

Faith Connection

September 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.faimennonite.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...

It's a common refrain this time of year: "The summer went by way too fast." We have high expectations for summer in Minnesota. We want it warm. We love the extended hours of daylight. We want to spend time up north and near water. We want to garden and enjoy fresh produce from a local farmers' market or CSA. We want to bicycle and take long walks. The list goes on. Like all high expectations, those for summer are hard to meet. Even if we've done *most* of what we had hoped to do, we wish we could stretch the time out a bit longer. I, for one, wish I had more time and energy to can and freeze the plentiful produce of late summer.

We also set high expectations for ourselves in the church. Just as we grieve the end of summer, we often find ourselves lamenting the ways in which we don't measure up to the expectations we set for ourselves or think others expect of us. Not all of our families are intact. Not all of our jobs are satisfying or pay as much as we'd like; some of them end unexpectedly. Despite the care and love we give our children, they sometimes make decisions that cause us pain. Some among us battle chronic and complicated health conditions. The list goes on.

Back in June at the annual meeting of Central Plains Mennonite Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska, keynote speaker Michelle Hershberger dramatically spoke in one of her messages about the healing power of being able to admit our weaknesses and our limitations. She was preaching about the story (in Luke 7:36-50) of the woman who came and anointed Jesus's feet while he was the guest in the home of a Pharisee. Jesus's host was scandalized by this embarrassing action by a woman who didn't live up to the religious expectations of the day and who broke the rules of hospitality by crashing a party. But Jesus used the woman as a model for what it means to live in the present— in the reality of being loved for who we are, not whether we live up to expectations of ourselves or others.

Michelle recalled an experience she had of visiting an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting where grace flowed as each and every time a person spoke they began with the words: "My name is *x* and I'm an alcoholic." She suggested that our churches would be healthier, more welcoming places if we were to routinely introduce ourselves saying, "I'm Joetta and I'm a sinner." This doesn't mean that we berate ourselves or never share achievement in our lives. Persons in 12-step programs like A-A usually follow their introduction by recounting the length of their sobriety or management of an addiction. The difference is that we celebrate achievement knowing that our fortunes can change and that our value as human beings is not tied to what we do and what we achieve, but who we are as God's beloved.

Krista Tippett, on the public radio program "Speaking of Faith," recently interviewed Eckhart Tolle, the author of *The Power of Now*. Tolle said that most of the stress in the North American society is caused by wishing we were someone other than who we are, and somewhere other than where we are. But, of course, we can only be ourselves in the here and now. God comes to us daily exactly as we are.

As we wrap up our summer projects and turn to the rhythm of fall, I hope we'll each take time to dwell on the wonders of summer, to celebrate the pleasures and the tasks accomplished. As we let go of the things that didn't get done, of unmet expectations, we'll be ready to receive the gifts of the next season.

--Joetta Schlabach

The truth is a snare: you cannot have it, without being caught. You cannot have the truth in such a way that you catch it, but only in such a way that it catches you...+

-- Søren Kierkegaard

What's happening at FMC...

Christian Education Program Resumes September 7

Here's what's on the menu for Christian education this fall:

Primary department: Andi Kuenning and Joan Wing will team teach the nursery class. Hermann Weinlick will teach the K-3rd grade class, assisted by parent volunteers. (Minke Sundseth will teach the winter quarter and Matthew Hendricks the spring quarter.) Children's Sunday school will begin with singing at 11 a.m. in the chapel (Room 101 in the education wing).

Junior and Senior High: Cori and Noah Skogerboe and Andy Martinson will be leading the Jr. and Sr. High program this year. During September they'll work with the youth to plan activities for the K-3rd-graders at the Fall Retreat.

Adults: Due to popular demand, we'll extend our fellowship time a bit (to 11:10) and begin our classes at 11:15. We're going to test a new format for adult education. In September, January, and May we'll have a single class that will allow us to discuss issues and topics as an entire church. These months will be planned by the church council and/or commissions. From October-December and February-April we'll have two to three elective classes. Pat Eliason, adult education coordinator, is finalizing plans for those sessions.

September schedule:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| September 7 | Overview of the coming year, led by Neil Okerlund, Moderator. |
| September 14 | Introduction to the Gifts Discernment process, led by the Gifts Discernment Committee. |
| September 21 | Discussion with Mark VanSteenwyk of Misseo Dei, the new Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship on the West Bank that became a member of Central Plains Mennonite Conference in June. (Mark will preach in our worship that morning.) |
| September 28 | No classes ó Annual Church Retreat. |

Adult classes for the coming year, beginning in October will include:

Fall (October through December, ten weeks):

Feminism and the Bible - facilitated by Dick Westby

and Pat Eliason.

A continuation of the class that began last spring, exploring the Bible using readings from the book *The Wisdom of Daughters: Two Decades of the Voice of Christian Feminism*, published by Innisfree Press, 2001.

Politics and Spirituality - facilitator to be announced. Religion and politics - two topics you are supposed to avoid in polite conversation. This class will discuss both at the same time, and the interchange between them.

Spring (February through May, ten weeks)

The Spirituality of Imperfection - facilitated by Glenn Geissinger.

Using the book by the same name, an exploration of hope and inspiration springing from multiple traditions.

Health and Spirituality - facilitators to be announced. The important connections between our bodies, our physical health and our spiritual selves.

--Joetta Schlabach

New Staff Position

In August the Church Council approved a job description for the new part-time Ministry Staff Position. FMC members and friends are welcome to apply and to help publicize the position to possible candidates. The application deadline is September 12. The pastor, moderator, and a representative of the Missions & Service Commission will review the applications, conduct interviews, and make a hiring recommendation to the Church Council. We hope to have someone in place by early to mid-October. The job description follows:

õFaith Mennonite Church (FMC) seeks a person to fill a part-time (8 hours per week), newly-created, Ministry Staff Position. The focus of this position is to extend the ministry of FMC into the surrounding community with a particular emphasis on peacemaking. This position will involve: 1) leading the congregation in choosing one or more opportunities that best match the congregation's gifts, passions, and resources with the needs of the community, including other Twin Cities churches, 2) working with the FMC Missions & Service Commission to develop and implement one or more of these opportunities, and 3) serving as a liaison to community organizations and churches who might be collaborators on said projects. This position will be directly supervised by the pastor and will report to the Missions & Service Commission and the Church Council. This is a one-year position.

The ideal candidate will be someone who:

- is committed to the Mennonite/Anabaptist perspective of biblical peacemaking,
- has strong written and oral communication skills,
- combines the skills of creative visioning and practical, organizational work, and
- is willing to be involved in the congregational life of Faith Mennonite Church, attending Sunday worship at least once per month.

To apply, send a letter of interest and a resume, including references, to: Ministry Staff Position Search Committee, Faith Mennonite Church, 2720 E. 22nd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55406. Compensation will be commensurate with experience within the church's wage guidelines.

Faith Mennonite Church is a Christ-centered community that 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 seek to be a sign of God's healing and hope in our community and world. More information about our church can be found at www.faithmennonite.org.

Time to Register for the Fall All-Church Retreat!

If you're relatively new to Faith Mennonite Church and are still trying to connect names and faces, we hope you'll consider coming to the Fall Retreat, which will be held at the Associated Retreat Center near Osceola, Wisconsin. Our theme will be "Pieces of Peace," and we'll be learning some of the practical tools for living out our call to be Christian peacemakers. The retreat center is a "swords to plowshares" facility—a former military base converted to a camp setting.

Although it lacks some of the natural beauty that we enjoyed at Camp Courage, it has the advantage that we'll all be lodged in the same building and a children's play area is right next to our lodging. The schedule is designed and priced flexibly so people can attend all or a portion of the weekend. And we want everyone to participate regardless of ability to pay. Contributions to the retreat fund can be made separately from registration and according to what one can afford. We hope to see you at retreat!

Comings and Goings

We welcome recent visitors:

Eva Diamond

We say farewell to:

Aryn Baxter, going to work in Rwanda for two years.

Hillary Richardson, beginning law school in Chicago.

Tony Johnson, beginning college at Goshen (Indiana) College.

Sam Bartel, beginning college at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario.

Greta Kreider-Carlson, beginning college at Lewis & Clark College, in Portland, Oregon.

Troy & Emma Osborne, who moved to Bluffton, Ohio, where Troy is beginning a position at Bluffton University.

Meet Your Fellow FMCers

On the farm where she works, Melissa Hochstetler is helping teenagers become more aware about how their food is produced. The youths have been assigned to the farm for job training. She is hoping that the discussions she is having with them about sustainability and social justice issues will not be forgotten. "I want them to ask, 'Who picked this tomato?' when they go to the grocery store," says Melissa. She talks with them about buying local food instead of food that has been trucked in from afar, because less fossil fuel is used. Melissa notes that "the smaller the farm, the less fossil fuel used." Growing organic food is important for the environment as well. "Also, it's healthier!" she says. Melissa is the manager of the Community Supported Agriculture Program at Gale Woods Farm, which is an educational farm owned by Three Rivers Park District. Through the CSA program, community members are able to buy shares and receive part of the harvest of vegetables. It was a natural fit that Melissa ended up helping to plan the "Omnivore's Dilemma" event at Faith Mennonite Church in the spring, as a member of the Missions and Service committee. The work of this committee resonates with Melissa's beliefs because she feels that she is helping build bridges to the community, as well as promoting peace and justice.

Melissa is from a Mennonite background. She grew up in Kansas, where her father was a pastor. When Melissa was in college, her parents moved to Normal, Illinois, where her father is a conference minister for the Illinois conference of Mennonite Church USA. Her older

brother, Bryan, and his wife Parin live in California. In July they were married in Thailand, Parin's native country.

For a college paper, Melissa researched the subject of tax protesting. She was already considering pursuing this path one day, because of her opposition to war. For several years now, Melissa has been writing a letter to accompany her federal tax return, in which she explains that she is withholding her taxes because she does not want to support war. She expects that she will be doing this as long as the war in Iraq continues, and maybe even afterwards. "We will be paying for this war for a long time," she says.

After college, where she majored in social work, Melissa volunteered for a year at a residential treatment facility for people with mental illnesses. This was in Massachusetts, and she stayed on after the year was over. There was a garden and some dairy production. "I found that I was spending all my spare time working in the garden," says Melissa, and she started thinking about farming as a career. She lived in a little cabin with no running water. "That experience showed me that there were people all over who were trying to return to the values of a simple life. That was a real eye-opener," she remembers.

Leslie Geissinger is a friend of Melissa's, and Leslie was the one who told her about the job at Gale Woods. Melissa visited Faith Mennonite for the first time in 2005, as a guest of Arlene and Glenn Geissinger. She has enjoyed being involved in the church, and appreciates the commitment of those attending Faith Mennonite to peace, justice, and the environment.

--*Martha Mayou*

In Gratitude

Amazed and grateful are the best words I can think of to describe how I felt as we sang the benediction hymn on what was my last Sunday at Faith for a while. As I prepare for a transition to life in Rwanda, so many of my reflections on the time I have spent in Minneapolis bear testimony to these words: where you go, where you walk, where you serve, where you meet, and where you come again, God is there. What an assurance. *Benedictus Deus.*

It is my hope that I will find meaningful ways to share my reflections and experiences as I learn about Rwanda, and especially as I explore how churches are involved in the reconciliation and peace-building work in a region where so much tension and conflict remains. I plan to continue posting on my blog, www.habarizaryn.blogspot.com, and to begin sending out a newsletter every other month. If you are interested in receiving these updates, please send me your email address (send to baxte085@umn.edu) so I can make sure you are included. Hopefully I will be back for a visit next May!

Thanks for being such a wonderful faith community to be a part of!

--*Aryn Baxter*

Children's Offering

This summer we began taking up an offering (in our Ten Thousand Village giraffe) during children's time. On August 24 the children decided to use their summer offering to purchase contents for a Relief Kit for Iraq. Noah Kreider-Carlson supervised the counting of the money, which totaled \$24.77. Thank you to others who purchased items for the children's relief kit and to Joan Kreider who transported relief, school, and health kits to Kansas.

Ice Cream Social with Community of St. Martin—September 21

Each Sunday evening the Community of St. Martin (CSM) holds worship in our basement fellowship area. In the past our two churches collaborated in "Peace Village," a two-week summer day camp with a peacemaking theme. This summer, for the first time, Peace Village was cancelled due to lack of enrollment. As we begin to explore ways to increase our involvement beyond our walls, getting better acquainted with CSM, which shares our commitment to peacemaking, is an important place to begin.

On Sunday evening, September 21, we'll join together for an ice cream social in the basement fellowship hall. Following an informal time, those who would like may join in the CSM service of "Prayer around the Cross." CSM holds this service, in the style of Taizé worship, on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Watch for more details on the ice cream social.

What's happening here and there...

Erin Geiser and Arc's Value Village Honored

City Pages recently announced their annual "Best of the Twin Cities" winners and Arc's Value Village Richfield received kudos in the "Best Used Clothing for Kids" category. Erin Geiser, General Manager of Arc's Value Village Thrift Stores was honored as one of 25 Women to Watch by *Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal* in July. Erin helped build the business from one store with \$80,000 in sales in 1982 to 3 stores and \$5.5 million in sales in 2007. Since Erin has worked for Arc, over \$13 million in proceeds has been raised to support the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in the greater Twin Cities. Congratulations Erin for a job well done! Learn more about the store at: www.arcsvaluevillage.org/.

You can join Greater Twin Cities United Way and Arc's Value Village for a ghoulish good time at the 5th annual 5A Celebration of Sorts on Tuesday, September 16 from 9:00am-8:00pm at Southdale Center in Edina. Volunteers will unpack, sort and tag over 50,000 donated Halloween costumes and accessories in preparation for the opening of Arc's Value Village Halloween Boo-tique. 5A Celebration of Sorts is a fun and energized volunteer event complete with music, entertainment and refreshments. You may even find that perfect polyester pant-suit you've been searching for! This is a great opportunity for both small and large groups. To sign up contact United Way Caring Connection at celebration@unitedwaytwincities.org or (612) 340-7440. Available shifts: 9:00-12:00, 4:00-6:00, 6:00-8:00. Volunteers must be at least high school age. Proceeds from items sold at Arc's Value Village help fund vital programs and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. For more information, go to: www.celebrationofsorts.org/.

These Spiritual Window Shoppers

These spiritual window-shoppers,
who idly ask, 'How much is that?' Oh, I'm just
looking.

They handle a hundred items and put them down,
shadows with no capital.

What is spent is love and two eyes wet with
weeping.

But these walk into a shop,
and their whole lives pass suddenly in that
moment,
in that shop.

Where did you go? "Nowhere."

What did you have to eat? "Nothing much."

Even if you don't know what you want,
buy *something*, to be part of the exchanging
flow.

Start a huge, foolish project,
like Noah.

It makes absolutely no difference
what people think of you.

--Rumi (1207-1273)

Deadline for October newsletter items is noon, September 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.