

# Annual Congregational Meeting

## 2023

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## Faith Mennonite Church Moderator's Report April 2022-April 2023

by Donna Minter

At last year's Annual Congregational Meeting I set the following goals for my work as FMC Moderator:

- 1) To let us together more deeply discover God's abiding love for us, both as individuals and as a community. And to share God's love with our neighbors, both near and far.
- 2) With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and excellent work of the Pastoral Search Team, discover the person who will be our next Settled Pastor.
- 3) Begin to figure out an FMC organizational structure that will better reflect how we want to work together as we follow of Jesus to be a warm and hospitable community for those who want to join us.
- 4) Inviting y'all to help me learn Robert's Rules of Order or suggest a better structure for conducting our meetings that free us to concentrate on identifying and fulfilling our Communal Values as a faith community.
- 5) To have as much fun as possible with y'all to go about our work joyfully following Jesus.

As I reviewed last year's written records, here is what has been accomplished toward these goals:

1. At each Council meeting, whenever I have been FMC's worship leader, and other gatherings such as talking circles, I have reminded myself and those gathered that each of us have been created to be loved by God, ourselves, and each other. Jesus calls us to love and forgive one another and to share the abundance of this love and forgiveness with our local and global neighbors. We are responsible to be and act in our own spheres of influence to be God's justice and peace with the people we are with and the places we go. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can choose to deliberately avoid conflict avoidance and instead lean into interpersonal and organizational conflict with deep abiding love and expectancy that healing and transformation will come.
2. The PST completed the Congregational Information Form in April 2022 and submitted it to Susan Janzen at Central Plains Mennonite Conference in May 2022. For many months they met to review documents of potential pastor candidates, conducted interviews, and as we now know, offered a call to a Pastor Candidate within the context of a written Covenant of Understanding (COU). FMC Council reviewed the COU, met this candidate and consequently voted to Extend a Call to this candidate. Since March 26, our congregation has been discerning via prayer, fasting, listening, talking, and asking questions with each other and God regarding whether to Affirm the Call of the COU with this Pastor Candidate. Today we will vote on this COU with this Pastor Candidate to be our next Settled Pastor.
3. To help FMCers instigate and sustain projects to completion, a written proposal questionnaire based on FMC's 10 Communal Values was developed, implemented, and practiced.
4. To help FMCers instigate new financial giving options, a written proposal questionnaire based on FMC's 10 Communal Values was developed, implemented, and practiced.
5. The COVID Team has made careful decisions to maximize the health and safety of all those who attend FMC.
6. The Repair Team submitted and Council approved the instigation of
  - a. a verbal land acknowledgment that is being read at the beginning of our worship services,
  - b. the November 16, 2022 Sarah Augustine's Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery community presentation in collaboration with Calvary Baptist Church and Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute,
  - c. a new FMC budget line item dedicated to Indigenous Reparations/Restitution, and
  - d. Stories of Repair Adult Education gatherings
7. To maximize the potential that all voices are heard at FMC, two talking circles were instigated:
  - (a) Multiple monthly Vicarious Harm Talking Circles occurred to discuss the history and pain of the "the Split" at FMC and to discuss other harms that have occurred by individuals and the organizational structure at FMC.
  - (b) Multiple month Money Matters Talking Circles: How should we then give? occurred to explore how FMC practices good financial stewardship to support FMC life and generosity to support God's work with our neighbors near and far.
8. After nearly 5 years of financial support of over \$100,000 to our two Migrant Families, we concluded the Migrant Fund program by giving each family approximately \$6500 to use as they see fit.

9. FMC met our 2022 budget goals to sustain our faith community and give generously to Mennonite organizations, local and global peace and justice organizations, and for Indigenous reparations and restitution.
10. At Council meetings and retreats we have reviewed and utilized our 10 Essential Communal Values that were identified by the congregation in Fall 2021.
11. We sponsored 2 enthusiastic FMC representatives (Roberta Malles and Phil Stoltzfus) to attend MCUSA's May 2022 gathering to participate in historical decision making regarding four important resolutions.
12. We sponsored 2 enthusiastic FMC representatives (Pat Eliason and Donna Stucky) to attend Central Plains Conference.
13. We used a communal decision making process to write a letter to Central Plains Mennonite Conference about our commitment to and position with regard to the MCUSA Resolution for Repentance and Transformation.
14. We held four, half-day retreats to practice and strengthen FMC communal decision making and community building in October and December 2022 and January and March 2023. Each retreat had 20-25 people. Survey results suggest that people were very appreciative of these times together to grow the life of our faith community.
15. Despite not having a Christian Education Commission this past year, FMCers participated in the following faith formation activities focused on Christian identity and expression:
  - a. Twin Cities Anabaptist at 500 Bible study
  - b. Peter Block community building book and Book of Jonah Bible Study
  - c. Stories of Repair
  - d. Two months each of gatherings focused on prayer, hospitality, and community
  - e. Funeral planning occurred two consecutive years as a Lenten practice
16. In 2022, we renewed Thom Bower's Covenant of Understanding for a third year. On June 11, 2023 we will have a farewell celebration with him as he departs from us as our transitional pastor on June 26, 2023. Thom, that you for your powerful, important guidance and leadership. To me, it is as if FMC has been born again.
17. Regarding organizational restructuring, the Moderator, Moderator Elect, and Pastor have met on a weekly basis to discuss what is happening in the church and how to support and practice communal decision making, community building and project instigation in a healthy manner that is in line with our Communal Values. While we recognize the wisdom of all past moderators, we suggest this role be formalized as Moderator Emeritus so this person's experience and recent insights can be notably available as needed to the new Moderator, the new Moderator Elect, and our Pastor. The goal is to strengthen this leadership team so that FMC is a faith community realizing God's deep abiding love and forgiveness for us and inviting our neighbors who want to join us in this community.
18. Also regarding organizational restructuring, through the development of a Personnel Team, I have agreed as Moderator Emeritus to chair the Personnel Team. This is an intentional decision discerned with Andy and Thom. We hope this model supports the Moderator, Moderator Elect and Pastor as I leave my leadership position. A recent past moderator John Hershey stated that he wished the past moderators were more available for advice when he was moderator. This is a low commitment way to support the new leadership team.
19. More specifically, we recommend that the Personnel Team include a Trustee, Deacon, and Moderator Emeritus who meets regularly with the Pastor to address on-going human resources issues such as keeping track of days off, sick days, professional development days, holidays, and annual evaluation of the pastor.
20. While I'm not a big fan of Robert's Rules of Order, it is common and works when you work it. So we've continued to us this structure for conducting meetings.
21. Finally, I can honestly say that for way more than 51% of the time, I have had fun doing this Moderator work with y'all. My favorite song to keep me in touch with the Holy Spirit's energy is the joy of the Lord is my strength. I wish the same for all of you. Amen.

Thank you for the opportunity to take my turn serving as your Moderator this year. It has been a challenge, honor, and an experience of deep spiritual growth for me. I am more of who the Divine created me to be than I was one year ago. Thank you.

Warm regards, your sister in Christ,

Donna Minter, Moderator 2022-2023

## **Transitional Minister's Report**

Spring 2023

Rev. Dr. thom bower

On 23 April I will offer a verbal pastoral report as my morning reflection. I will identify what I perceive to be the most significant transitions I have seen at FMC. I will ask that report be included in the minutes from the Spring meeting.

This past year there have been four foci of my ministry with you.

Last summer and fall, we engaged congregation-wide faith formation through three practices of faith: prayer, hospitality, and community. The activities to experience faith practices were met with varying degrees of success (and attendance), but the entire endeavor raised conversations about FMC's practices for nurturing discipleship.

We offered half-day retreats in October, December, February and March. When we started the plan was for one retreat, but we encountered a momentum worth continuing. All of these retreats examined congregational dynamics, together building community and reinforcing practices of meaningful discussion. That these retreats each had 20+ attendees is a marker of success; hearing attendees continue to talk about the events is another marker.

In January, I led conversations related to my departing FMC. The Moderators, PPRC, Trustees, and Personnel Team were the main participants before bringing the discussions to Council. Early there were two scenarios to consider: if I were to be called by a congregation or if I complete the term of my current Covenant of Understanding (through July 2023). In February, I committed to fulfilling my call through July. At that time Personnel and I discerned the best of multiple proposals for my exit timeline. My final Sunday will be 25 June, with a farewell on 11 June. I will then use continuing education time to attend the UCC general Synod, followed by vacation in the remainder of July.

Each week, Donna Minter, Andy Martinson, and I met together for a "Moderator's Meeting." This has generated collaborative and shared leadership. We have discussed congregational dynamics, concepts of leadership, assessed leadership strategies, and deliberately aligned our leadership tasks to complement one another's work. While not always efficient, this has been a powerful way to share leadership and to practice community.

Although not at the fore in all my tasks, these four foci shaped how I worked with commissions, led worship, offered advice, and joined in discernment. It has been a rich year of significant spiritual growth as we have considered how God is calling and inviting FMC into the fullness of God's realm. Thank you for allowing me to be part.

## Trustees Report 2023

Your Trustees this term are Amy Kaiser, Glenn Geissinger, and Darrell Martin. We were assisted by many of you this past year with cleaning on the church work day, help with construction projects (demolition, painting, tile work, electrical work), and work on our grounds like mowing and maintaining flower beds and gardens. Thank you all!

### Tenants

We have had another robust year of both occasional and year around renters. The only long term tenant we lost was BMC when they moved to Chicago. Their space was quickly taken over by Community Power – Minnesota Environmental Justice Table. Our Office Administrator, Brianna Hendrickson, monitors leasing agreements, rent payments, and building requests from our many tenants and building users.

### Building Projects

After discussing an Office Building restroom remodel for many years we finally tackled the project in 2022 with the help of WonderWoman Construction. Our tenants have been especially appreciative of this upgrade. The church offices are in the final stages of a “refresh”: the walls and ceilings have been freshly painted and new carpet installed; we’ll soon be ready to move back in. A new thermostat will allow better heating control for these offices.

Work continues on the library area as well as a new storage cabinet planned for the upgraded tech equipment in the balcony. A new fiber optic system for internet service and phone lines was installed last year.

After much deliberation we installed fences with locking gates at 3 locations around our building. Our neighbors have commented that they have seen no more foot traffic behind our building since the installation of the fences.

### Personnel Management

In addition to regular communication with Brianna, the Trustees worked with the Pastoral Search Team to create a Covenant of Understanding, or job description, for the new pastor.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Martin

## **Deacon Commission Report, March 2023**

The deacons have been particularly visible over the past year through service in multiple Sunday morning capacities: pre-service greeting, leading congregational sharing time, crafting the prayer concerns for the Midweek Update, serving as convener for the online Zoom services, and hosting fellowship time after online services. We have developed a new protocol/script this year for leading sharing time. Also, once per month deacons are in charge of preparing communion elements and helping to serve during communion.

Our central task as deacons is to work with the pastor to oversee pastoral care for the congregation. We've provided support to people through service, visits, phone calls and emails. Members have experienced positive COVID tests, numerous health issues and surgeries, home health care needs, needs connected to household tasks and transportation, family members passing away, financial needs, life transitions for high schoolers, unemployment or switching jobs, care needs for elderly parents, and general feelings of over-extension and burnout. We administer the Deacons Fund and this past year responded to occasional requests from within and beyond the congregation for assistance. One member of our congregation, David Ott, passed away, and a memorial service was held for Jim Kuebelbeck.

In our monthly meetings we work with the pastor to attempt to think intentionally regarding a variety of aspects of our spiritual life, such as: upcoming worship themes and special events, fellowship practices and participation, faith formation and Christian ed., keeping in touch with people we haven't seen in a while and welcoming new people, and small group formation. We are in the process of re-constituting the deacon care groups list, which includes all those households currently participating in congregational life. Previously, during COVID, the list had been re-constituted as a phone tree in order to keep in touch when we could not meet in person. With only three deacons most of this year and numerous shifts in congregational participation, we have been in the process of rebuilding a fresh deacons list with an eye towards small group development.

Over the past year and a half deacons have been working on a process of updating our membership records. All available data about baptisms, congregational transfers, child dedications, and other related membership information exists on an Excel spreadsheet. We have, for the first time, placed it on the church Google drive so that the pastor, deacons, and moderator can access and periodically update it. We are inviting attenders to review their membership status -- to contact us about the process of either adding or removing their name in the FMC membership record -- according to their wishes.

Deacons are represented on the Retreat Committee and have participated in the planning of various retreats and special events. We also participate in the regularly scheduled meetings

and business of Church Council, Pastor/Parish Relations Committee, and Gifts Discernment Committee.

Respectfully submitted, Phil Stoltzfus

## Pastoral Search Team Report - 2023

This timeline shows the steps the Pastoral Search Team has taken over the last year and a half. We vote on April 30th at the annual meeting to affirm Caleb Yoder as a church.

The numbered steps in italics below are taken directly from MCUSA's website. The bold dates and details below are added by the FMC search team.

### **November 2021**

*1. We have appointed a search committee. They are: Andy Martinson (Chair), Rachel Geissing (Secretary), Matthew Hendricks, Minke Sundseth, Pat Eliason (joined June 2022), Melissa Hochstetler (resigned June 2022).*

### **December 2021**

*2. The search committee has met with our area conference minister/representative. Along with church leadership.*

### **January–May 2022**

*3. We are gathering information and developing a description of our congregation.*

- Wrote first draft of the Congregational Information Form (CIF)
- Met with various targeted groups within the congregation, beginning with elders, deacons, trustees, and ending with a few meetings open to anyone. Every member of our church was given multiple opportunities to meet with us and we also welcomed written feedback from anyone unable or not wanting to meet with us.
- After each of these meetings we revised the CIF based on learnings and feedback.
- CIF was approved by Council May 2022 and sent to Susan Janzen, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership, Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Our search became officially open to candidates.

### **Mid-May 2022 to December 2022**

*4. The search committee is considering potential candidates.*

*5. The search committee has identified possible candidates and will conduct interviews.*

Also written during the summer and into the fall of 2022 was an incomplete draft of the Covenant of Understanding (aka, the job description or call agreement).

### **January-March 2023**

*6. One candidate is being selected to recommend to the congregation for our pastoral opening.*

- During January and February, we conducted a second interview on Zoom. Over a weekend in late February, Caleb and his spouse visited Minneapolis for a third "interview."
- Search team "offered a call" to Caleb the week after the visit.
- March 2023, Caleb accepted the call.
- Trustees (Amy and Darrell), Chair of the Search Team (Andy) and Caleb met to review the Covenant together and come to an agreement.



- March 19th: council held an emergency meeting and “extended the call” through a vote after reviewing the covenant of understanding and meeting Caleb.
- March 26th: Chair of the Search team (Andy) announces the candidate.

**7. This candidate, Caleb Yoder, will visit the congregation and community on *April 15 and 16, 2023.***

At this visit, the candidate will be invited to meet with various commissions and church members. We will also enjoy time in fellowship and social time with our pastor-elect. (More details about this weekend will be announced).

For Sunday Worship, the candidate will have planned the service, including the reflection/sermon.

**8. The congregation will vote on “affirming the call” with the recommended candidate on *April 30th during the annual meeting, in-person at FMC.***

**9. We will celebrate with the installation of our new pastor in September 2023.**

Susan Janzen, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership, Central Plains Mennonite Conference will join us to install Pastor Caleb Yoder.

The final date will be discussed and agreed upon by FMC Council, Caleb Yoder and Susan Janzen.

## Annual Report – Missions and Service Commission 2022 – 2023

March 26, 2023

Submitted by Roberta Malles

Last year's congregational giving, not including donations to Mennonite Church agencies such as Central Plains Conference and Mennonite Disaster Service.

• Community Emergency Services	\$600
• Agate – Ending Homelessness	\$600
• Soup for You	\$600
• Community Peacemaker Teams	\$700
• Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery	\$500
• Makoce Ikcipi – Land Repair	\$1000
• MN Peacebuilding Leadership Institute	\$600
• Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza	\$600
• Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice	\$500
• Central States Chapter, MCC	\$300
• Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light	\$500
• Total	\$6500

Mission Moments we presented.

- Soup For You
- Pueblos
- Repair Team
- Migrant Fund
- Report back from MCUSA Special Delegate Assembly

In May of 2022 we had a Food Drive for Community Emergency Services (CES) , and we packaged and donated Laundry Pods to them as well. In March of 2023 we did a second laundry pods packaging and donation to CES.

Projects within the general purview of Missions and Service:

Migrant Fund Commission end of the year report (members: Andi Kuenning, Roberta Malles and John Ratigan) Submitted by Andi Kuenning

FMC started the Migrant fund in the summer of 2018, The goal of the Migrant fund was to help support financially the families from Honduras and Mexico that Faith Mennonite sponsored until they could become independent. Due to Covid, and difficulties finding steady employment, this process took longer than had been anticipated. The amount given to families was decreased as they became more independent. In the calendar year 2022 a total of \$17,745 was given to the two families.

The Missions and Services team (Andi Kuenning, Roberta Malles, and Bruce Brunner) met with the families in December to talk about their financial situations and to explain that Church Council was going to discuss the migrant fund in the December meeting. Both families had fairly steady work at this point and were doing better financially. Both families expressed great appreciation for how the church has helped them. They understood that it cannot continue indefinitely and indicated that they would be all right without long term support.

After much prayerful, thoughtful, dedicated discussion, and in consultation with others in the congregation, FMC Council decided to end the Migrant Fund on January 31, 2023. An appeal was made for people to donate one last time to the fund before the final disbursement. In February 2023 the remaining amount of money, a sum of \$13,075, was divided equally between the two families. While the fund has been ended, FMC members are encouraged to continue relating to the two families.

Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza update.

(Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza means People of Struggle and Hope.)

2021 was a year of re-creating Pueblos after Antonia Alvarez resigned as President on December 31, 2020 and Ry Sigglekow became President. Karla Arredondo continued as Executive Director. Some of the Board of Directors left and new Board Members were recruited. In the summer of 2022, the Board held a retreat and began working on Vision and Mission statements. In the winter Pueblos held its first Annual meeting at Ascension Catholic Church in North Minneapolis, which is a largely Latino/a/x congregation. Fundraising has been going well, thanks to Karla's work. Pueblos has been able to hire a part-time organizer to work on a project that will document the gratuitous cruelty of the government's e-carceration program that uses electronic ankle bracelets to monitor and control migrants while their cases are in process. Karla has gone to full time hours. Pueblos pays FMC \$300 per month rent for its office.

- Submitted by Roberta Malles

March 2023

**GIFTS DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Gifts Discernment Committee has observed that this year was challenging to fill all the roles of church officers, commission and committee members, and some have not been completely filled. With a smaller congregation there are fewer people to fill all of the roles we have had in the past. We look forward to Church Council working with ways to reconsider some of the roles. We note that there are people at Faith Mennonite Church who want to contribute but are less eager to commit to the length of a term. By redefining roles to have an increased aspect of coordination we would be able to engage more people to carry out the tasks of meeting the needs of the congregation.

Submitted by the 2023 Gift Discernment Committee:

thom bower (Pastor), Candace Lutt, Shelly Hendricks, Karen Wiebe (Deacon Rep)

March 2023

## **Worship Commission Report**

Over the last year, the worship commission continued our practice of hybrid in-person and online worship services, as well as fully online worship services once per month. John Ratigan of the tech team made significant upgrades to our live streaming hardware. Worship commission continued to collaborate with Thom Bower in planning services—long term planning and specific services. We maintained our practice of having worship commission members plan one service per month, giving them a week off. We created a pre-recorded Christmas worship service video, hosted ecumenical Taizé services, and organized a Maundy Thursday service. One continuing struggle is to fill the Children's Time leader position for each Sunday, but we continue to try and fill it, as we value keeping it as a part of the service.

-Miriam Augsburg, Karla Hovde (chair), Jennifer Wandersee, and Hermann Weinlick

## Fellowship Commission Report: May 2022 - Spring 2023

After two summers of pandemic-inspired, bring-your-own picnic to a park, and a year of occasional outdoor fellowship snacks after returning to in-person worship in summer 2021, this year we were able to bring back potluck gatherings. We scheduled monthly outdoor potlucks from May through October, and scheduled potlucks in fellowship hall starting in November. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to coordinate these individual events.

Karla Hovde organized monthly bike rides following worship during the summer and early fall.

Our goal this year was to hold intermittent fellowship events outside the usual post-worship fellowship time, to allow for longer periods of fellowship and connection.

- August 20th: Day at the Lake. We gathered in the backyard of Donna Minter and Bruce Brunner, with opportunities for boating and swimming at Bde Maka Ska, walking, board games, conversation, as well as lunch and dinner. Thank you to Bruce and Donna for hosting.
- November 20th: Sunday afternoon talent show in the sanctuary, followed by a pie social in fellowship hall. Thank you to John Ratigan for serving as emcee for the show.
- January 8th: Game afternoon held in the Education Wing following a chili lunch.
- February 12th: Winter Day at the Lake. Thanks again to Donna and Bruce for opening their home and yard for a Sunday afternoon of potluck soup, hot beverages, board games, walking around and skiing on Bde Maka Ska, and s'mores around a backyard fire pit.

- Matthew Hendricks and Alisa Bardo-Martinson

## **Repair Team Report for FMC Congregational Meeting**

**2023**

Since the annual congregational meeting last April, the FMC Repair Team developed a Land Acknowledgement Statement that is spoken by worship leaders every Sunday. In June we submitted a proposal to the FMC Council using the “New Initiative” process form. We continue to work on varying this statement and keeping it relevant.

In June and July, several of us participated in volunteer workdays with Makoce Ikikcupi (which means Land Recovery in the Dakota language) at their site near Granite Falls, MN, Zani Otunwe (Village of Wellness). John Stoesz, who established the Twin Cities Repair Network for Makoce Ikikcupi, coordinates these volunteer opportunities, monthly virtual reflection hours and social gatherings. A few of our FMC Repair Team members have participated in each of these virtual and in-person gatherings, as well as quarterly zooms with the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition.

We co-sponsored a speaking engagement featuring Sarah Augustine, executive director of the DDD Coalition. Calvary Baptist Church in Minneapolis hosted this successful event in November, with Sarah appearing virtually. Katerina Friesen, Repair Network Coordinator for the Coalition, who came in person joined about a dozen people in FMC’s Social Hall the next evening for a delicious meal and meaningful conversation about our Repair work. .

In January the Repair Team proposed that FMC put a \$2000 line-item in our church budget for the work of Indigenous Restoration/Repair. The council put it in the budget and it was approved by the congregation at the annual budget meeting.

The Repair Team organized two book studies for congregational participation. In the Fall we read Sarah Augustine’s [The Land Is Not Empty](#) and this winter DDD Coalition’s [Stories of Repair](#). Members of our team have lead Mission Moments, Children’s Time and this last week promoted prayer action for the Apache Stronghold’s court case to save Oak Flat.

- submitted by Kristi Zabriskie

## COVID Team Report - 2023

The Faith Mennonite Covid Team met several times in 2022 to refine our overall practices. We also participated in two Healing Circles to discuss our Covid practices, which were helpful in guiding our response. In addition to relaxing our guidelines for this stage of the pandemic, we briefly attempted to have one Sunday be “extra caution Sunday”, where we did all mask, in an attempt to be more inclusive of varying preferences throughout the month. We didn’t see a difference in attendance (or who attended) for these dates, so we have now concluded this practice. We are no longer meeting as a team, but Minke Sundseth is tracking our community metrics, and should there be a significant change in Covid status that could affect our community, a meeting will be called. We continue to be a “mask-friendly” congregation.

- Submitted by Minke Sundseth