

Faith Mennonite Church

2021 Annual Reports

April 2021

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Moderator's Report

April 25, 2021

This has been an extremely challenging year for Faith Mennonite Church, individually and collectively. We have experienced many changes and disruptions during what remains a time of transition. COVID continues to impact our church community; we have worshiped virtually for over a year now and some of us have experienced personal and professional loss related to COVID. George Floyd was killed on May 25, 2020, and our community - local and beyond - continues to grapple with the aftermath of his death. Ry Sigglekow ended his pastorate with us at the end of May 2020. In June 2020, I moved from Moderator-Elect to Moderator, and John Hershey accepted the call to be Moderator-Elect in the midst of these difficult times. Thom Bower joined us in August 2020 to serve as our transitional pastor.

Since Thom's arrival, we - as individuals, informal groups, Church Council, and the congregation as a whole - have been reflecting and working on numerous topics, hard work that will continue into the coming year. Much of that work is perhaps best described currently in the form of questions - from the practical to the spiritual, from the short term to the long term. For example, how will our church use technology to make hybrid worship accessible in person and remotely? How will our church adjust its decision making around budget priorities to be a more accessible and inclusive process? How will our church better support children, youth, and families so that more families stay at Faith Mennonite Church? How will our church become a welcoming place of worship for younger adults in their 20s and 30s? How will we adjust our church organization (e.g. commission structure) to better reflect 21st century needs? How can our next permanent pastor best support our church? How can we prevent burnout among our lay persons and our pastor? How can we address the loneliness many people feel in our congregation? How will we be more engaged with our community? How will we prioritize our many social justice oriented goals? How can we grow our church body? How can we have honest conversation that doesn't damage relationships while still allowing us to address different opinions and desires around church priorities? How do we embrace and demonstrate our Mennonite and Anabaptist beliefs as a congregation that is combined of individuals with

Mennonite roots and individuals who have recently learned about the Mennonite faith? These and so many, many other questions have sparked valuable dialogue that I trust will lead to positive outcomes for the future of Faith Mennonite Church.

I want to express my immense gratitude to all of you who help make Faith Mennonite Church the community that it is. During my term, I have gained a better understanding of the love, passion, and support that so many in our congregation have for our church family, our community, our denomination, and our world. While unfortunately I cannot name everyone that I have had the pleasure of working closely with this past year, I do want to specifically acknowledge how grateful I am for the work of Bruce Brunner, Karla Hovde, Dan Leisen, and Beth Richardson. They - like so many others at Faith - have invested considerable time and energy toward supporting our church community. I am very appreciative of Thom's transitional pastoral leadership, especially his willingness to ask hard questions, to make observations that may be invisible from the inside, and to help our congregation clarify its communication, organization, and priorities. Finally, I am tremendously grateful for all of John Hershey's encouragement, support, time, and energy during my term as Moderator. He has been an amazing Moderator-Elect, and our church is very blessed to have him now serve as Moderator.

As we move forward this coming year, I know we will be in great hands with John's leadership, Thom's transitional pastoral wisdom, the collective energy of all of us who make up Faith Mennonite Church, and God's presence and love.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Hendricks

Missions & Service Report April 2021

Despite the challenges living with COVID, Missions & Service found a way to "zoom" through the year. Our original expectations included networking with other social justice churches in and around our neighborhood, playing a more active role in Seward-wide community activities, supporting the work of Pueblos, exploring organizations involved in climate change, and making informed decisions regarding what service and social justice organizations Faith Mennonite might reach out to with small grants.

And then George Floyd was murdered and our attention shifted to looking into how our church could best reach out to support both actions and recovery. We significantly drew on the fund the church set aside in its budget by offering financial assistance to a broad spectrum of responses to the crises. At that time we sent out a special email informing everyone of the groups we reached out to and also suggestions how individuals might get involved. Close to half of what the church set aside was drawn on to support the cause. After the George Floyd crises, we turned our focus to what other organizations can we reach out to.

How we decide on and make use of our resources as a church is currently undergoing a re-examination with the expectation of greater transparency along with opportunities for members to be more involved. Missions & Service is currently undergoing an assessment of how it can best serve the needs of the church. Do we become more intentional in our efforts to network? Does Missions and Service act as a resource to its members by providing opportunities for individual involvement in service work and social justice activities. Does Missions & Service take on special action projects? The challenge here is to be realistic about what can be achieved. How do we get the best return on our time invested? This is a transformational time for the church. What success we experience will have a lot to do with how intentional we become. We have to seek that place where we are talking and walking at the same time.

Respectfully submitted,
Rudy Okerlund

Treasurer's Report April 2021

2020 was a year of transition at Faith for the Treasurer. After over 2 decades of faithful service Jerry Jantzen stepped down as Treasurer. I took over the position as a 1 year transition and integrated what we had been doing into a new process as we brought on a book keeper to do the day to day financial accounting and bill paying. The job previously would have took 2 or 3 people to complete as Jerry had handled everything previously. We are currently transitioning to a new bank in keeping with the Trustee's suggestion to move away from Wells Fargo due poor bank practices at a national level. The last transition will be for a committee to handle the treasurer's position as part of the Trustee committee.

Yours truly,
Bruce Brunner