalent of a "sister city" relationship and there is indeed a great deal of travel back and forth. At least a great deal compared to other states' going and comings to Paraguay.



If this works, perhaps CMBC in Winnipeg will become a partner since there seemed to be a great number of Canadians from Manitoba at the Congreso in Asuncion. At the Twin Cities MCC Relief sale there will be more information available. If you would like to bring an instrument to donate to the relief sale, that would be terrific. For the future, contact me, Patricia Mack, at 612 341 3421. We will obviously also be looking for people who drive to Kansas or have folks in Kansas, preferably close to Bethel, who would be willing to deliver instruments. I do not know too much about the history of this musical miracle but you can read more at their website:
http://www.sonidosdelatierra.org.py/english/sonidos_présentacion.php

--Patricia Mack [photos by Arlo Kasper]

All Saints, All Souls

(For William Stafford)

I had disappeared
 into grassland, the high plateau
 where the Missouri begins
 to claw its way south, where hail
 wets the wreckage of fields. I accept it
 gratefully, even this
 bitter pill.

The chaos of the wind
 had taken me, like topsoil
 off a hill, dark steam
 churning, away
 from earth. But you kept me
 on your radar, Bill--*Kneel down*
 you said, *explore*
for the poem.

I love the saints,
 Thérèse cried in mortal illness--*I love the saints,*
they want to see--the other side
 of death's bitter
 remedy, Bill,
 the sleep
 of grass, both root
 and blaze, the river ice waiting
 as time forms its word, the garden
 where we need not hide.

Home, you say,
 as feasts wheel around
 in the dark of the year, All Saints,
 All Souls; all song
 and story. Sing it now, Bill,
 let it come.

--Kathleen Norris

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the deadline for December newsletter items is noon, Tuesday, November 24th.

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.