

Faith Connection

November 2013

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 always feel a twinge of sadness when I pick the final items from the garden—green tomatoes, herbs, arugula and kale—and then pull up plants to add to the yard waste composting pile. Summer goes by so fast and the dark hours extend so quickly. Yet I'm glad that preservation methods allow us to carry some of the summer goodness into fall and winter. Using an old recipe from my mother I mix green tomatoes with brown sugar, raisins, orange, and spices for pies. This year I dried herbs and kale for winter soups and stews. Each of these will serve as reminders of the recent growing season and also point, in hope, to another planting season to come.

I'm glad that the church year includes a shared time of remembrance (All Saints/All Souls Day) and celebration (Thanksgiving) in this autumn season. It acknowledges the sadness we feel not just from passing seasons but also from the passage of persons from our lives. And it invites us to count our blessings: the rich heritage we have received from friends, family, and spiritual ancestors who have gone before as well as the daily abundance we enjoy.

One of the worship texts for November 3, when we will observe All Saints Day, Colossians 3:12-14, includes a list of characteristics that we associate with "saintly" folks: "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and, above all, love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." These are qualities that we don't just grow and harvest for a season or preserve for occasional use. They are ever-bearing and ever-needed in our Christian walk. Yet there is a way in which such goodness is preserved in the individual memories we carry of specific persons and the collective memory we have in Bible stories and other records of faith. These serve to encourage us to live in the same gracious ways that we have been blessed by others.

Of course, as humans, we know that even the most saintly among us and among those who have passed, carry deep flaws. That is why compassion, patience and forgiveness (for ourselves and others) are just as important as kindness and love. This month we have several opportunities to remember pain in our history (as John Stoesz reminds us of Dakota land justice issues) and in the wider world (as Ron Byler provides an update from Mennonite Central Committee). We will be helped in responding to what we hear as we remember that we are not the first to face such challenges...that we are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1).

Who are the "saints" you are remembering this fall whose memory encourages and sustains you? What are the gifts you have received this year for which you are giving thanks and learning to share?

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry staff report...

The FMC middle school youth group met for an evening at the church back on October 23, the day of the most recent community meal. The evening started with some leaf raking around the church, with Joy Z. and John M. winning the prize for starting the earliest and raking the most leaves. The season is later this year and in the streets around the church building many of the leaves are still on the trees. However, the "Rake for the River" project encourages us to get a head start on the early leaves—before the streets are swept—to keep leaves from running into storm drains when it rains and creating excessive phosphorus levels in the river.

Then the youth got some great food that Marybeth Luing had cooked and headed up to the youth room above the sacristy. Hannah O. started out the games with Yahtzee, then Sophia G. and Joy Z. started an energetic Dutch Blitz tournament. Then everyone gathered around to learn how to play Settlers of Cataan.

After about 45 minutes the “Orange Empire” team of Anthony B. and Sophia H. edged out the others for the win.

Youth are planning for two upcoming events. On November 6 we are hoping to do a service project with Second Harvest Heartland. We will head out to their facility in Golden Valley to volunteer for a couple of hours of sorting and packing food boxes. We’ll leave from the church at 5 p.m.(or contact me to arrange a pickup time).

Then mark your calendars for Saturday, November 16, 12:30-2:30 p.m., when Richard Westby (with help from the middle schoolers) is planning to put on a “Kids Fair” at the church. This will be a time for group games, relays, and individual fair-type skill games. Perhaps we’ll get out the giant Dutch Blitz cards? Also, perhaps a time for a sing-along or having a snack. FMC kids age four and up are invited to attend, and to bring another friend if they wish. Contact Richard or me for more information.

In other news, Missions and Service Commission is sponsoring a drive right now for women’s winter boots. We would like to assist the St. Paul organization “Sarah’s... an Oasis for Women” in providing winter outfits for women especially in their first winter in the U.S. Sarah’s has collected the coats but still needs boots (new or lightly used, women's sizes 5-9 especially). Sarah's is a Sisters of St. Joseph transitional housing program that houses about thirty women at a time. They have come from more than sixty nations and have survived violence, abuse, torture, war, discrimination and other difficult circumstances. Their website is: www.sarahsoasis.org. There will be a collection box for the boots at the back of the sanctuary.

In November, we are looking forward to hosting Ron Byler, Executive Director Mennonite Central Committee, US. We will be holding our next community meal on the day of his visit, Wednesday, November 20, 6 p.m. at the church.

Also, I heard recently from Mary Parker, who practices voice in our sanctuary. She held two recitals at FMC last month to raise money for the Walker UMC rebuilding project. She writes: “It was just so energizing and gratifying to be able to share the music I’ve been working on for so long! I had a larger audience than I could have guessed. People came not only from my church community, but from both my work communities and also some family and old friends, etc.

So the donations totaled about \$400. And the great thing was that we had a funds match going on at that time, giving altogether \$800 to our church! I am very pleased! Thanks, FMC!”

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

John Stoesz, Contemporary Zacchaeus, Visits FMC November 10

On November 10, John Stoesz, former director of Mennonite Central Committee-Central States, based in Newton, Kansas, will speak in our morning worship and participate in discussion with the *Unkingdom* adult education class. He will arrive after concluding a two-month bicycle trip across southern Minnesota to raise awareness about Dakota land justice. John grew up in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and recently inherited some of the profit from the sale of family farm land. His work with the MCC Indigenous Visions Project had raised his own awareness of the fact that many people today live on and benefit from land that was forcibly taken from indigenous people who were not compensated when European settlers arrived in the 19th century. Inspired by the gospel story of Zacchaeus, who gave half of his money to the poor after being visited by Jesus, John decided to give half of his land inheritance to indigenous justice causes, including a Dakota land purchase project. John’s visit offers an opportunity to learn more about a complex issue and to hear how one person has responded.

November 20 Community Meal To Feature Mennonite Central Committee Guest

The next Wednesday community meal is scheduled for November 20 and will be followed by a presentation by Ron Byler, Executive Director of Mennonite Central Committee-US who will be visiting in the Twin Cities. We are inviting other area Mennonite churches to join us for this meal and program. Mennonite Central Committee works in humanitarian relief, community development, and peacemaking activities with international partners around the world. Come enjoy an evening of good food (prepared by Marybeth Luing), fellowship and a chance to learn the latest from MCC. The meal will be served at 6 p.m., with the program to follow at 7 p.m.

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

Faith Mennonite Church will be one of five worship communities joining together in a shared Thanksgiving

service on Tuesday, November 26, at 7 p.m. The service will be held at St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church, 1500 Franklin Avenue, SE, Minneapolis. Persons who would like to participate in an impromptu choir should arrive at 6:15 to rehearse. An offering of money and non-perishable food items will be received for local food shelves.

FMC Partners With Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire

On Sunday, October 20, Susan and I worshipped with the Shalom Mennonite Church of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. This is a young congregation that our congregation is helping to support as they get started. While Mennonites in Eau Claire have been meeting bi-weekly for several years, in the last year they have gathered every Sunday and have a regular pastor serving half time. The worshiping community numbers about thirty. Several things impressed me about the congregation.

- Every other Sunday the pastor preaches. On the other Sundays they gather for prayer, using - *Take Our Moments and our Days: The Anabaptist Prayer Book* (a copy is in our church library).
- They are racially diverse.
- They worship in the building of Shalom Jewish congregation.
- Both faculty and student body of UW-Eau Claire are represented.
- More than half the adults stayed for adult education, which had lively discussion.
- The pastor, a professional drummer, is active in Eau Claire musical groups.
- The pastor preached a sermon really wrestling with the Gospel text.
- Serving at a homeless shelter is part of their regular life.
- Their identity as an Anabaptist, peace church is clear.
- They are willing to experiment, as with their worship.

Emmanuel Mennonite Church of Minneapolis and - Bethel Mennonite Church of Mountain Lake are also part of the support network that is helping Shalom become established. Shalom welcomes visitors to their Sunday worship, which begins at 9:30 am.

--Hermann Weinlick



If you or a family member has a birthday in November, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on November 16th. (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.

November
Birthday
Brunch

Saturday,
November

16th

9:30-11

a.m.

Comings and Goings...

We welcome **Daryn, Candace, and Lydia Dockter**, who began attending worship this fall. Please take the opportunity to get acquainted with them. We are glad to share updates from several people who recently moved away:

Aryn Baxter writes: I'm now working at the largest university in the United States: Arizona State University (ASU). It's a huge place to learn your way around. Some days I feel overwhelmed by the steep learning curve and others I am encouraged as I discover the many pockets of exciting and fascinating things happening across the four campuses. For example, entrepreneurship and innovation are emphasized through programs like Changemaker Central, which seeks to catalyze student driven social change. In the department of engineering, faculty have developed Global Resolve, a social entrepreneurship program that involves students directly in semester-long projects designed to improve the lives of people in disadvantaged communities.

Outside of work, I have felt similarly encouraged that this is a good place for me to be. There have been ups and downs as well as reminders that this transition is going to take patience, but already I have begun to discover people and places that I look forward to getting to know better. My starting point to build connections was attending a Mennonite church in the Phoenix area that I had reason to believe shared a few things in common with Faith Mennonite. The first time I visited Trinity Mennonite, I showed up to an empty parking lot because everyone had gone on a mountain retreat and it

wasn't posted on their website. I was pretty disappointed after a 35-minute drive. After a few minutes, someone found me in the parking lot to greet me and give me a Starbucks gift card. She apologized and said they hoped I would come back. Last week I went back and it was really nice to make connections with people who know some members of Faith. Mark Kaufman and Heather Wengerd have former Goshen classmates who attend Trinity, and Cleta Roth has a relative. I also met someone from Mountain Lake. I was particularly happy to be introduced to someone named Laura who is around my age and has been in Phoenix for about five years working as a defense attorney. She has been very hospitable and already introduced me to quite a few people and places that have given me the impression I will be able to take root here.

It was good to hear that the FMC fall retreat focused on roots. I appreciated the reminder of how important it is to attend to our root systems when we are transplanted, and was struck by how powerful this metaphor is when the landscape transition is so drastic. I came to Arizona fearing whether or not I would be able to withstand the heat and the challenge of yet another transplant. The verses you reflected on at retreat emphasized that those who are rooted and grounded in love can thrive anywhere. A desert landscape gives new meaning to these familiar words: *They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green, in the year of the drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. – Jeremiah 17:7-8*

And from Washington, DC, Cleta Roth Gingerich writes: I feel like I've been planted on an outer spaceship in a very new world that's isolated but with a constant flow of aliens. I'm totally separated from my past world on 20th Avenue South! Have I ever been so preoccupied, so married to work and home enveloped in a 3,000-square-foot area? The breadth of world-trekking aliens is what sustains and brings the outside in for new life, new ideas, and world perspectives. So...scrubbing toilets, baking hundreds of muffins, staying up till 11 p.m. checking folks in (which is *way* past my early-to-bed hour of 9 p.m.!) is perhaps worth it?

[Hearing news of the FMC fall retreat reminds us that] yes, we do feel “rooted and grounded in love” by you at FMC! Thanks for the very sweet reminder that we are remembered, as you are with us in DC! I miss you all, I miss the worship service, I miss watching the children's faces as they attentively listen to the children's story during worship and I miss chatting with you all at coffee time. What a gift memories are ... perhaps that's part of

being rooted and that is sustenance to continue growing.

Today we biked to the campus of Catholic U where the largest Catholic Church is in the US, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The tour guide was personal and full of stories about the Saints and the sacred art. The most peaceful place, for me, was the outdoor fountain and Mary's Garden.

Note: Cleta and Orv Gingerich are serving as volunteer hosts at the Mennonite-sponsored International Guesthouse in Washington, DC. They welcome Twin Cities travelers to stop and visit (their contact information is in the on-line church directory.) Another letter from them is posted on the foyer bulletin board.

Summary Of September “Body & Soul” Adult Discussion Series

Note: In September, Cynthia Miller, Gerald Schlabach, Donna Stucky, and Hermann Weinlick facilitated the adult education discussions on sexuality as part of the Body & Soul: Healthy Sexuality for the People of God worship and education series. We share this summary, presented in the final session, for those who were not able to take part in those discussions.

In the first week, Donna Stucky struggled a bit to get discussion started because the answer to her first question seemed so obvious: sexuality and sex are not the same. Sexuality is much more than sex. Looking back, though, it is helpful to see that the entire series has been seeking to unfold the meaning and implication of that distinction. Healthy sexuality will not make too much of sex, nor too little. We humans find any number of ways to make too much of sex, whether obsessing over it by trying to repress it, or obsessing over it by expecting sexual pleasure to be the key to a fulfilling life. Yet neither do we experience healthy sexuality when we make too little of sex. We do that both when we treat sex as though it can ever be “casual” and when we treat sex and our sexual bodies as anything less than gifts of God to be celebrated with deep gratitude to the Giver.

The second week we turned to explore the meaning of intimacy in its many forms. The story of Ruth, Naomi, Boaz and their kinship networks reminded us of many kinds of intimacy. In all its forms, intimacy must sometimes deepen through shared pain or loss, but always relies on the support that comes as God's presence knits us together in a complex web of relationships.

In preparing for this session, Cynthia Miller and I found the following paragraph in our study guide especially valuable:

These stories show that intimate relationships are the most valuable of all earthly possessions. They bring us life because they reach into our most vulnerable selves. But they also require qualities that can sometimes be hard to find in our busy culture: time, commitment, and perseverance.

Think of a triangle with these three corners: intimacy ... vulnerability ... covenant care. In any relationship, intimacy makes us vulnerable. And so to go deeper into those relationships of intimacy that give us the deepest satisfaction in life – friendships, family life, kinship, and yes, relationships in which sex plays a part – we need to know we can trust and will be cared for truly over time. Hence, “covenant care.”

And hence, for that sexual encounter in which we present ourselves to another – naked and at our most vulnerable – we need and long to be held by someone who has promised us a lifetime of covenant care. The vulnerability of sexual union will be most safe and reliable in the context of a unique, exclusive and enduring commitment. Our leader’s guide expressed this when it reminded us that “The Christian church reserves this expression of intimacy for those who declare their commitment to each other before God and the community in marriage.” Thus, even as Faith Mennonite officially began to stretch its understanding of marriage in 1996 by voting for the full inclusion of gays and lesbians, it was important to honor the sanctity of marriage as we welcomed “Christian gays and lesbians... without regard to sexual orientation ... whether single or in marriage-equivalent relationships.”

When we completed that process in 2012 by making clear that we would bless same-sex marriages, the task force report that prepared us for this decision likewise affirmed that “Ideally sexual intimacy is reserved for ... covenanted relationships because of the deep level of vulnerability and communication involved in sexual relationships.” Intimacy, vulnerability and covenant – they need each other.

The third week, even as we gathered around the theme of “Honoring the Gift of Sex,” we had to frankly address some of the challenges that even a properly celebratory Christian understanding of sexuality may face. One of the break-out sessions took up “the shadow side of sex.” After all, we face almost daily reminders in the news (if not in haunting memories of our own) that human beings too often take God’s good

gifts and twist them to misguided purposes that wound deeply. Two other break-out sessions took up another challenge, though in different ways: Where do Christian understandings of sexuality leave people for whom the blessing of sex within marriage may not be available, whether because we are married and face the uncertainties that come with aging bodies or disability, or because we are single or divorced?

A few discussion sessions cannot answer every such question. It is helpful to recall that the gospel never promises to spare us from every disappointment in life. But it does promise exactly what this series has been getting at. It promises to place our lives in that larger network of Christian kinship and relationality that God is weaving, sometimes at a cost but always a cost that God too has entered into through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the canopy of intimacy and covenant care woven through God’s own relational presence in our lives, which we encountered in the Hebrew wedding symbol of a well-woven overarching *chuppah*.

Hermann Weinlick remarked in one of the team meetings, “Peacemaking and a Christian view of sexuality have something in common: both are countercultural ways of looking at life.” Again, historical legacies as well as cultural trends, both in church and society, so often conspire to push us into making too much of sex or too little. How then to embrace God’s promise of healthy sexuality and grow into that promise with a confidence that is at once serene and passionate?

We may start by noticing a phrase: “God desires.” God desires. God desires. When we announced the theme for the final week, “Holy Desire,” it seemed a bit of a mystery to at least a few persons. Yet here is why our series has been placing sex in the context of sexuality all along, and seeing the wide meaning of sexuality at work in all of our lives, and in the very alluring work of God.

The God who created us with the desire of a lover for the deepest possible relationship with creation, and with the desire of a friend simply to walk together with us in the cool of the day, woos us back and yearns for reconciliation. The book of Revelation portrays the promised day of reconciliation as nothing less than a cosmic wedding. And so our every human response is but a longing for union with God and with one another in God. Our very human challenge is to find contentment amid the incomplete fulfillment of this in-between time of longing, with the disappointments it brings to everyone in some way. And our necessary human task in this in-between time is neither to

suppress desire nor to act on every desire, but to train our desires, coordinating them lest they take us off in scattered directions, as we orient them all according to that ultimate desire for union with God.

-- Gerald Schlabach in consultation with leadership team

Thank You

Peter Funk here. I am the one that is not a diehard Indians fan. I had the opportunity to worship at Faith on September 29th. I really appreciated the very warm reception that Terry and I received. It was almost like being at Home Street Mennonite Church, my home church. I shared about your church this morning and encouraged anyone traveling to Minneapolis to visit Faith Mennonite church on Sunday. You may have more Home Streeters visiting. Any anyone traveling to Winnipeg is welcome to come and worship with us. We are almost as friendly as you folks. We may even slay a fatted e~~at~~ calf if we know that you are coming. It was good to meet so many of you and share a worship service with you. It was the perfect start to our Sunday! Greetings to all and may God bless you all!

--Peter Funk

January-September Financial Statement

Income	Year to Date
Offerings	\$98,831
Rent	28,595
Investments	6,810
Total Income	\$134,236
Expenses	
Conference support	\$4,000
Deacons	2,835
Education	4,529
FICA	1,391
Fellowship	2,324
Missions and Service	1,639
Office	3,764
Pastor/Ministry Staff	60,822
Trustees/bldg expenses	26,405
Worship	1,004
Mortgage	4,477
Total Expenses	\$113,190
Income minus expenses	\$21,046
YTD budgeted offerings	\$106,875
Actual offerings	\$98,831
Shortfall	(-\$8,044)

What's happening here and there...

Bach Cantata Project

You are invited to join us for a music service at Emmanuel Mennonite Church 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, November 17th as we begin to say farewell to Mathew and Becky Swora. The focus of the event will be to sing Bach Cantata 79: *Gott, der Herr, ist Sonn' und Schild* which is based on the hymn tune "Now Thank We All Our God." Rehearsal will begin at 2 p.m. for all musicians followed by a 'Kaffee und Kuchen' social time around 3 p.m. and finish with a final performance and some hymn singing. An additional choral rehearsal will take place on Sat, Nov 16th 4-5:30 p.m. to aid in preparation. If you are interested in singing in the choir or playing in the orchestra, please contact Russell Adrian at russelladrian@gmail.com or 316-217-5525 to get music. Come for the entire event or join us at 3 p.m. for socializing and the music to follow. Looking forward to this time of music and fellowship

--Russell Adrian

Prevailing Winds

Come hear the Prevailing Winds Quintet perform on Sunday, November 10th at 7 p.m. We will be performing at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, on Como Avenue, next to the seminary. A challenging transcription of four piano pieces by Johannes Brahms, *Trios Pieces Breves* by Jacques Ibert and *Roaring Fork* by Eric Ewazin, highlight the program. It's a free concert!!! I'd love to see you there.

--Rudy Okerlund

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Inclusion

The Welcoming Dialogue Group of Lancaster (a member of the Supportive Communities Network) and BMC are sponsoring a special evening with Megan Ramer, pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Chicago, Illinois. Megan will discuss her essay, *Biblical and Theological Foundations for Inclusion*, a paper that was prepared for her conference as part of a credential review after she officiated at a same sex union ceremony. The event will be held on November 17 from 5:00 – 8:30 at the Eden Resort in Lancaster and will include dinner. Over 100 people are already expected, and tickets are still available. To learn more, contact

Bob Wyble, the convener of the Welcoming Dialogue Group, at wyble@ptd.net. It promises to be an inspirational and very informative evening.

BMC Oral History Project Interviews

Amy Short and Carol Wise will travel to Washington, DC and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in early November in order to collect a series of interviews for the BMC Oral History Project. The project was begun three years ago in order to celebrate and record the lives and experiences of older lgbt BMCers, as well as collect a history of BMC. Since its inception, Amy has taped over 40 hours of interviews with nearly 20 individuals. This upcoming trip is particularly important as planned interviews include Martin Rock, the founder of BMC, and key individuals from Germantown Mennonite Church, the oldest worshipping Mennonite congregation in the United States. Germantown was expelled from its conference over fifteen years ago because of its welcoming stance, in a particularly brutal and disturbing fashion.

Please contact the BMC office (bmc@bmcigbt.org or call 612-343-2060) if you would like to either interview someone for this project or be interviewed. Amy has developed helpful guidelines for questions and topics for the interview.

The deadline for December newsletter items is noon, Monday, November 25th.

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.

Illness in the Family

We're sleeping in the same room to take care.
For the young ones for whom rest is important,
we share delightful stories of the past:
We were the first to jump in the water.
We could run faster than anyone.
We spoke in strange accents to make everyone laugh
until they cried.
We witnessed terrible accidents where everyone survived.

The times of trial bring us together.
The warmth and close quarters of recovery...

When is when the fever subsides.
To hold is the hands let go and the little ones
run for the joy of speed.
The next time we spent getting well remains through our lives.
The next need to rest contains all the dreams necessary.

--*Travis Lusk*