

Faith Connection

September 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...

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4 & 5

For many of us September is a homecoming time: a return to our own homes and beds after times of travel; a return to school after vacation; a return to routines after less structured time, a return to the indoor dining room table after meals on the deck or in the back yard. At Faith Mennonite Church September signals a return of our Christian education program. It is also a time when new folks often arrive and visit to see if we're the home they might be looking for.

Several events caused me to think about the concept of home this summer. With the marriage of our son Gabriel, we blessed the formation of a new home for another generation. We were pleased to be able to stay in the apartment that will be Gabe and Valerie's first home for the next 8-12 months as they remain in Malaysia until immigration procedures allow Valerie to return to the US. The formation of their home changes ours as well, drawing us into a warm and generous circle of Malaysian Chinese relationships.

Just several days after returning from Malaysia, Gerald and I traveled to the Laurelville Mennonite Center in Pennsylvania for the annual Mennonite-Catholic Bridgefolk gathering. For the past ten years this has been another home for us as we've formed deep bonds of friendship with Mennonites who have found wells that satisfy their spiritual thirst in the Catholic sacramental tradition and Catholics who have found kinship and support of their desire to be peacemakers among Mennonites.

While in Pennsylvania we attended Sunday worship at the Mennonite Church of Scottdale. There we renewed an acquaintance with Peter Dyck, a long-time Mennonite Central Committee associate, whom we had gotten to know in the 1980s. Peter is now 94 and in declining health. His wonderful life partner, Elfrieda, who worked with him in post-World War II relief efforts in Europe and in accompanying ships of Mennonite refugees to South America, died five years ago. Peter told us in no uncertain terms that he is ready to die—indeed wishes to die—so that he can move on to his eternal home.

Three views of home: the beginning of a marriage ... a bridge between two traditions that historically distrusted each other ... the final resting place in the arms of God. All are places of trust and love. In his letters to the early churches, Paul often used the metaphor of "body" to refer to the corporate life of Christians. The first letter from Peter uses another metaphor for God's people—that of a holy house or temple, made of living stones. I look forward to the coming months as we regroup from summer and continue building ourselves into a holy people, a holy place of trust and love.

--Joetta Schlabach

"When our learning exceeds our deeds, we are like trees whose branches are many but whose roots are few: the wind comes and uproots them . . . But when our deeds exceed our learning, we are like trees whose branches are few but whose roots are many, so that even if all the winds of the world were to come and blow against them, they would be unable to move them. "

--Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah

What's happening at FMC...

Faith and Community

At the end of this October, I will complete my year in the part-time Ministry Staff Person position at Faith Mennonite. Getting to know and work with this community has been a great gift to me. With each day, I've become more convinced of what spiritual and practical treasures you have here at Faith Mennonite. I see my role, as a relative outsider, as supporting all of you as you find more ways to share those treasures with the broader community. I don't feel any movement in the congregation to coerce people to join this church or to pressure people to accept the beliefs common in the church. However, I do feel a strong pull in the congregation to be open, transparent, and engaged with the rest of the community, allowing that engagement to deepen both the congregation and the wider community.

One major focus for the remainder of my time in this staff position will be helping prepare for the "Who are the Mennonites?" community event that will be on Sunday, October 25 from 2:00 – 5:00 PM. I see this as one opportunity to let others know about the treasures that are at Faith Mennonite and in the broader Mennonite tradition. Please plan on spending the afternoon at Faith that afternoon to be a part of this event. The planning committee is setting up the event as an open house, with many different stations for people to visit and interact with. Because of this format, we will need the majority of the congregation to be involved in hosting the event and talking with people who visit.

Prior to the event, please consider the following questions:

- What attracts you the Mennonite tradition, and what keeps you engaged with the tradition? How could the essential part that draws you be shared with others?
- Who do you know that you think might resonate with Mennonite values, or who might be curious about Mennonites? Please consider inviting these friends to the open house.
- What would you like to share at the open house (food you prepare, stories of carrying out service, music with others, photos or videos, etc.)?

Please be in touch with me or another member of the planning committee (Phil Stoltzfus, Marian Heinrichs,

Donna Minter, Patricia Mack, and Rich Deming) to let us know how you'd like to contribute to this community event.

--Michael Bischoff

Adult Christian Education in September

Back by popular demand, the months of September, January, and May will be reserved for all-church discussions during the adult Christian Education hour. Our September topics will be:

September 13: Discussion of Safety in the Church, as a follow-up to the visit of a protestor on July 12.

September 20: Reports / Discussion with delegates to the Central Plains Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting and the Mennonite Assembly in Columbus.

September 27: Introduction to the Gifts Discernment Process for the coming year.

September Worship Schedule

We will conclude our summer worship series, "Letters to the Early Churches," on September 6. On September 13 we will begin a four week series, "Breathe and Be Filled," based on the scripture passages and worship themes from this summer's Mennonite Assembly in Columbus. Summaries of the Columbus worship services were included along with other Assembly highlights in the July 21, 2009 edition of *The Mennonite* (copies in the magazine rack in the fellowship area at the back of the sanctuary).

Labor Day All-Church Picnic at Minnehaha Park

If you're in town on Labor Day, why not join your FMC friends at Minnehaha Park for a noon picnic and the annual Laughing Waters Bluegrass Festival.

Please bring your own:

- items to grill (*barbecue briquettes will be provided*)
- tableware
- blanket/chairs for the concert

Bring food to share: salads, veggies, dessert (*drinks provided*)

There are about 8 places for electrical plug-ins *if* we get the spot we want. This is a fun event with some of the best local bluegrass bands performing. See you there!! Please RSVP to Cleta Roth Gingerich so we know how many people are coming: 612-333-7956.

"Spirit of Institutions" Open House and Update with Michael Bischoff

Invitation from Michael Bischoff: About a year ago I left my full-time job and set aside time to learn about the "spirit of institutions." My work at FMC has been a great complement to this learning. I've explored how spiritual approaches to discernment can be translated for use with secular organizations, seeking to discover how any organization can be led more by mission than by ego. I'm going to have a gathering to report and discuss what I've learned. I want to engage with people who are interested in this topic, to introduce you to each other, tell some stories from my year, and get your feedback about the transformation of organizations. I'll also "unveil" where this learning is leading me in the upcoming year.

When: Wednesday, September 30, 6:30-8:30 pm.

Where: Minneapolis Friends Meeting, 4401 York Ave. S., Minneapolis.

RSVP encouraged but not required:

michael@clarityfacilitation.com or 612-234-1122

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

Present: Joan Kreider, Moderator; Neil Okerlund, Deacons; Gregg Richardson, Secretary; Joetta Schlabach, Pastor; Jerry Janzen, Treasurer; Glenn Geissinger, Trustees; Jenny Wandersee, Worship; Katie Hochstedler, Missions & Service, Thaine Dirks, Pastor-Parish.

Absent: Moderator-elect; Education representative, Fellowship representative.

Affirmations. Glenn affirms Neil's role in intervening with the man who disrupted the worship service for Joetta's ordination. Neil affirms Darrell's role as well. Joetta affirms Dick Westby for his work cleaning the floors, and Greg Renstrom and Hermann Weinlick for painting. Joan affirms Joetta for her support during Sandra Westby's diagnosis and surgery. Jenny affirms the choir's singing during yesterday's service. Joan is grateful for all the kitchen volunteers during the ordination day potluck. Joetta affirms Dan Leisen for designing the bulletin cover. Joan affirms our delegates roles at both the recent MCUSA and CPMC conferences.

Treasurer's report. Jerry notes that we're halfway through the fiscal year. The delegate funds are listed under pastor travel/conferences and under youth. Katie says the conference travel got a little expensive for some

of our delegates. Might we do another fundraiser? Joan asks whether we could use deacon funds? Glenn suggests some reimbursement out of existing travel funds. Gregg suggests asking congregation to consider some designated offerings for the travel expenses. The Calvert fund has grown by \$2100 since the beginning of the year. Jerry wrote a check to reduce the mortgage by \$20,000. Glenn notes that income is just about on target. Jerry predicts that we'll come out about \$7000 ahead for the year. Joan asks how we decide how much we pay per member to Central Plains Conference? Jerry says we just set a dollar figure in the budget every year. Joan says there is a wide range in conference support among congregations—we're on the high end.

Sunday "visitor." Joan wants to discuss briefly the disruption of the ordination service by the stranger yesterday, and how that might be handled in the future.

Katie draws a parallel with the confrontation between the pink Mennos and opponents at the Columbus MCUSA conference. A brief discussion about ways to intervene. Should we check in with parents of young children? Gregg suggests we file a police report, not to press charges, but simply to let them know this is going on. Police can sometimes over react if they don't know the individual, and this may be for his own protection. Should we post a "no guns" sign? Jerry notes that we already decided several years ago not to. Katie suggests some other kind of peace-oriented sign? M&S Commission will discuss this. Joetta will check in with parents.

Commission reports.

Trustees. Glenn says there's a new flower bed on the sidewalk where the Elm stump was ground out. Bernie Waibel redid the front doors. He will also be doing some replastering this fall. The interior committee will start meeting again soon.

Missions and Service. Katie says M&S is planning a community meal this fall, perhaps October 24th, with a "who are the Mennonites?" program. There was good attendance at the GLBT Pride Parade, 18 from FMC. Fewer at strawberry picking this year (about 35), including some from Community of St Martin and the neighborhood.

Worship. Jenny says they haven't yet started planning for fall. Adam Nafziger and John Ratigan are working on the sound system.

Education. Joetta says Kristen Green is the new children's SS commissioner. September adult ed could be a report to the church about the conferences. Also MCC intergenerational SS.

Deacons. Neil says the deacons retreat is being planned for September.

Pastor. Two Winnipeg youth groups will be spending the night in the church is August. Joetta will be out of the country for the August council meeting.

Old business.

Church building use. A draft policy for groups wanting to use the building is circulated. We'll add a mission statement, a refundable deposit, and note that checks should be made out to FMC.

Conference debriefing. Joan describes the Friday night meeting at CPMC to discuss the open letter on LGBT concerns. Joetta and John Zimmerman facilitated. It included the leader of the Pink Mennos, and the author of the letter in opposition. The discussion was respectful, and about 60 attended. Most churches had not discussed the open letter. Most were frustrated by the report from conference on congregations at variance. Jerry asks if there was a vote on restoring St Paul Mennonite Fellowship. Joetta says no, because there was worry about another negative vote as being another slap at SPMF.

Joan notes that keynote speaker John Suderman of MCC Canada was excellent. Joetta also describes a workshop on safe sanctuaries, and protecting children against abuse in the church.

Katie describes the success of Pink Mennos at MCUSA in Columbus as a positive presence. They held seminars that filled the room, and sold all of their pink paraphernalia. They also held a press conference attended by an AP reporter. Katie was quoted in the article. The Open Letter group wanted a resolution asking the church to stop discriminating against LGBT people. Another group wanted a resolution reaffirming the current statement. The resolution committee wrote its own, which was amended on the delegate floor to change the word "affirm" to "acknowledge" the current conference policy. Joan notes the irony that this was exactly the language that SPMF used, which put them on probation.

--Gregg Richardson, Secretary

What's happening here and there...

MCC Relief Sale Events

August 30th is the deadline for pre-ordering two MCC Relief Sale favorites, verenicka and prieshka. For details, call Thaine Dirks at 612-850-8419 or see: <http://www.tcmccreliefsale.org/calendar/> .

September 11-13: St. Mary's Greek Festival (Minneapolis) Again this year the TC MCC Relief Sale will have a table at the St. Mary's Greek Festival Boutique selling sewn and small quilted items. It will be lively and entertaining with a chance to talk with many people. Festival schedule is:
Fri., Sept, 11: Noon - 10:00 PM
Sat., Sept. 12: Noon - 10:00 PM
Sun., Sept 13: Noon - 6:00 PM
St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, 3450 Irving Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-825-9595

A Celebration of Sorts!

Volunteering at A Celebration of Sorts is so much fun it's scary! Join United Way and Arc's Value Village for a ghoulish good time at the: Sixth Annual A Celebration of Sorts, Tuesday, September 15, from 9 am-9 pm.

Volunteers will unpack, sort and tag over 100,000 donated Halloween costumes and accessories in preparation for the opening of Arc's Value Village Halloween Boo-tique. A Celebration of Sorts is a fun and energetic volunteer event complete with music, entertainment and refreshments. This is a great opportunity for both small and large groups. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old. Proceeds from items sold help fund vital programs and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, provided by Arc Greater Twin Cities.

Available shifts:

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

To sign up, contact United Way Caring Connection at celebration@unitedwaytwincities.org or (612) 340-7440.

Deadline for October newsletter items is noon, Thursday, September 24th.

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.