

Faith Connection

October 2011

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...

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*
Psalm 139:23-24

These words of self-examination come at the end of a Psalm of praise in which the poet describes an intimacy with God that began before birth. We often speak of our search for God, but Psalm 139 speaks of God's search for us, of God's loving knowledge of each of us. This past weekend's celebration of our congregation's 50th anniversary was much like a psalm of praise. In various ways we proclaimed the ways that God has walked with, sheltered, protected, and nurtured the growth of Faith Mennonite Church during 50 years. It has been appropriate and healthy to spend this year looking backward, retelling the stories of the past. But we tell the stories, not in order to return to the past, but to encourage and energize us as we move into the future.

I know of no better way to move forward than to stop and assess where we are and ask where God is calling us. That is what we attempted to do when the Pastor-Parish Relations Commission conducted a Pastor-Congregation Evaluation last May. On Sept. 18 the congregation received a summary of the feedback from the pastor portion of the survey during the education hour. (This can be found on the FMC website, under Church Council on the "Member" drop down. Please contact the church office if you need instructions for member login.) The Church Council will receive a report from the congregation portion of the survey at its October meeting.

I am grateful for the affirmation that I received through this evaluation and even more so for the recommendations of how I might serve more effectively. In the suggestions I heard the call for greater biblical/theological engagement in the congregation, for

a higher degree of challenge in how we are living out our faith, and for me to be less "hands on" as commissions carry out their responsibilities. I intend to take these seriously and prayerfully and I invite each of you to share ideas and examples of what you would find helpful in each of these areas. Even if you didn't take part in the formal evaluation process your comments are welcome.

After the feverish preparation for our anniversary weekend in which so many people contributed in a wide variety of ways, I hope that everyone will take some much-deserved rest. As you rest, I invite you to reflect on Psalm 139. Spend time marveling in how much God loves you/us. Then prayerfully ask God to "search and know my heart...and lead me/us in the way everlasting." I'm anxious to see where that path will lead Faith Mennonite Church in the coming months and years!

--Joetta Schlabach

"A good listener is usually thinkin' about somethin' else"

--Abe Martin

What's happening at FMC...

Church Council Approves Sabbatical Plan For Joetta Schlabach

At its September meeting the Church Council approved a proposal from Joetta Schlabach to take a ten-week leave (2 months of sabbatical and 2 weeks of vacation) from January 1 to March 11, 2012. In order to encourage significant growth in ministry and to increase the likelihood of longer pastoral tenure, Faith Mennonite Church allows its pastor to accrue one month of leave for each year served. (Joetta is not requesting

all of her accrued leave time now in order to request additional time in 2014 when her husband, Gerald, will take a sabbatical leave from St. Thomas University.)

Joetta's proposal includes a) time for retreat at the beginning and end, b) travel to Central America to visit persons she and Gerald worked and worshipped with while serving there with Mennonite Central Committee in the 1980s, c) a volunteer week with Mennonite Disaster Service in New Orleans (or other area of need), d) independent study at Associate Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, in order to explore ways to increase biblical engagement and study in the congregation, and e) a visit to several multicultural Mennonite churches in Philadelphia to learn from their experiences.

The Church Council will work with the Deacons and Worship Commission to plan for coverage during her absence.

--*Matthew Blackwell Kinney, moderator*

Anniversary Wrap-Up

It was quite a weekend for the little church planted by the Mississippi 50 years ago.

It took 65 generous volunteers, 30 musicians, ten former pastors and spouses, and over 200 participants to pull it off. The weekend left us with good memories and plenty of food for thought...Friday night, as we ate popcorn and played games, welcomed returning pastors and other former members, we were treated to Ted Lewis' music and his testimony as a "convinced" Mennonite: thirty years ago, he had been invited to a Christmas Eve service at Faith, in which the children performed a drama about how Mennonites rescued a ship of Baptists trapped in the ice in the English Channel. He found two elements that he had not encountered in his past church experience: an embrace of heritage, and a call to discipleship. Thirty years later he cherishes his Mennonite ties, in his work in reconciliation in Rice Lake, Wisconsin.

Saturday morning we got to work, as we picked up trash with Teresa Wasick, removed graffiti with Dick Westby, rode bikes with Matthew Hendricks, and toured the sights of historic Seward neighborhood with Bob Mack--learning that the Matthews Park Hill was built on the rubble of the old Seward school, and that periodically a piece of the old school erupts from the ground.

In the afternoon we gathered in our newly painted and decorated sanctuary (thanks to the efforts of Glenn Geissinger, Mike Okerstrom and a horde of volunteers) for a concert planned by Neil Okerlund and Sandy Westby. There we heard an astonishing array of music--ethereal and down-to-earth-- from the many talented musicians of Faith Mennonite. We rocked to the debut crossover music of the singing brass. We listened to virtuoso violin, flute, voice and piano. We joined with Chris Jones as he encouraged us to sing from doubt into faith.

Saturday evening we feasted as we celebrated our ethnic heritages as planned by Katie Hochstedler: meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and jello from 1961 Mennonite potlucks; egg rolls and lo mein to remember our first Hmong refugee family; tamales and black beans to honor the work on the overground railroad and St Paul Mennonite Fellowship's planting in the Hispanic community; doro wat and budena by Yeshe to celebrate our Ethiopian immigrant members; organic salads to honor our contemporary interest in mindful eating; and a variety of desserts from new restaurateur Rachel Geissinger Hoskins. We raised over \$1800 to support the work of Misseo Dei, the next generation Mennonite church in the Twin Cities. The room was alive with the buzz of good conversation and renewing ties.

We tested our wits on trivia, learning such important facts as: "There were 26 bars and liquor stores within 6 blocks of Faith Church in 1961" and "100% of the charter members were ethnic Mennonite, compared to 40% of current members" and "Faith members have adopted children from nine different countries."

Karen Peterson and Noah Skogerboe prepared a wonderful slide show of images that took us from the church's early days meeting in homes, to baptisms and dedications, camping trips and retreats, and of course adorable children dressed up for Christmas programs. We heard pastoral stories of encountering unexpected visitors making breakfast in the church kitchen using food shelf supplies. We endured silly jokes by emcee Adam Nafziger ("repaint and thin no more..."). And we heard the testimony of returning friends including Gedion, baptized in his Mennonite church in Ethiopia under cover of night due to the danger, who was overjoyed to be taken in by Faith Mennonite on arrival in Minnesota.

Sunday morning was again filled with music: the children memorably singing "I am becoming what the Lord of Life wants me to be: a strong young tree". Two of Bret Hesla's commissioned pieces were presented:

the choir's gentle "We Share the Peace" and the whole congregation's strong singing of "Blest Are Those Who Trust In The Lord" to a calypso beat. We heard Patty tell the children about the birds who live in the trees along the river: the chickadees who are resident birds, showing the way for the migratory birds who come and go. So too in a church, we need both those who stay as well as the colorful transients. Myron Schrag, the longest-tenured pastor of Faith Mennonite, exhorted us in a rousing message to stay firmly rooted, embracing our unique tradition and theology—and then reminded us that as Mennonite Christians we are often called to swim against the prevailing currents.

During the pastors' forum following church, the pastors shared some of their most difficult and rewarding tasks. John Esau told of guiding the young congregation through the turbulent 60s. Don Kaufman shared about the work with war tax resistance during the Vietnam War. Kay Welsch spoke of the contentious discussions and vote for welcoming of GLBT persons, and her confidence that the process gave each voice an opportunity to be heard. Myron discussed the energized spirit in the 80s, when Faith Mennonite had an active MCC unit working in the Native American community here, as well as six workers in the mission field. He recalled the negotiations with Lew Sundquist, pastor of the dying Ebenezer Lutheran congregation who generously passed on their building to us: "We must decrease so you can increase". Patty and Patrick spoke of the struggle to form an adequate response to the tragedy of 9-11.

In a fitting end, we sang "606" as a blessing before gathering for our final meal, a luncheon spread which Alisa Bardo-Martinson and her crew served in style in the fellowship hall. Again the tables were filled with people engaged in animated conversation. It was a scene of abundance and life. As I surveyed the room I felt the strength of God's promise in Jeremiah: this sapling planted by the river 50 years ago has matured into a strong tree whose leaves have stayed green and who continues to bear fruit.

--Joan Kreider

Adult Christian Education Classes for October-December

Beginning October 2, we will have three options for adult discussion and learning during the education hour. Everyone is welcome (and encouraged!) to participate. A quantity of books have been purchased for each class and more can be ordered if necessary. We invite class

participants to make a contribution toward the cost of the books. Listed prices are suggested amounts; pay as you are able.

"Theology and Creativity" This class will explore selections from the book *In the Beginning...Creativity*, by Mennonite theologian Gordon Kaufman. The emphasis of the book is on rethinking our images of God in light of evolutionary processes and ecological challenges. Phil Stoltzfus will facilitate the discussion. (Price: \$17.00; used copies are available at lower price on Amazon.com if you wish to order on your own.)

"The Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding" The Eastern Mennonite University Center for Justice and Peacebuilding has developed a series of little books that present, in a highly accessible form, key concepts and practices from the fields of restorative justice, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding. Written by leaders in these fields, they are designed for practitioners, students, and anyone interested in justice, peace, and conflict resolution. This class will begin with *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community*, by Carolyn Yoder, which covers principals from Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR). Donna Minter will facilitate. Class members will determine which other books to discuss thereafter. (Book: \$5.00; used copies are available at lower price on Amazon.com if you wish to order on your own.)

"Exploring Anabaptist/Mennonite Theology and Church Membership" This class is intended for persons who are relatively new to the Mennonite Church and/or interested in joining Faith Mennonite Church and want to learn more about Mennonite faith and practice. We will use two primary books: *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and *Beliefs: Mennonite Faith & Practice*, by John D. Roth (\$11.00). Facilitated by Joetta Schlabach.

--Kathleen Harder, adult coordinator

Comings and Goings...

We welcome *William Chittenden*, who recently began attending worship. If you haven't yet met William, please look for an opportunity to get acquainted.

Eric Kasper passed through Minneapolis in mid-September. He returned from Lithuania at end of school year and worked in a restaurant in Washington, DC this summer while living with friends. He is now moving to Brighton, England where he will soon begin a D.Phil program in Development Studies at the University of Sussex. Eric continues to consider FMC his church

home and is glad to receive news of things happening here. He was sorry to not be in town over a Sunday and sends warm greetings.

Stacy Griffin also sends greetings to the congregation. Stacy continues to teach orchestra at Anoka High School. She received tenure and a full-time contract this fall by adding a middle school orchestra to her teaching load. She has been attending Mercy Vineyard Church in Columbia Heights and has joined a group of song writers there. She's active in four different music groups, playing in a variety of venues, including house concerts.

Commission Updates

Missions and Service. The Missions and Service Commission met on September 8. Orv Gingerich, Melissa Hochstetler, Mike Okerstrom, Kathleen Remund, and Joetta Schlabach were present. Orv Gingerich agreed to take on the recording role, vacated by Ry Siggelkow, until the new commission convenes in February. The commission heard various updates. A STAR workshop will be held Sept 12-16. The Commission has asked Cleta Gingerich and Katie Hochstetler to prepare a noon meal one day, to be paid for by the commission as a way to support the program.

The refugee hosting project is beginning to taper off as the Edha family gets situated. A closing ceremony will be held in mid-October. Kathleen Remund is summarizing the project from an administrative perspective. There will also be a debriefing meeting with the volunteers. These will help determine if and when we will host another family. Karen Wiebe has agreed to assume the communicate liaison role with Refugee Services when Kathleen leaves.

The Immigration Action group that formed after the series on immigration last January 2010 is disbanding. Individuals may continue to be involved in some actions and we will watch for information and action opportunities from MCUSA.

We are in the midst of asking volunteers to serve on a planning committee for a neighborhood Sustainability Fair to be held in mid-winter. We hope this will be a collaborative event with the Community of St. Martin.

We discussed whether FMC would want to be a host site for the Seward Art Crawl, which is part of the Seward Frolic, December 3-4. Mike Okerstrom recalled that we participated in two previous years and that it required a large amount of work to prepare and host the

event. We will put out a query to see if there are interested folks in the congregation who might want to do this. At the same time we will contact Seward Neighborhood Group to offer our church as a host site if other artists need a display or performance venue.

We ended the meeting with cake and ice cream to celebrate and thank Kathleen for the work she has done as ministry staff person the past 18 months.

Deacons. The deacons met on September 21st. Discussion centered around Joetta's upcoming sabbatical, fall Christian education offerings, and fostering a deeper sense of belonging throughout the congregation. The next meeting will be held on Monday, October 10th, from 9-11 a.m.

1 st Monday, October 3 rd	Joan Kreider
2 nd Tuesday, October 11 th	Andi Kuenning
3 rd Thursday, October 20 th	Aryn (@ Gerber's home)
4 th Friday, October 28 th	Katie Hostetler

Worship Commission. During the month of October our worship services will be centered on the New Testament book of Philippians. This book is known as the Apostle Paul's "joyful letter." Unlike the letters to the Corinthians or Galatians, in which Paul addresses problematic practices or theological understandings in those fledgling churches, for the Philippians Paul has only praise. Although he wrote this letter from prison, Paul exuded confidence, gratitude and hope. This letter gives us insight into Paul's faith and the faith of a first-century Christian community. Two millennia later, it continues to speak truth and lend encouragement to our contemporary faith journey.

Matthew Blackwell Kinney has memorized the four chapters of this book and will be our scripture reader during the month of October. Here are a few suggestions for engaging with this book during the month:

- Read the entire four chapters out loud at one time.
- Read one chapter several times during each week, exploring different versions. (Bible Gateway, accessed on the FMC website home page, provides numerous online translations of the Bible.)
- Choose one particular verse each week to learn by memory.
- As you read, watch for repeated words and recurring themes. Meditate on these words.
- Pray with the text, seeking the grace to be formed by its teaching.

Gifts Discernment Process Begins

On October 2 every household will receive copies of the 2012 Gifts Discernment Process and Forms in their hanging mail file. This is an annual process in which we invite everyone in the church, including children, to participate. We examine the many gifts God has given to our congregation through our gifted participants and we discern who is being called to specific leadership and activity roles in the coming year. Some roles, such as commission members and church council officers, require church membership. Many other volunteer roles are filled by persons regardless of membership.

For three successive Sundays in October—9, 16, and 23—we will collect completed forms during the offering time in worship. Please use the next few weeks to prayerfully consider how you might like to serve in the congregation during the next year. The form also provides opportunity for you to affirm other people. We hope you will speak directly to others, sharing your affirmations and encouragement with them, in addition to writing their names on the form.

If you have any questions, please address them to any member of the Gifts Discernment Committee: Shelly Hendricks, Gregg Richardson, Karen Zeug, or Joetta Schlabach

Mennonite Your Way!

Over the past several years we have appreciated the variety of guests staying with us through Mennonite Your Way, which is a hospitality directory that encourages people to stay overnight in homes rather than hotels. Not only is this approach intended to make lodging cheaper for the travelers, but it also allows for richer connections to develop with people from the U.S. and abroad. Our guests have been from Germany, Canada and various states in the U.S. and have stayed with us anywhere from one night to three nights. While the type of hosting has varied, from taking a German couple on a brief tour of Minneapolis to barely seeing a guest (who arrived late one evening and left early the following morning), all have been positive learning experiences for us. In general, guests pay a small fee to the host (such as \$10 per person per night), and the host provides sleeping space and perhaps one or more meals. The 2012-2014 Mennonite Your Way directory is currently being developed, and the coordinators are accepting new host entries until November 1. We encourage you to consider adding yourself as a host, and if you would like to talk with us more about our experiences we'd be happy to share

more details. To learn more about the program online, as well as to sign up, visit:
www.mennoniteyourway.com/Myw/.

--*Matthew and Shelly Hendricks*

Help Needed with MCC Relief Sale

Baked Goods Needed: Margaret Janzen and Arlene Geissingner are looking for bakers to help supply baked goods for the sale. All contributions to the bake sale tables are greatly appreciated. In past years, all contributions have sold out which means this is a great fundraising corner during sale day. Good sellers have included breads, rolls, zwieback, cookies, cakes, New Year's cookies (porzilke), pies of all kinds, perischke, peppernuts and bars. If you have your own favorite baked item, we'd love to sell it! Cookies, rolls, zwieback and bars should be packaged in either half dozen OR dozen per Ziplock bag. Peppernuts should be packaged at 1 and ½ cups per Ziplock bag. If you are not able to attend the sale but would like to contribute baked goods, please call or e-mail Margaret or Arlene to make arrangements.

Margaret Janzen:

612-827-7201 (evenings)margaret.janzen@gmail.com

Arlene Geissingner:

952-470-1847 (evenings) angeissingner@gmail.com

Pop and Bottled Water Needed: To help cover food costs, the sale Board appreciates large quantities (cases) of pop and bottled water to be sold in the cafeteria. Over the next 2 weeks when you see sales of pop or water at your local grocery or big box retailer, pick up a couple of cases and drop them off at church. Bring to church Sunday or by 3pm Friday, October 28, and we'll coordinate delivery to the sale. Thank you for your help with this small but necessary project.

Penny Power Collections: Bring your pocket change to church and ask a few children each Sunday to pass Penny Power boxes or other designated containers along the pews to collect your loose change. Dig under the sofa cushions, through your purses, deep into your pants pockets and any other spot that gathers coins and collect them at home or bring them to church each Sunday. This year's sale features an anonymous grant that will match your contributions penny for penny to \$4,000. The total Penny Power collection will be split between an MCC water project in a third world country and a Ukrainian orphanage.

Want to get involved with this exciting event: If you've never been to an MCC auction / sale OR if

you've only attended, we are looking for any last minute volunteers to help staff our event. If you'd like a peek at how this festival happens, get personally involved by volunteering for a two hour slot in one of the many areas staffed entirely by volunteers. Contact Glenn Geissinger, volunteer coordinator by email at glenn.geissinger@gmail.com or by phone at 952-470-1847 no later than October 21. Do you have friends who'd like to volunteer? Share your friend's contact information with Glenn.



If you or a family member has a birthday in October, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on October 15. (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.

*October
Birthday
Brunch*

*Saturday,
October 15
9:30-11:00
a.m.*

What's happening here and there...

St. Paul Interfaith Network's Hosts Fall Dialogue Series

"Eyes Wide Open: A Conversation about Racism, Discrimination, Prejudice and Meeting the Other" is the topic of a month-long series that will focus on sharing and learning the stories and facts that have shaped our society and our personal responses to prejudice, systemic racial injustice, and white supremacy. Racism has religious and spiritual dimensions. In that light, we will focus on ways in which our religious traditions bring hope and change even as we acknowledge the ways in which they have contributed to the problem. By tapping into our religious and spiritual resources, we will look to forge new commitments.

Each of the four sessions will offer facts about racism and feature diverse panelists, who will share their stories of pain and marginalization as well as stories of awakening, healing, and engagement. The panel

discussions will be followed by dialogue and personal sharing in small groups. By learning how to better see one another, we will embrace concrete actions that effect substantive change in ourselves and in our communities.

Each evening program runs from 7:00 to 9:15pm. We request that participants arrive by 6:45 p.m. Doors will open at 6:30. There is a parking lot at each site and street parking nearby. At all four locations, non-perishable food, school supplies or toy donations will be appreciated. Further information can be found at www.spinterfaith.org.

October 3: Becoming Personal: Sharing Our Pain
Martin Luther King Center, 270 N. Kent St., St. Paul, MN. 55102

October 10: Invisible Wounds: Experiencing Everyday Dehumanization
Martin Luther King Center, 270 N. Kent St., St. Paul, MN. 55102

October 17: Religion: Building Walls, Building Bridges
American Indian Magnet School, 1075 East 3rd Street at Earl, Saint Paul, MN. 55106

October 24: New Possibilities: Creating Something Better
American Indian Magnet School, 1075 East 3rd Street at Earl, Saint Paul, MN. 55106

MICAH Fundraiser, October 16th

Metropolitan Interfaith Council On Affordable Housing (MICAH) fundraising event on Sunday, October 16, 2011 will be held at the Capri Theater 2027 W. Broadway in Minneapolis in support of the organization's mission and work to advocate for more quality, affordable homes in our communities. Professional musicians and spoken word artists will inspire and motivate each of us to take action and raise funds for MICAH. Reception with drawing for special prizes at 2:30pm and program at 3:30pm. Single tickets are \$30.00 available at www.micah.org or Paul Stoll paulstoll@charter.net. For more info Jodi Nelson, jodi@micah.org or call 651-646-0612

The deadline for November newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, October 26th.

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.