

Faith Connection

October 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...

This summer's unexpected protestor in worship (the day of my ordination, July 12) has given us the opportunity to discuss with each other how to maintain the balance between being a welcoming and a safe faith community. I am gratified when persons who have visited only once or twice tell me that Faith Mennonite is one of the friendliest churches they have attended. In fact, I'm not sure our protestor would have come in if various folks had not invited him in! Now, as we've had time to reflect on that occurrence, we realize that in some cases we may need to explicitly articulate that everyone is welcome, but not all behaviors are welcomed or appropriate.

We have broadened this conversation to include the general safety, particularly of children, within our building, given its multiple entrances and various passage ways between the two sections of the building. We value the fact that we are a small enough community where intergenerational relationships are important and children feel very much at home in our building and among their FMC family. But we also recognize the tragic fact that churches have been places where sacred trust has sometimes been broken and abuse has occurred. We want to consider appropriate precautions that safeguard the welcome and trust.

As we've begun this conversation and have a task group (Michael Bischoff, Kristin Green, Tom Johnson, Joan Kreider, Neil Okerlund, Mike Okerstrom, Teresa Wasick, and Joan Wing) to process feedback and make recommendations, another safety matter swirls around us—this one health-related. As the flu season opens early with the H1N1 virus already circulating, the Fellowship Commission has begun an email discussion of what precautions we should be taking in our Sunday gatherings, particularly when we serve snacks and potluck meals. Ideas are also circulating about developing a system of support and care when members

of our Faith community get sick. While we continue to discuss our church response, we can certainly take the suggested individual precautions of remaining at home if we become ill and to wash or sanitize our hands often. More helpful information is available from the Centers for Disease Control (cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm).

Situations like this remind me of earlier times in history when the church was faced with far more dreadful health threats such as the plague. In the second and third centuries Christians were often blamed for the plague because they didn't follow Roman cultic practices. Lacking scientific knowledge of disease, people attributed most disasters to the gods being upset. To their credit, early Christians did not let these accusations deter them from practicing fearless compassion in ministering to those who were ill. While many Roman families would throw their ailing members in the streets to die, or would flee, leaving them behind, Christians remained in their neighborhoods and tended the sick and dying. Some died as a result, but those who survived and developed immunity continued their ministry of caring. Sociologist Rodney Stark credits this behavior for the incredible growth of the church in these early centuries: those who were saved through the care of Christians were drawn to their loving, faith convictions.

Historians tell us that early Christians were moved largely by their belief that every human bore the imago Dei—the image of God. They sought to follow the teaching of Jesus' parable, recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, that "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." May we be guided by this same vision.

--Joetta Schlabach

"I love the recklessness of faith. First you leap and then you grow wings."

--William Sloane Coffin

What's happening at FMC...

Faith and Community

October will be my last month in the Ministry Staff Position at Faith. I'm very grateful for this past year of learning and serving with all of you! The job was a one-year commitment, from the church, and from me. I spent 8 hours a week listening to the congregation and to this neighborhood to see what kinds of community engagement FMC was called to. Four of the themes of activities that emerged were:

- Hosting community forums that share the values of the church and engage the community in applying the values to contemporary issues.
- Building partnerships with East African communities in this neighborhood.
- Partnering with other faith communities in the neighborhood and beyond.
- Encouraging healthy and sustainable relationships with food and land.

There is good momentum within the church in each of these areas to continue to nurture and grow actions in each of these four areas. I know that the Church Council and others are thinking of how to best continue and adapt the part-time Ministry Staff position. While I won't be in the staff position after October, I will still live four blocks from the church, and I certainly plan to continue the relationships and connections with FMC. I'm a member of a Quaker congregation, but I want to continue thinking of FMC as a second faith home.

Before I leave this staff position, I'm putting lots of energy into helping organize the "Who are the Mennonites?" open house and fair that will be at Faith on Sunday, October 25 from 2:00 to 5:00 PM. Please plan to come and help host this event! And please invite your friends to come get to know about Mennonites on that afternoon. So far, plans for the event include:

- Music
- Food
- Tables about Mennonite-related service and activism, including: Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Mennonite Disaster Service, 10,000 Villages, and more
- Interactive presentations about Mennonite history and ideas
- Presentations about hospitality in response to the foreclosure crisis

We want to make sure that everyone in the church is able to participate, including families with young children, so Meagan will be there to watch children during the event. Fliers and magnets about the event are in the back of the sanctuary. Please join us in letting others know about the treasures that are at Faith and in the broader Mennonite tradition.

--Michael Bischoff

Adult Christian Education Elective Classes Fall 2009

Two classes will be offered this fall quarter, beginning Oct. 11. You are encouraged to **sign up for one of the classes by September 27** so that books can be ordered in advance. Sign-up sheets will be present on the back table and they will also be circulated during the adult education session on September 20 and 27. Do not be deterred by the cost of each book. Upon receipt of the book, *please pay as you are able*.

Money and Faith: Hermann Weinlick and Matthew Hendricks will lead a class focused on issues pertaining to money and faith. They will use the book *Money and Faith: The Search for Enough*, by Michael Schut to guide the discussion. The following is an excerpt from the publisher's summary of the book: "Talking about money in a personal way remains more of a taboo than sex or politics. To Schut, this seems odd within a Christian context since Jesus addressed topics of money, poverty, and wealth more than probably any other concern... On a personal level this book opens up issues of scarcity and abundance, idolatry and freedom; on a societal level it invites exploration of greater equity and sustainability. On both levels it empowers individuals and groups to practically apply their faith's values. The book seeks to balance a pastoral and prophetic stance while being a practical guide as well." (\$14.00)

The Politics of Jesus: Participants in this class will read and discuss John Howard Yoder's classic, *The Politics of Jesus*. An editorial review offered the following book description: "Using the text of the New Testament, this engaging study critically examines the traditional portrait of Jesus as an apolitical figure and clarifies the true impact of Jesus' life, work, and teachings on his disciples' social behavior." Phil Stoltzfus will lead the discussion. (\$15.00)

FMC Movie, Game, and Pizza Night

Join your FMC friends for a relaxed evening of film, games and pizza on Friday, October 30, beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the basement fellowship hall. This will be

an intergenerational event, with separate films for adults and children. The adult film will be “Through the Desert Goes Our Journey,” which portrays a modern-day trek by Mennonite descendants of a group of apocalyptic Russian Mennonites who, in the 1880s, made a trek to Uzbekistan, where they believed Jesus would inaugurate his kingdom. The story includes surprising signs of coexistence with Muslims that are healing and hopeful. Wolf Bartel and Rhonda Martin, who are coordinating this evening, welcome suggestions of DVDs for the children. Everyone is invited to bring a favorite table game as well. Pizza and drinks will be provided and a donation basket will be available to help cover the cost.

Intergenerational Sunday School— “Bread For All”

Last year’s “Tents to Houses” auction segment at the MCC Relief Sale was a big success and organizers hope that this year’s “Bread for All” auction segment during the sale will rival it. An inter-generational Sunday school will be held at FMC on October 4 to highlight the “Bread for All” auction and the larger relief sale occurring on Nov. 14.

After worship on October 4, all ages will gather together downstairs in the fellowship hall where four main learning stations appealing to a range of interests will be located. The stations will include:

- basket weaving,
- a science experiment involving yeast and an injera-making demonstration,
- an information center regarding “What does a dollar do?” and
- a display/presentation by a local homeless shelter.

Members of the MCC sale executive board will be available to answer questions about the sale.

The basic format will be for groups to move from learning station to learning station at 15-minute intervals.

Following the education hour the event will continue with a potluck where, in line with the theme “Bread for All,” we will share food together. Please bring a dish to share. We look forward to seeing all of you at the intergenerational Sunday school.

Note: Because of the potluck, refreshments will not be served during the Fellowship Time on Oct. 4.

Comings and Goings

Summer/early fall has brought us an array of new persons who are visiting and entering in the life of our faith community. Please say hello and look for an opportunity to get better acquainted with:

- Bob and Lauren Brown
- Rachel Combs and Shawn Walding
- Brittany Edwards
- Gudrun Eglitis
- Kirsten Freed
- Deb James
- Eric Kasper
- Jenny Kempf and daughters Rui Rui and Eva
- Cedric Singletary
- Matthew Thomas
- Natalija Zacharova-Nausede

Welcome everyone!

Note of Thanks

We recently received this note of thanks from family of former FMC pastor Ellis & Delpha Graber

Dear Faith Mennonite family,

We want to thank you for all the prayers, love, and support you have given our mother and family during these final weeks of her life. She was surrounded with much love, and the cards received graced the wall of her room. Indeed, God’s gracious and loving Spirit was, and continues to be, very present. The memorials are appreciated and we look forward to making a positive contribution to better this world in her name. Please know that the years spent in ministry with your congregation were very dear to both mom and dad, and we thank you for being an important part of their lives.

--Eric, Connie, Joan and Karen

Faith Mennonite Church Council Meeting July 13th, 2009 @ FMC

Present: Joan Kreider, Moderator; Hermann Weinlick, Deacons; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Scott Neal, Moderator-elect; Jenny Wandersee, Worship; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service; Kristen Green, Education; .

Absent: Pastor; Trustees representative; Pastor-Parish representative, Fellowship representative.

Affirmations. Hermann affirms the care that Joetta takes to ensure that things carry on while she’s gone. Joan affirms everybody participating in the Friday night

potlucks, which provide a chance to connect with a variety of people.

Treasurer's report. Jerry notes that ISAI AH charged FMC \$1000 for the copy machine, but we are disputing that we made 800 copies a week. Calvert fund has gained back \$2000. Giving has been down this summer (not usually the case), but overall giving is still nearly on track.

Commission reports.

Trustees. Trustees are installing a new white board for the Sunday school classes.

Missions and Service. Hasn't met

Worship. Jenny says they're not planning for fall yet, will begin when Joetta returns.

Education. Kristen says there are teachers for all the children's classes but one. There will be a meeting of teachers on August 22. Kathleen is planning adult classes on politics and prayer and meditation. Classes will start September 13, with a class on church safety issues, then a session on Central Plains Conference September 20. There will also be an intergenerational class on food.

Deacons. All day retreat in September.

Pastor. Joetta wants to have a brainstorming session about the ministry staff position. Michael Bischoff would like to continue through October, then be finished.

Old business.

Corinthian plan. Scott went to the discussion on the Corinthian plan at Central Plains conference. Wasn't well attended. The plan to insure pastors would be owned by MCUSA and administered by Mennonite Mutual Aid through BC/BS. Would need 80% of congregations participating to be viable.

Kristen asks whether Joetta is covered? Jerry says she declines coverage because she's covered under Gerald's policy. Joan says MMA's current policy is more for catastrophic costs, and not available in all states. Jerry says this would be \$200 per month. Scott says we need to decide by October 1, and will discuss again at the September meeting. Joan says this benefits us and benefits the wider church. Katie asks whether participation depends on congregational voting status? Scott doesn't know and will find out. Kristen asks what coverage Patrick and Patty had? Jerry says Health Partners. Hermann asks whether it would cover dependents? Jerry doesn't know. Katie asks how good is the insurance? Joan says it's standard BC/BS. Hermann asks if the church doesn't cover its own employees, how can it be credible advocating for

universal health coverage? Scott says some have asked why not make it available to members too? If this works, they may. Katie asks if they can deny coverage to anyone? Scott says no. Joan says we will vote on this at the next meeting. The consensus of the Council is to support, but we need some questions answered first.

Plans for safety discussion. There will be a planning meeting August 31 run by Joetta and Joan.

Church handbook. Copies of the finished handbook are distributed. Consensus of Council is to adopt it as is and post it on the website. It can always be revised later if necessary, since it is not by-laws.

Ministry staff position. Council agrees to extend Michael's position through October. Council ends with discussion of what has worked and what could be done better with this position.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

What's happening here and there...

Project Homeless Connect Event

Just a quick reminder of the next Project Homeless Connect coming up on Monday, December 7, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Please mark your calendars and watch for the volunteer recruitment e-mail in mid-October which will have instructions on signing up to volunteer and the training dates and times.

The need is great. Thank you for your support and your generosity in volunteering.

--Patricia McHugh, Volunteer Coordinator

Join the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration

*The strangers who sojourns with you shall be to you as the one born among you, and you, personally, shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.
Leviticus 19:33-34*

As Minnesotans of faith, we recognize the sacred humanity of all immigrants. Our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our sisters and brothers with love and compassion. Our faith calls us to pursue policies

that uphold the human dignity of each person and value the wholeness of each family. We commit to stand for America's finest ideals and core community values and publicly reject the politics of division and isolation that fan anger and hate against any person or community. We support humane and just immigration reform. We call for an end to all raids and work place enforcement policies that cause workers to lose their jobs or be detained and deported.

ICOM coordinates advocacy efforts through regular monthly meetings. We meet the third Thursday of the month at First Lutheran in St. Paul at 9:00 AM. Upcoming meeting dates are October 15, November 19, and December 17. The meetings allow us to have a deeper discussion around immigration issues and share legislative updates. From time to time these meetings also include educational opportunities with speakers, movies, or planning time for upcoming events or actions. This coming year we hope to sponsor along with *Sojourners* magazine a forum on immigration reform through the lens of faith.

As part of our educational outreach, ICOM members are available for worship leading and adult education forums. Occasional sermons and/or theological reflections can be found at interfaithcoalitiononimmigration.wordpress.com.

We believe it is time to fix our broken immigration system and pass immigration reform this year. Our broken system is hurting our economy, our families, and our workers. ICOM partners with a variety of local, state, and national organizations to accomplish these goals including the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (www.interfaithimmigration.org).

We also hold public witness events including interfaith candlelight prayers services and public vigils. This fall we will begin a new project with other community and faith based organizations called Faith Action at the Ramsey County Adult Detention Center in St. Paul. We will meet the first Sunday of the month from 2:30-3:00 PM during visiting hours. We will meet to remember the brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers and neighbors being detained inside. We will also continue to pray for our representatives and president that they may have the courage to enact laws that protect the rights of those detained. Upcoming Dates for Faith Action at the Ramsey County Adult Detention Center are October 4 (prayers from different faith traditions), November 1 (reading of those who have died in detention), and December 6. If your faith or community group would like to take the lead on a particular Sunday, please contact us.

To learn more about the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration or to become a member or get on the listserv, please contact Rev. Loren McGrail at interfaithonimmigration@gmail.com.

Canal Bank Walk

Leafy-with-love banks and the green waters of the canal
Pouring redemption for me, that I do
The will of God, wallow in the habitual, the banal,
Grow with nature again as before I grew.
The bright stick trapped, the breeze adding a third
Party to the couple kissing on an old seat,
And a bird gathering materials for the nest for the Word
Eloquently new and abandoned to its delirious beat.
O unworn world enrapture me, encapture me in a web
Of fabulous grass and eternal voices by a beech,
Feed the gaping need of my senses, give me ad lib
To pray unselfconsciously with overflowing speech
For this soul needs to be honoured with a new dress woven
From green and blue things and arguments that cannot be
proven.

--Patrick Kavanagh

Deadline for November newsletter items is noon, Thursday, October 28th.

Faith Mennonite Church publishes our official monthly newsletter Faith Connection. The purpose of this publication is to enhance communication about the various types of the ministry of our congregation among the members and also with the community. Due to the space limitation, the editor may edit, modify, and change the submitted documents.