

# Faith Connection

September 2012

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...

*Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgives you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. -Colossians 3:12-14*

Throughout this year the Deacon Commission has been discussing and seeking ways to nurture a sense of belonging within the congregation. We will continue this theme as we move into the fall and begin a September worship series on "Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us," which will serve as an entrée for our fall all-church retreat with the same theme. This title is taken from a new book with the same title by Christine Pohl who teaches Christian ethics at Asbury Seminary in Kentucky. Pohl's book is based upon a group project that examined the life of a number of congregations, looking for elements that supported or thwarted the quality of community.

One aspect of community that has been emphasized in the Mennonite church over the centuries is a commitment to "hold one another accountable in love." In a recent article in *The Mennonite*, Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, identified a "signpost" that helps us gauge how well we do this: "Substantial time is spent with one another, building trust and holding ourselves accountable to each other in love."

There is much in our cultural milieu that mitigates against this signpost. Substantial time for one another in the church frequently competes with demanding professional responsibilities and, if we have families, the activity schedules of our children. Our culture promotes busyness and, when our schedules are full, it sometimes takes months to schedule time with our church family.

One of the strongest messages in the dominant culture of individualism in our society is "what I do is my own business." Often this spills over into our life of faith and we forget that when we commit ourselves to follow Christ, we are saying "what I do is *your* business." We no longer live for self alone but become members of the body of Christ, seeking to be transformed into disciples of Jesus. What each of us does *is* the business of the whole community. This doesn't mean we become nit-picking, fault-finders. It does mean, however, that we invite others into the questions we have and the decisions we make. And to do that requires time. It requires a commitment to letting others get to know us. Sharing our life stories with one another helps to guard against judgmentalism because we see the actions and decisions of one another within a context. As we deepen relationships of trust, our stories may include challenges and struggles that may lead to confession and forgiveness. In the end, that is the goal of holding one another accountable—to find and offer grace and freedom.

As Pohl's book title highlights, we never fully achieve the perfect community, but we walk and live into community as best we can. We can take heart in the example of Jesus and his disciple community. Even with the Teacher par excellence, the disciples bumbled along, often competing with one another and not understanding what Jesus was calling them to. Jesus was patient and loving—and occasionally abrasive! His Spirit continues to lead us.

--Joetta Schlabach

"You call yourself free? Your dominant thought I want to hear, and not that you have escaped from a yoke...Free from what? As if that mattered to Zarathustra! But your eyes should tell me brightly: free for what?"

--Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

## ***What's happening at FMC...***

### **Ministry Staff Update**

Our final themed soup group of the summer took place last Wednesday, August 23. About twenty people attended, with soup made by Leslie Minkler, Pat Eliason, and Joetta Schlabach. This event happened due to an invitation extended to an existing group, Discussions that Encounter, to hold their meeting at FMC. Originally begun seven years ago by Arthur Agnew of Bethesda Baptist Church (whom I met earlier this summer at a Minnesota Council of Churches event) and Bill Keatts of St. Olaf Catholic Church, Discussions that Encounter has been meeting twice a month on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays, often at St. Olaf. After a potluck meal, the group typically focuses on a different topic each evening involving race, racism, or white privilege. Rich Deming and Pat Eliason have participated on occasion and invited them to locate their event at FMC this time.

Our guest speaker was Alicia Frosch, Racial Justice & Public Policy Program Coordinator at the YWCA of Minneapolis. She started out autobiographically, talking about growing up in the Twin Cities as the daughter of a mixed race (African American and white/German) couple. Often she struggled with not fitting in or feeling accepted by family, school, or community. She tried, for example, learning Spanish in order to attempt to “pass” as Latina. Frosch also discussed her work with YWCA, particularly the Community Dialogues program, which uses circle methodology to address themes of race and privilege.

Rich Deming wrote afterwards that Frosch’s telling of her personal story “got us all into the spirit, and lifted any burdens we might have had about self-disclosure. Personal stories are the foundation of unconditional community.” Frosch wrote back to me and Rich, saying: “Your community is doing wonderful things there, and I felt very honored to be a part of it.”

In October the deacons would like to continue our informal semi-weekly soup groups as we did last year. Watch for a sign-up sheet and consider being a host—either to hold the event at your house or to prepare the food (or both).

Another event held this past week was a canoe outing for 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders, organized by the Okerstroms. Six of our youth in that age bracket participated. After our

church potluck with Walker UMC this past Sunday, the group carpooled over to Lake of the Isles, donned life jackets, and headed out in four canoes. On Cedar Lake the group came together again for watermelon and swimming. Noah Skogerboe, Thaine Dirks, and Noah Kreider Carlson (back from a month-long wilderness canoe trip in Manitoba) assisted with the logistics.

Before canoeing, the kids met in the upstairs youth room above the sacristy, which will be used for their Sunday School room this year. They shared ideas about social and service activities that they might like to do every month or so over the coming year.

One interesting development on this front is that Emmanuel Mennonite Church is also developing a junior youth group of seven kids in approximately the same age range. I met recently with Emmanuel’s Tammy Lundquist, who would like to coordinate with us for planning some occasional events involving both groups. We would also invite youth in the same age range from the other Mennonite congregations in the Twin Cities to join us. If you have ideas for activities that you think our emerging youth group would be interested in, let me know.

*--Phil Stoltzfus*

### **Christian Education Program Begins September 9**

Our 2012-13 Christian Education program will begin on September 9 with classes for children and adults. Children’s classes will continue to use the Gather ‘Round curriculum. We are grateful for a number of new teachers who have volunteered to lead our children’s classes this year:

Middle School – Beth Richardson

Older primary (2nd, 3rd, 4th) – Gregg Richardson

Younger primary (1st & 2nd) – Rhonda Martin

Preschool – Andi Kuenning and Shelly Hendricks

During September the adults will meet together to discuss themes from the book *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* by Christine Pohl. This will also be the theme of our fall retreat. A sign-up form in the fellowship area is you would like to purchase a copy of the book for \$13.99. (Kindle edition is available for \$9.99.) We will also distribute summaries of the readings each week. Adult elective classes will begin in October.

*--The Christian Education Commission*

## Fall Retreat Update

Brochures for the FMC Fall Retreat, which will take place at Camp St. Croix in Hudson, Wisconsin, October 5-7, are in mailboxes and the planning committee invites everyone to participate, even if you are a relative new-comer. This is an excellent way to get better acquainted in a beautiful, relaxing environment.

Please complete and return the registrations forms ASAP, but no later than September 16, so the planning committee can plan accordingly. Payment, according to your ability to pay, can be made in the Sunday morning offering. If you have questions about retreat, please direct them to one of the planning members: Wendy Brunner, Adam Nafziger, Joetta Schlabach, and Donna Stucky.

Given the close proximity of the camp, about a 30-minute drive from FMC, we will hold our Sunday, October 7 worship at the camp. We hope that people who are not able to attend the full weekend will be able to join us for a closing, celebrative worship service, held outdoors if weather permits.

## Fall CPMC Conversation Process Update

The Church Council has continued to make plans for the FMC participation in the four regional conversations planned by the Conference Board of Central Plains Mennonite Conference this fall in response to the marriage guidelines we adopted at the beginning of 2012. Four gatherings will occur over four months:

- September 29** Twin Cities (including Eau Claire, Rochester, and Mountain. Lake)
- October 27** South Dakota
- November 17** Nebraska
- December 15** Iowa

These will be three-hour meetings with three representatives from regional churches participating in listening and sharing counsel about how we live and work as a conference when congregations differ with regard to biblical interpretation, belief and practice. At each gathering several people from FMC will be present to share our congregational story as it relates to the inclusion of glbt persons. In the Twin Cities gathering we will also have members participate in the listening and conversation.

The following persons have agreed to participate in the process (a different group will travel to each of the regional meetings): Arlene & Glenn Geissinger, Orv Gingerich, Matthew Hendricks, Katie Hochstedler, Jerry

Janzen, Joan Kreider, Donna Minter, Joetta Schlabach, Phil Stoltzfus, and Karen Wiebe. This group welcomes the prayers of the congregation as they prepare for these experiences and for the entire process as it unfolds. The Council decided to set aside a weekly time this fall for prayer. Each Thursday evening (except Thanksgiving), beginning September 6, at 7 p.m., the chapel will be reserved for anyone who would like to come and join with others in praying for God's Spirit to move through this process. This will be a 30-minute time with a standard format and a weekly host (to open and close the church). Anyone who would like to host one or more weeks should contact the church office.

--Matthew Hendricks, Church Council Moderator



If you or a family member has a birthday in September, pastor Joetta invites you to her home, 248 Aurora Ave., St. Paul, for brunch on September 15<sup>th</sup>. (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](mailto:jschlabach@faithmennonite.org).

September  
Birthday  
Brunch  
Saturday  
September  
15  
9:30-11  
a.m.

## Commission Updates

**Missions and Service.** The Missions and Service Commission encourages FMC participants to consider joining in two activities during the month of September:

- 1) Visit Shalom Mennonite Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. On September 16 we will send a delegation to worship with Shalom Mennonite Church, which started five years ago in Eau Claire. We are considering being a sponsoring congregation for them to help support their new part-time pastor. Contact Mike Okerstrom if interested, [mokerstrom@comcast.net](mailto:mokerstrom@comcast.net).
- 2) Community Emergency Service is recruiting volunteers for two Saturdays in September for their new home delivery program. Volunteers are needed 9-11:30 a.m. on Saturday September 8 and 29 to help bag and deliver groceries for homebound food shelf recipients. This would be a great family project! Please contact Susan Weinlick for details: [sweinlick@aol.com](mailto:sweinlick@aol.com).

**Deacons.** The deacons met in both July and August. In addition to addressing regular prayer concerns and congregant updates, the deacons have been in discussion with both Joetta and the church council about this fall's upcoming conference meetings. The deacon commission is offering support to those people both from Faith Mennonite and other Central Plains Conference congregations who will be meeting to discuss our marriage guidelines. We will also help coordinate regular Thursday evening prayer services this fall, and offer debriefing sessions following each of the four conference meetings.

The deacons will help lead September's adult Christian Education hour. The class will be conducted by dividing the church into deacon groups and we will help lead our particular groups discussion. Finally, the deacons are looking at developing a more formal way of addressing ongoing care needs in the congregation, and we will be working on this as the fall progresses.

--Adam Nafziger

## **Worship with Walker Community Church**

Faith Mennonite participants who came to worship on the last Sunday of August were greeted by lively singing led by a small group of musicians from Walker Community Church. Following Walker's usual Sunday format, the singing (and standing!) continued for thirty minutes. The service also included testimonials by two persons from each church about aspects of congregational life that have been meaningful for them. Thaine Dirks shared how word, song, and service are central to his experience at FMC. Minke Sundseth shared reflections and read portions of two poems about the various dimensions of being "Mennonite." Bret Hesla joined Phil Stoltzfus in leading several of the songs that Bret wrote for our 50th Anniversary. One of these was used as an offertory song as worshippers walked their offerings to baskets placed at the front of the church. In closing, we made a large circle, shared bread, juice and our joys and concerns. After praying the Lord's Prayer and singing Amazing Grace, participants moved to the basement for a sumptuous potluck meal. An estimated 140 people were present, about half from each church. Both churches contributed to the meal and also helped with clean-up.

Many of the Walker members expressed deep appreciation for our hospitality and the opportunity to again worship in a church building. One participant commented, "We're still all traumatized." Another left a message in the offering basket: "Thank you, Faith, for

welcoming us and sharing the love." They have been meeting at the Heart of the Beast and in Powderhorn Park this summer since their building burned. Next Sunday they will move to Patrick's Cabaret as an interim meeting place until they have a new, permanent building. Let us continue to pray for Walker Church as they rebuild. Many thanks to everyone who was involved in some aspect of the service and/or potluck, and to Jennifer Lusk who originally suggested the idea of offering some form of hospitality to Walker Church.

--Joetta Schlabach

## **TC MCC Relief Sale Needs Volunteer Coordinator**

This year's Twin Cities Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale is fast approaching on November 10. The sale desperately needs a volunteer coordinator to fill all the volunteer jobs on sale day.

Here's the scoop: this job is easy but takes some time to call volunteers. I've been doing this for about eight years and am happy to teach the new coordinator a few simple tools; e.g., to use MS EXCEL and to organize calling last year's volunteers over a four-week period.

Call 952-297-4081 or email: glenn.geissinger@gmail.com and I'll get you started right away.

--Glenn Geissinger

## **Giving Money in Different Ways**

We experience continuing change in how we do everyday things—from letters and cards to telephone to e-mail to texting; from cash to checks and credit cards to electronic transfers. These changes offer new options for supporting the church financially.

Our support of the church is not like paying the electric or telephone bill, for at least two reasons. First, neither God's love nor our place in Christian community will end if we do not give money to the church, although lack of funds may limit how we as church live out our faithfulness. Second, the church lives in our response in word and action to God and one another, not in the flow of funds.

We are probably accustomed to putting a check in the offering plate on Sunday morning, perhaps every Sunday, perhaps once a month. But we do have other options. When we know we will be absent—as for many persons over the summer—we can mail checks to the church office.

The church (Website: [faithmennonite.org](http://faithmennonite.org)) has an online "Donate" link connecting with the national Mennonite Church USA. Here, one can arrange for a payment, from a Visa, MasterCard, or Discover credit card, to Faith Church or other Mennonite causes. This program, however, is set up for single transactions, not for automatic recurrent giving, and has a small fee.

Everence (formerly Mennonite Mutual Aid) invites members or friends of Mennonite congregations or sympathetic to Anabaptist ideals to establish accounts with Everence Federal Credit Union (Website: [everence.com](http://everence.com)). Through Everence's Contributions Direct™ service, payments can be made to the congregation or other causes on a regular basis and at no charge. There are a number of federal credit union or other ATMs in the Twin Cities, including one in Seward, that Everence customers can use without a fee. For more information on Everence, contact Teresa Wasick, FMC's Everence representative.

Giving financial contributions regularly and systematically is good both for the church and for our personal and family financial planning. And there is more than one way to do it.

--Hermann Weinlick (Trustees)

### FMC Monthly Budget Summary

	May	June	July	YTD
<b>Total Giving</b>	\$7,782	\$9,499	\$9,719	\$72,007
<b>Total Budgeted Income*</b>	\$10,102	\$11,889	\$11,769	\$93,474
<b>Budget Target</b>	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$98,000
<b>All Expenses</b>	\$11,217	\$10,389	\$11,678	\$85,950

\*Includes rental and investment income

### Greetings From Erin Geiser

Greetings from Denver! The past 6 weeks whirled by in clouds of moving paper and boxes as well as very hot air and a blistering sun. I've hung out in a hot garage many an afternoon sorting thru boxes of a collected life. Frequently questioning how I made decisions about what to keep over the years! Somehow we've figured out how to meld 2 mature households into a comfy

home and I'm grateful it has been a smooth and exciting process.

After completing all the fun tasks that come with a move across country; new license plates and drivers license, voter registration and a shiny new library card, I've moved on to finding my way around the grocery and farmers markets, found a fitness studio that covers the basics and fitted my bike out with a new seat so I can keep up on the extensive trails here. A nice mix of business and pleasure for a fairly easy transition and integration into life here.

I've enjoyed getting to know the people at First Mennonite; really enjoy Vern Rempel's approach to worship and community and am relieved that I expect to be as comfortable here as I was at Faith. People are friendly and of course there have been numerous rounds of the Menno game with connections to extended family, friends from college, connections to Faith, etc.

Oh but how I am starting to wish I could condense the process for making good friends! I've got to find a book club, a drumming or biking group or some type of avenue to meet people and develop relationships. I knew this would be the tough part of moving, and 6 weeks into this, I'm beginning to understand tough. Unfortunately, Craig's house is across from a small university and there are no neighbors available. I've got my feelers out for church and community volunteer opportunities – hoping this fall to jump into several. (First on the list – Dog Walking!)

To keep connected to Faith and Minneapolis I enjoy face book updates and photos and appreciate the weekly church e-mail. Hope you all know that we'd love to have visitors – the welcome mat has been found and is out!

--Erin Geiser

### Thank You, Thank You...

Dear Faith Mennonite Church,  
Thank you so incredibly much for opening up your doors to us for the night. We are really appreciative of your generous hospitality and it's great to meet some of our brothers and sisters in Minneapolis! This has been a great start to our western tour.

--Love, Theater of the Beat

Thank you for letting us stay in your church!!  
--The Sterling Mennonite Fellowship Church Youth Group, Winnipeg, MB

## *What's happening here and there...*

### **The St Bernard Project**

In case any of you are trying to think of a way to get out of town and also do some good this winter, I want to tell you about an organization in New Orleans that could use your help. When I was exploring options last year, the Mennonite Disaster Relief in NOLA was full and couldn't use us for several months out. I checked around and it was recommended that we contact the St. Bernard Project. They are a local organization that continues to work with homeowners eight years after Katrina and have dormitory style housing nearby. They estimated there is work related to the storm and flood damage for at least another ten years.

Tom and I worked on homes in the Lower Ninth Ward and we lived walking distance away. Because there were so many volunteers (this was delightful) we were scheduled from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day, so there was plenty of time to bus into downtown and walk around the French quarter, eat beignets, etc. A highlight was when the Mennonites from Kentucky arrived at our work site, wearing tool belts, suspenders and straw hats, with their own van full of tools, ladders, etc., and proceeded to side the entire house in one afternoon. Mennonite pride!

Here's a link from YouTube showing the house we worked on the most. Please notice the particularly well-done floorboards and molding...lol:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=D\\_x5bh3uOUk&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_x5bh3uOUk&feature=youtu.be)

There's also a nice YouTube video of the owner of the house speaking to St. Bernard Project volunteers when the house was completed last summer:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2S5Ifqn48M&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2S5Ifqn48M&feature=youtu.be)

--Pat Eliason and Tom Peterson

**The deadline for October newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup>.**

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.

### **Song of Seward**

In between the river and the light rail line  
Is a sweet old neighborhood I'm proud to call mine  
In the heart of Minneapolis, Seward is a place  
Where people take a break from the big rat race

The houses are all about a hundred years old  
The summers are sweaty and the winters dang cold  
The yards are small and the neighbors are near  
You have to get along, keep communication clear

Gardeners, artists, immigrants, pets  
Writers, nurses, baristas, vets  
Cyclists, bikers, walkers, strollers  
Businesspeople, volunteers, fiddlers, bowlers

It's a place where folks sit out in their yards  
Invite you to their porches for a drink or some cards

If your cat gets lost or your car breaks down  
If your kid is sick or you go out of town  
Neighbors are there--to pick up the slack,  
Take in the mail, bring a meal, help you pack

You can walk to get coffee, you can walk to buy some food  
You can walk to see a play if you're in the playful mood  
You can walk to get gas (that would be a little weird)  
You can walk off an ice cream cone (double-tiered)

At our last big party we blocked off the street  
Let the kids run wild, did the meet-and-greet  
A fire truck came, a gospel choir wailed  
I tried to learn some double-dutch jump-rope (failed)

The folks were crowding in, the nametags didn't last  
No rain or bugs (just laughs and hugs)--it ended all too fast

In between the river and the light rail line  
Is a sweet old neighborhood I'm proud to call mine  
In the heart of Minneapolis, Seward is the place  
To leave the screen, go outside, and find a friendly face

-- Linda Breitag (22nd Street East)