

Faith Connection

October 2008

Monthly Newsletter of Faith Mennonite Church
2720 E. 22nd St. Minneapolis, MN 55406
Ph: (612) 375-9483
e-mail: faithmc@faithmennonite.org
web: www.faithmennonite.org

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...

One of the less pleasant administrative parts of the job description of pastor is sorting through the mail, the electronic and the print versions. The easy part is deleting the email SPAM and dropping the catalogs in the recycle bin. The hard part is deciding which of the good, legitimate items to ponder and bring to the attention of the congregation. I must admit to some subjectivity in this process. Certain things tug my heart strings more than others. I hope that as we fill the ministry staff position and make progress as a congregation in deciding how to best increase our involvement in the community, the mail sorting will get easier; I will be able to save the things that match our outward mission.

One recent item that pulled my heart strings and also falls within our commitment to peacemaking was a notice from the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches (GMCC) that October is Criminal Justice Month. This year's third annual observance is "designed to help reduce the alarming rate of repeat offenders — making the community a safer place to live and work, and helping those re-entering society after incarceration to live full, productive lives." To this end GMCC has developed a mentor system in which trained mentors develop one-on-one relationships with newly released offenders, providing them guidance and support as they return to their communities. According to the GMCC website, of the 105 felons who were matched with a mentor in 2007, only 21 percent were re-incarcerated during the first year of release (compared with the average 45 percent of Minnesota inmates who end up back in prison within a year of release). Ex-offenders who stay connected to their mentor commit fewer crimes overall, thus improving public safety.

The criminal justice system in this country is

almost as broken as our health-care system. As I stated in a sermon several weeks ago, the US leads the world in its rate of incarcerations. Furthermore, our jails and prisons hold a disproportionate number of African-American men: Black men in their early thirties are imprisoned at seven times the rate of whites in the same age group and 28 percent of black men are imprisoned sometime during their lifetime. Common wisdom suggests that poverty is the root of much of this disparity, but new voices are noting that these high rates of imprisonment exacerbate and intensify poverty.

Our family has had a first-hand experience of how this works. Several years ago, Gerald's sister, a single parent, began a relationship with a paroled ex-offender. He joined her household and began contributing to her household income. But he got picked up for driving without a driver's license and ended up back in prison. Kristina had had a number of previous boyfriends, but her commitment to Keith was solid enough that they decided to get married while he was in prison and they hoped for an early release for good behavior. Keith was released a little over a year later in spring 2007 and began looking for work. In a short time, however, he got caught between mixed messages and expectations from separate parole and probation officers and ended up back in prison. His life is in the hands of a fickle parole board and judge who refuse to give him a clear idea of when he might be released.

A healthy, African-American man sits in prison with every desire to be out working and providing for his wife and the two girls who consider him their father. Meanwhile, tax-payer money pays for his upkeep while his wife struggles to make ends meet and must turn to public assistance programs.

Mennonites have made a name for themselves in the area of victim-offender reconciliation programs. I hope we will find additional ways to raise our voice and advocate on behalf of the offenders that Jesus proclaimed release for in his inaugural address:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

(Luke 4:18-19)

--Joetta Schlabach

What's happening at FMC...

We Walk Because They Walk

Join the Faith Mennonite team on Sunday October 12 for the Minneapolis area CROP walk!

When:

12:30pm Catered lunch at church for all participants
1:15pm Leave faith Mennonite to walk to Augsburg College, where walk originates
2:00pm Walk starts along Mississippi River

Why: To raise money for hunger awareness and relief. In spite of our nation's current economic problems, we live amid wealth that is unimaginable to the majority of the world's citizens. We walk because too many people in the world need to walk many miles every day to carry their water, their fuel, and their food. A portion of the proceeds (25%) will go to local food banks and hunger projects including Groveland Emergency Food Shelf, Youth Farm and Market Project, and Brian Coyle food shelf. The remainder goes to worldwide relief efforts through Church World Service. Donations can also be designated to MCC or another agency of the donors' preference.

Goal: Goal for the Faith Mennonite team is \$2000.00 this year. One way that could break down is: one building kit—wooden beams, window frames, lintels, doors, nails, plastic cement, and other materials—for an Afghan family rebuilding their home in the wake of war (\$1600) PLUS Cost of field and garden seed for six families (\$100) PLUS cost of three pairs of rabbits to increase families' incomes (\$30) PLUS some left over to donate to the Brian Coyle food shelf on the West Bank in Minneapolis (\$270).

How to donate: See one of our walkers after church or go on line to www.cropwalkonline.org and follow the links to Minnesota, Minneapolis, and Faith Mennonite Church.

How to sign up to walk: See Joan Kreider (651-645-2660) for a registration packet. A free T shirt will go to anyone raising \$150 in funds; a drawing will be held for all those raising over \$200. You can also follow the above link to sign up online, and to accept online donations.

Who can walk? All ages and abilities. This year there are two walk routes, one 3 miles and one 5 miles. Eleven walkers have signed up so far, with an age range of 12 to 54. Let's double our numbers and expand our age range!

--Joan Kreider

From The Deacons

Cleta Roth Gingerich fills open deacon position. Cleta Roth Gingerich has agreed to fill out the term of the deacon position that opened this summer. She joins Candace Lutt, Mike Okerstrom, Beth Richardson, and Hermann Weinlick in supporting the pastor in meeting the pastoral care needs of the congregation. In addition to individual support through prayer and friendship, the deacons also oversee the formation of small groups, plan for various retreat experiences, and respond to financial emergencies.

FMC Neighborhood/Geographic Area Groups will meet October 19

Watch for details for the quarterly meeting of neighborhood/geographic area groups. This is a good opportunity to get better acquainted with FMC friends who live in proximity to you. The gatherings are informal and children are welcome.

Small Groups Forming Soon

The deacons will be using the Small Group response forms to create some small fellowship groups this fall. If you have not yet turned in a form but would like to join a small group, please speak with the pastor or a deacon.

Global Youth Summit Fundraiser

Come to a fundraising meal on October 26 after Sunday School in the fellowship hall. We are raising funds to help young adults from the Global South to attend the

Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit in Paraguay in the summer of 2009. Christians from different countries must meet in order to make the strong connections necessary to tackle 21st-century issues. Many emerging leaders in the global Anabaptist church are simply a visa and a plane ticket away from this event. The Mennonite World Conference young adult committee - AMIGOS - is trying to raise \$30,000 to reach North America's "fair share" for international delegates to attend GYS 2009. Are you willing to help us? We want every committed young leader appointed by his or her national conference in the Global South to come, uninhibited by the cost.

Katie Hochstedler is facilitating this meal and will be cooking much of the food. She is attempting to make it as inclusive as possible for those with food allergies and sensitivities as well as those who eat vegetarian and vegan diets. Much of the food will be sustainable, organic and/or local. The menu currently includes chicken and vegan (will include legumes) stews, rice, bread, green salad with homemade dressings, fresh fruit and cookies. A basket will be available for your donations.

Please plan to join us for this meal. If you are interested in helping or if you have any questions, you can contact Katie at katie.hochstedler@gmail.com or 319-936-0495.

-- *Katie Hochstedler*

Simply in Season Update

What does environmental justice have to do with the apple harvest? The site chosen for our Simply in Season apple harvest project this fall is Women's Environmental Institute (WEI) at Amador Hill, near North Branch, Minnesota. This is the second year of harvesting apples for WEI, whose mission is for renewal, learning, and organization for environmental justice.

Environmental justice is defined as "the right of every person to clean air, clean water, and uncontaminated foods." Unfortunately, this is still a far distant goal. However, awareness and concern about inequities in distribution of environmental hazards sites are increasing. The WEI is active in the Phillips/Seward neighborhoods in challenging environmental racism. This work has taken the form of creating a Community Environmental Information System that allows residents to request appropriation of public funding to clean up arsenic in the soil. The advocacy and organizing network brings together Native Americans, new immigrants, and others to begin to assess the health needs of residents of Phillips

and develop strategies with political and social service agencies as to how best to utilize resources to address pollution-related illness. Long-term sustainable education will be needed in the future as people become more aware that the soil, air, and water of Phillips are the most contaminated in the state.

In Minnesota, six percent of the population is under the age of five years old. In the Phillips neighborhood, 13 percent of residents are under age five. The minority population of Minneapolis is 23.2%, while Phillips is 75.6% people of color. Pollution measures 300 times higher in Phillips than the rest of Minneapolis.

So what does environmental justice have to do with apples in North Branch? A farm was donated to WEI several years ago and is now being used to educate people in creating a safe food system for city people. The farm is run by young VISTA volunteers and a long list of volunteers contributing money, skills, education, and labor to create a community supported agriculture (CSA) network that embodies the vision of working towards environmental justice. For more information see the website: www.w-e-i.org.

We need a site to pick apples and WEI needs apple pickers and eaters. We've scheduled our apple harvest trip for Saturday, October 11, during the fall harvest festival in North Branch. Farm tours, a meal, and apple harvest are being planned by WEI. We can bring a limited number of people to the event, so contact Carol Harder or Candace Lutt (507-663-1859) now if you are interested. We look forward to supporting WEI and their justice efforts in the FMC neighborhood.

--*Carol Harder (assisted by Phil Stoltzfus)*

What's happening here and there...

Seward Neighborhood Then and Now

The Seward Neighborhood Group History Committee is hoping to instill a sense of roots and place among Seward residents. On Saturday October 18 from 1 to 4 pm, a self-guided tour will be held featuring some of the buildings that have social or cultural significance. Buildings which were originally constructed for a certain purpose have changed over time and now have a new and different mission. Photos from earlier years will be exhibited along with a text which will describe some of these changes. The description may highlight unusual

features of the building. At some sites, hosts will be available to answer questions and more fully explain historical information.

Faith Mennonite Church, as well as some other churches, has been invited to participate. Our building was the original site of the Swedish ethnic Ebenezer Lutheran Church. FMC purchased the building in 1990 when Myron Schrag was the Mennonite pastor and Lou Sundquist was the Lutheran pastor. We shared the space for over three years until Ebenezer disbanded its congregation in 1993. One of the Lutheran pastors, Reverend Charles Johnson, served that congregation for 37 years. Everyone is invited to participate in "Seward Then and Now" to learn some history of the Seward neighborhood.

--Dick Westby

Call to Action for Criminal Justice

The Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches invites congregations and individuals to a Call to Action on Thursday, Oct. 2 from 7-8:30 p.m. at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, 511 Groveland Ave. in Minneapolis. This free event, co-sponsored by Prison Fellowship, will feature former Minnesota Gov. Al Quie as guest speaker, stories of ex-offenders and mentors, and detail the role volunteers can play. The event will offer an understanding of GMCC's Community Justice Project mentorship program and answer questions about training and time commitment.

The Community Justice Project is a collaboration between GMCC and the Minneapolis Police Department and trains volunteer mentors to help newly released Hennepin County inmates—ages 18 and older—reconnect to the community in healthy ways. Volunteers are recruited from area congregations to help ex-offenders navigate through social service and government channels. Mentors offer practical advice on job hunting, budgeting, and housing issues. To date, more than 270 mentors have been trained.

Middle East Peace Presents "False Alarms on Iran"

William O. Beeman explains why Iran is not a danger to either the United States or Israel. He will explore the charges that Iran is the "chief state supporter of terrorism," that Iran's nuclear program constitutes a danger for the world, and that Iran is responsible for attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq. Beeman will explain the real reasons why the Bush administration has targeted

Iran during the past eight years. Professor Beeman is Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota and President of the Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Association. His latest book is: *The "Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs": How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other.*

Saturday, October 4, 2008

9:30 a.m. Refreshments

10:00 a.m. to noon Program and Discussion

Southdale Hennepin County Library

7001 York Avenue South, Edina, MN

For information call Florence Steichen, 651-696-1642

Other Events

"The Practice of Sabbath" Spend a day learning, reflecting, and practicing how to keep Sabbath in this culture in this century right here. Barbra Wiener a member of Shir Tikvah Congregation will give a presentation on the "Traditional Meaning of Sabbath." Franciscan sister Joan Tuberty will give a presentation on Centering Prayer. Schedule allows for individual quiet time.

October 18, 2008, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

\$25 (includes lunch)

Sabbath House

3228 Portland Avenue S, Minneapolis

Call to register at least one week before event: 612-822-2623.

International Year of the Organ Concert, 2008-09 has been designated by the American Guild of Organists as the International Year of the Organ. Recitals and concerts around the world on October 19 will contribute to this "Organ Spectacular," the world's largest organ concert. Twin Cities organists perform on St. Olaf's Lively-Fulcher pipe organ: Dr. Lynn Trapp, Lawrence Lawyer, Kathy Borgen, Carolyn Diamond, Dr. Kim Kasling, Jackie Holstrom. Freewill offering. Sunday, Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m. St. Olaf Catholic Church, 215 S. 8th Street, Minneapolis.

Deadline for November newsletter items is noon, October 30th.

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.