

Faith Connection

September 2013

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...

A common refrain this time of year goes something like this: "Where did the summer go?" or "Summer always flies by so fast!" While many of us, especially families with children, often look forward to the return to a more scheduled and predictable life that the school year brings, some of us wish that the relaxed pace and longer hours of day light that summer affords weren't quite so fast fleeting.

As some aspects of life seem to speed by, or continually speed up, other things move painstakingly slow. We generally find that the things we enjoy the most are the fast fleeting, while the things that are difficult and cause pain linger on beyond the time we would apportion to them. Following the visit of the Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC) of Central Plains Conference on August 17 to visit with me and several members of the congregation about the biblical and theological basis for our ministry and position regarding same-sex marriage, we find ourselves again in a slow time. We are waiting to learn the outcome of the committee's deliberation.

Sometime in the past year I heard a fellow pastor comment about the "speed of church," by which he meant "slow." He was referring to the inner working of a congregation, and how it often takes months to make fairly simple decisions, in order to make sure that all interested parties have a say in the process, or perhaps until someone is found who will agree to turn a decision into action. The speed slows even more when we move to the realm of conference or denomination because of geographical distance between our churches and the great diversity of experience and perspectives.

If slow means intransigence and a lack of will to envision new possibilities it is indeed problematic. But slow mode can also be essential to thinking more carefully. Holding divergent views together forces us to think outside of our normal patterns of thought and can perhaps result in new ideas that wouldn't have sprung

up otherwise. Those of us who met with the PLC caught a glimpse of this possibility. And so we wait in hope as much as pain.

When we become impatient with the speed of church, we can find companionship in the Psalms. "How long, O Lord?" is a frequent refrain of the Hebrew poets, often expressing exhaustion from the wait for justice or release from suffering.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
(Psalm 13: 1-2)

I am thankful that the visit of the PLC provided an opportunity for us to share some of the groaning of our congregational experience with persons from other parts of our conference. Now, as we wait, we can practice the confident trust of those same poets:

But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.
(Psalm 13:5-6).

May God indeed deal bountifully with us.

--Joetta Schlabach

Ministry staff report...

This Wednesday, September 4 is the fall start of our weekly community meals. No need to bring food—all will be prepared by our Mennonite Worker chefs! Everyone is welcome regardless of ability to pay—freewill donations will be accepted which will go toward the purchase of the food. 6 p.m. in the fellowship hall.

On the first Wednesday of every month the meal will be followed by a presentation arranged by the Missions and Service Commission. This coming Wednesday,

September 4, Hermann Weinlick will start things off with a presentation on the organization Bread for the World. 7 p.m. in the chapel.

Lots of other things coming up on the schedule, too. This Friday, September 6 at 6 p.m. will be the Sunday School kick-off event at the church, with pizza provided. On Sunday, September 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m. is a Meet the Guys Time for FMC men in Rudy Okerlund's backyard, 5648 Pillsbury Ave. (RSVP neildeb@bitstream.net). There's a rug event at Ten Thousand Villages September 11-15. And, the big neighborhood fair of the year, the Kings Fair, featuring an FMC booth, is coming up in Matthews Park on Saturday, September 21.

Look for a brochure in your church mail slot for registering for our October 4-6 church retreat. Also in your mail slots soon will be the most recent FMC phone directory. Let the church office know if you have a different number you'd like people to use to contact you.

A small African-American congregation, New Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, has begun meeting in our sanctuary on Sunday afternoons on a trial basis, beginning at 12:45 p.m.. Make sure your things are picked up from the sanctuary after church so that we can be good neighbors to this group.

--Phil Stoltzfus

What's happening at FMC...

Worshipping with "Body and Soul" in September

We live in a media and entertainment culture that is saturated with sexual images and innuendo. These images often exploit and project unrealistic expectations. Sadly, within the church, it has often been difficult to have healthy conversations about sexuality and about the relationship between sexuality and spirituality. In recent years, as we know so well, any attempts at a broad conversation about sexuality in the wider church quickly devolve into a narrow focus on the morality of certain minority sexual expressions.

As a way to invite congregations into positive conversations about sexuality, Mennonite Church USA has developed a resource titled "Body & Soul: Healthy Sexuality and the People of God" which is intended for use in worship and in youth and adult education classes for a four-week period. We have chosen this as the theme for our September worship and adult education.

The topics for the four weeks are: 1) Our bodies, God's image, 2) Created for intimacy, 3) Honoring the Gift of Sex, and 4) Holy Desires.

A team of several people including Cynthia Miller, Gerald Schlabach, Donna Stucky, and Hermann Weinlick will facilitate the adult education sessions, to which everyone is invited to attend.

--*The Worship and Education Commissions*

Christian Education Program Resumes September 8

Our Christian Education Commission has been busy planning for the new Sunday School year, with classes for all ages beginning Sunday, September 8. We are pleased to have some returning teachers and some new teachers for children's education. Casey Englund-Helmeke will be teaching the middle school (5th through 8th graders) class. They will start out the year using the Body and Soul curriculum, which will also be the theme of the adult sessions in September. Minke Sundseth, Shelley Hendricks, and Paula Okerstrom are team-teaching the elementary class. This year all the 1st through 4th graders will be together for part of the class time and divided in two groups for the other part. They will use room 206 in the education wing and the chapel. Andi Kuenning and Heather Wengerd will share the teaching of the nursery/kindergarten class.

The children's program will continue to use the Gather 'Round curriculum, which is in its final year. The theme for the fall is "God's People: Scattered and Gathered." This will include stories from the books of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Job, Jonah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Psalms. (Because we do not have Sunday School on all the weeks of the fall quarter, we will not do all of these.)

We hope that Sunday School is a positive experience for all the children. We also encourage families to attend as regularly as possible. The lessons in the curriculum build on previous ones, and it is hard to have continuity when children do not come regularly. Having regular attendance also helps build community among the children in the class.

-- *Christian Education Commission (Andi Kuenning, Minke Sundseth, Candace Lautt)*

Sunday School Kick-off – September 6

Children and parents of pre-school through 7th-graders are invited to the church from 6-7:30 p.m. on Friday, September 6, for pizza, children's activities, a meeting for parents, and a chance for children to meet their

teachers and see their fall classrooms. We're looking forward to a good year of learning and growing together and this time together will help get us off on a good foot! Please come!

-- *Christian Education Commission*

Taking Root!

Annual All-Church Fall Retreat

October 4-6

Camp St. Croix, Hudson, WI



Featuring Farmer & Church Administrator

Diane Zaerr Brenneman

who will lead us in considering how to deepen our spiritual roots as we make our home in an urban landscape where many of us do not have extended family or a long history.

Detailed brochures are in church mailboxes.

Everyone Welcome!

Comings and Goings...

As fall begins we anticipate getting to know persons who visit and begin attending our church. Please introduce yourself to persons who you have not met before and extend a welcome to them.

We welcome back **Noah Kreider Carlson**, who has returned from a 6-week voyageur canoeing experience in the Canadian arctic, followed by another week as a counselor on a week-long canoe trip with Camp Widgiwagan in Ely, Minnesota.

Several people are making transitions:

We will have a time of sending and blessing for **Aryn Baxter** on September 8 as she departs for Tempe, Arizona, where she has accepted a position as director of a scholarship program at Arizona State University. Aryn has been a part of our congregation since 2005 when she came to the Twin Cities as an AmeriCorps volunteer. Since then she has done graduate work at the University of Minnesota and worked and done research in Africa and in Arkansas, always returning to share her gifts when she has been in town. We will miss her and we wish her God's rich blessing as she begins this new assignment and creates a home in a new city.

Gerald Schlabach is relocating to the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research next to St. John's University for this academic year while he is on sabbatical. He will be working on a book manuscript, taking part in the prayer life of St. John's Abbey, and dipping his fish line in Stump Lake.

Pierre Gingerich-Boberg has begun his third year of medical school which will involve rotations at hospitals in different parts of Wisconsin.



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 28th. (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.

*September
Birthday
Brunch*

*Saturday,
September
28th
9:30-11
a.m.*

Thank You to Summer Worship Planners and Participants

Last Sunday concluded our summer worship series, "God's Good Creation." We are grateful to:

- The planning team: Casey Englund-Helmeke, Gregg Richardson, and Joetta Schlabach;
- Arlene Geissing, who provided fresh flowers on most Sundays
- Maggie Page, who coordinated and led children's activities and responses
- Casey Englund-Helmeke, who coordinated silent meditation and sharing times
- Everyone who volunteered as a nursery or children's activity assistant, a worship or music leader, usher, fellowship time host, or helped set-up the basement for worship on hot steamy Sunday mornings.

---*The Worship Commission*

Nursery Coordinator Position Filled

On September 8 we will welcome **Danika Zabertini** as our new Sunday nursery coordinator. Danika is in her final year of an undergraduate Urban Studies program at

the University of Minnesota. She has experience as a live-in childcare giver, a baby-sitter, and also in a church nursery setting. She has volunteered with America Reads and as a classroom assistant at the Cedar-Riverside Adult Education Collaborative. She comes to us with a lot of energy and love for children. Andy Martinson, Nursery Volunteer Coordinator, Andi Kuenning, Children's Education Coordinator, and Joetta Schlabach conducted the interview process.

Fun Opportunity for Young Readers

Children ages 4 through 8th grade are encouraged to sign up to participate in the Shalom Readers Club program. Shalom Readers Club (SRC) is sponsored by the Christian Formation Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and gives children an opportunity to learn more about core values of peace and justice from an Anabaptist Mennonite perspective. A list of over 200 titles has been chosen for the club. We have borrowed some of these from the Conference, and will purchase others based on the interests of participants. This will provide an added bonus of helping us to rebuild our children's library collection!

During the course of the school year, club members read (or have someone read to them) seven books from the SRC list and record them on an SRC record sheet. They then create a book sharing about two of the books they have read. The sharing could be a book review, song, story, skit, drawing, or activity. When a child has completed their sharing on two of the books they have read and given them to the SRC leader, they may choose a book from the SRC list to keep as their own. Those interested in joining can fill out a registration form, available at the back of the church, and place it in Cynthia Miller's mailbox.

--Cynthia Miller

Calling Closet Musicians

FMC has long had a wonderful contingent of musical contributors, both professional and amateur, who enrich our worship experiences in a variety of musical styles and combinations. But we on the Worship Commission are also aware that there are many others in the church who play instruments or sing, who are perhaps a bit shy about sharing their gifts. If you are such a person, and are interested in participating in worship in musical ways, I encourage you to contact me as we try to expand our musician resource list. This could include playing special music or accompanying or leading hymns, alone or as part of a small ensemble. If you feel a bit intimidated, let me assure you, as an amateur musician myself, we have a very supportive church community, and our professional musicians, most of whom are music educators, are gracious and patient to work with, and to sing or play alongside them is always an enjoyable experience. Please consider sharing your gifts and interests, as Worship Commission looks for ways to enrich and diversify our worship experience.

--Gregg Richardson for the Worship Commission

The deadline for October newsletter items is noon, Wednesday, 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.

Harmony

our old truck will only start with trickery
but it works well enough to get us to the beach

you're in the sun while I'm in the waves
getting pushed closer or away

they take me far down shore
and I walk back to you with sea legs

then you're in the water beyond breakers
diving for treasure from those who rely on pockets

we are together before dusk, still amazed by ships
their smoke and slow progress

the water becomes another territory at night and we start back
forget our blanket, return for it
the only hallmark on the sand

familiar breathing awaits at home
sleeping bodies remembering the sea

--Travis Lusk