Faith Mennonite Church

Annual Meeting, April 28, 2024

Opening Prayer (Andy Martinson, Moderator)

Moderator's Report (Andy Martinson)

Commission Reports

These have been submitted and printed. Please read them at the start of the meeting and there will be time to ask questions of commissioners who are present.

- Missions and Service
 - o Repair Team
 - Mennonite Action work
- Deacons
- Trustees
- Christian Education
- Fellowship
- Worship

Pastor's Report (Caleb)

Approval of the Current Slate of Commissioners (Andy Martinson)

The current slate is incomplete; the gifts discernment committee will continue to work on this throughout the year until roles are filled.

Congregational vote is needed here

Prayer of Blessing (Caleb)

Moderators Comments and Closing Remarks and Prayer (Matthew Hendricks, Moderator)

Annual Reports from FMC Commissions

Missions and Service

FMC Repair Community

When Sarah Augustine, Executive Director of the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery (DDoD), visited Minnesota in April members of FMC Repair Team provided airport transportation and hospitality for S.A. from airport, six from FMC participated in a gathering with her at Calvary Baptist Church.

Volunteering at First Nations Kitchen: five from the repair team helped sort produce and prepare bags of food for distribution at All Saint Episcopal Mission, close by in Minneapolis.

Training and Volunteer Day at Hohwozu Otunwe—five from FMC repair team drove down to Mountain Lake and spent the day at the new village of Makoce Ikikcupi. We learned about edible and medicinal plants, as well as food sovereignty and "starchitecture" in workshops. We helped with tasks like scrapping bark, cutting & praying thistles.

The FMC Repair Team encouraged Kristi to pursue an opportunity presented by the DDoD Coalition. She applied for a grant from Central Plains Mennonite Conference for the CPT training and the Team committed to raising funds to cover her travel expenses. She went to the training in Tucson in September. We organized a fundraising dinner at the end of October that was well attended and successful in raising awareness, money and prayers. Kristi went served on accompaniment delegations with Apache Stronghold at Oak Flat Nov. 1-15 and Feb. 24- Mar. 14, five weeks total, and shared with the congregation through a Mission Moment, photos in the narthex, Children's time, prayer requests, Adult Education slide presentation and plans to offer the sermon and another Adult Ed Q&A on May 5.

Resource table and display poster in the Narthex—February Indian Recovery Act—advocating for Legislation in Minnesota for a tax on property sales. We sponsored an adult education session on this subject with a presentation by members of the Twin Cities Repair Community for Makoce Ikikcupi. Rise and Repair event at the capitol. Two members of our group participated in the MNIPL sponsored event in advocating for climate justice and Indigenous justice. Connecting Repair with Creation Care, Donna's Grammy Ride—Donna Minter is planning a fundraising ride to benefit 5 different groups advocating for climate justice and the environment. The FMC repair team agreed to assist her in her fundraising effort.

Also related to Oak Flat, Kristi made a presentation to the FMC Council about signing on to an Amicus Brief for the Apache Stronghold's legal case against Resolution Copper and the U.S. government.

In addition to these events and projects part of our regular gatherings includes sharing resources about Indigenous Justice in the news and local events (e.g. American Indian

Boarding School Healing Coalition, Roof Depot, articles about ICWA, Red Lake MDS delegation). Some of us participate in TC Repair Community for Makoce Ikikcupi monthly reflection and learning hour and the DDoD Quarterly Repair Network zooms. We also have had ongoing discussions and discernment about dispersing restitution funds for Indigenous justice.

For the 2023 calendar year we designated the budgeted line item of Indigenous Restitution/Repair as \$1000 to Makoce Ikikcupi and \$1000 the the Coalition for Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery, We decided to designate the money the same way for the 2024 calendar year.

Mennonite Action

Some members of FMC have long-standing connections to Palestine/Israel advocacy, and Mennonite Central Committee has been working in the region since 1949. After the October 7 Hamas attack in Israel and Israel's subsequent attacks in Gaza, a group of FMCers met to discuss how we could respond. A nation-wide group was forming, Mennonite Action (MA), advocating for a resolution in Congress calling for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and an end to the occupation. A series of on-line mass meetings was held. FMC donated \$300 to Mennonite Action through Missions and Service Commission. We designated Andi Kuenning and Phil Stoltzfus as Mennonite Action MN point people for the congregation.

An ad hoc group of FMCers and other Twin Cities Mennonites planned events at the offices of our U.S. Senators on the December 19 MA national day of action. We were not allowed to enter the building at Senator Klobuchar's Minneapolis office so we held a vigil of 25 people out in front with signs, speaking, and singing. Afterwards, we were able to get an appointment with Senator Smith's staff and a group of ten people went to her St. Paul office. We delivered a petition from FMCers, presented our ceasefire talking points, sang a hymn, and gave staff a plate of Christmas cookies. FMCers also participated in various actions held around this time planned by the newly formed Twin Cities Ceasefire Choir.

On January 16, Phil Stoltzfus and Candace Lautt participated in the DC Mennonite Day of Action for a Ceasefire. They were among the 135 Mennonites arrested while singing hymns in the rotunda of the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill. At the same time a group of over 200 were holding a permitted vigil outside. On March 18, FMCers also helped plan and participated in another vigil outside of Senator Klobuchar's office. It was organized by Christians for a Free Palestine, an ecumenical offshoot of Mennonite Action.

On March 23, FMC hosted the lunch stop for the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage, a global network of 40+ Christian groups who engaged during Lent in prayerful solidarity with the people of Gaza by walking 22 miles (the length of the Gaza Strip). The Twin Cities group held a march from Brooklyn Park to B'dote (Fort Snelling). Being conveniently located at the midpoint of the route, FMC welcomed some 200 people for lunch with Ceasefire Choir providing some songs in the background. Other churches provided the meal; we did the setup, serving, desserts, and

cleanup. Dan Leisen created two large Mennonite Action themed signs for use during the pilgrimage and in subsequent actions.

To coincide with a national MA call for "Send Aid, Not Bombs" local events to be held during Holy Week, Mennonite Action MN co-sponsored a Good Friday Public Grief Ritual at the State Capitol. It was a very meaningful event involving grief songs, readings, and ritual actions. 120 people attended, 15 from our Mennonite Action MN network. FMC planned a collection of materials for MCC relief kits and other "most needed" items, hoping to bring one relief kit to each senator's office to use as an example of aid that is needed. Due to difficulties in scheduling the visits, this has not yet happened. On May 11, FMC will be hosting the monthly Ceasefire Choir meeting at our church.

MCC kits:

In coordination with the FMC sewing group we participated in the MCC School Kit Challenge in August/September. The children proposed a goal of 100 school kits; we collected 124. We also sponsored a hygiene kit drive in December, collecting 63 hygiene kits, as well as 24 school kits. We began an MCC relief kit drive in March, which is ongoing. In this drive we are also collecting some items that are urgently needed by MCC to complete kits in the warehouse that are missing items. We sent about 50 comforters to MCC..

In December we sponsored a hat and mitten drive for Community Emergency Services and collected 9 coats/jackets, 36 pairs of mittens & Emp; gloves, and 27 hats. Twelve hats and a scarf were also donated to Soup for You

Food drive:

In March and April we sponsored a food drive for Community Emergency Services, with the theme of culturally specific items and "most needed" items. We donated 219 pounds of food and \$100.

Financial Giving:

We gave to the following organizations:
Community Emergency Services \$600
Soup For You \$600
Community Peacemaker Teams \$700
Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice \$500
Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza \$300
Central States Chapter, MCC \$300
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light \$500
Conversations With Friends \$500
Urban Homeworks \$500
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center. \$500
Total \$5000

We arranged for Mission Moments:

October 8: Kristi—Oak Flat (before she went)

Jan 28: Phil Stolzfus: Mennonite Action Network and Washington DC action

February 11: Kristi Zabriski: Oak Flat

April 21: Conversations with Friends, Steve Kramer and Andi K

(For May and/or June: Bruce has been looking into Indian Women's Resource Center

and Urban Homeworks.)

Service Projects:

We have been asked to plan service projects to do in conjunction with potlucks. We did a laundry pod project for Community Emergency Services in the fall. Packing school kits and hygiene kits were also used as service projects. A service project of making cards for Conversations with Friends was planned for in the fall, but needed to be postponed until the April potluck. We will be trying to relate the service projects to organizations that we are also supporting financially, if possible. We made a few changes to the website on the Services and Justice section, as well as in the Missions and Services section of the FMC handbook. As Roberta is no longer on the Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza board, we no longer have an FMC liaison to the group.

Respectfully submitted, Andi Kuenning

Deacons

Some significant activities deacons have participated in this past year include:

- Covering some duties over the summer typically done by a pastor while we waited for Caleb to arrive.
- Organizing small group dinners for FMC members and attendees to get to know Caleb and for Caleb and family to get to know our congregation better.
- Continuing the work Phil Stolzfus began last year to update our membership lists.
- Setting up an updated church directory.
- · Discussing best practices for deacon/pastoral care, including community resources, good listening practices, and confidentiality.
- · Making some minor changes to our roles and responsibilities on Sunday mornings and how we share them with our pastor.

A big focus for deacons this year has been hospitality, a significant area of concern raised at several FMC Saturday morning retreats over the last year. To address this, we met with the Fellowship Commission, church leadership, and with ushers to discuss this more broadly. We asked ourselves, "how can we best work together to ensure that we are hospitable in all areas, from welcoming churchgoers at the front door, to nurturing connections among attendees, to following up with newcomers?" Our discussion centered on the needs of our congregation and the ways attenders find connection and support.

Our recent deacon meeting discussions have considered how deacons might be more active in areas of hospitality, doing more related to greeting new attenders, and connecting new members to activities such as our current ongoing small groups.

Deacons are currently starting several new small groups, including 2 supper groups and a book group. Less formally organized drop-in summer potlucks in a park will take place again this summer. We have begun putting together a "directory of small groups" along with contact people for those groups, so that attendees can find all these ways of connecting with others in one place. All regular attendees are also assigned to a Deacon Care Group, which allows that deacon to look out for and reach out to those in their care group in particular and serve as a point of contact for them.

More recently, deacons looked at a proposal sent to us by church council chair, Andy Martinson, that suggested a restructuring of some of the past areas of responsibility carried out by various church committees, and how those areas of responsibility might be overseen by the different individuals on the deacon commission. This is a work in progress.

In April, we began discussion around how deacons could take on an active role in Children and Family Support, which also arose as a major concern at the fall meetings. While this would be a new area for our commission, it fits with the overall purpose of the commission in "care and nurture of the congregation". This would cover areas *other* than Christian Education when it comes to children and families.

As we near the beginning of new service terms for deacons, the four current deacons, Minke Sundseth, Dan Leisen, Roberta Malles, and Donna Stucky have committed to staying on for the coming year. We welcome Pat Eliason as a fifth deacon. Minke is willing to continue as chair for another year. The deacons will be reviewing current responsibilities and how we can reassign and differentiate roles, especially if the commission takes on new responsibilities. A sixth deacon would be ideal to help us cover the area of Children and Family Support.

In realigning responsibilities the deacons will be seeking candidates who are willing to focus on one particular area, rather than being in charge of all deacon responsibilities: for example, one deacon leading the attention to hospitality, or to focus on children and families, or to pastoral care, or to a different unique aspect. We hope that by differentiating deacon roles, more congregants will be available to be part of our commission.

Deacons are available to everyone in our community of faith to share in joys and listen to concerns. Our contact information is available in the bulletins and Midweek Updates.

Respectfully submitted by Minke Sundseth, Deacon Chair, with assistance from Dan Leisen and Donna Stucky, deacons

Trustees

The Trustees have bounced all over the building this past year.

- The church offices have been refreshed with new carpet and fresh paint.
- The old gas stove has been replaced with two new induction stoves
- The light fixtures in the sanctuary were cleaned and fitted with LED bulbs
- The light fixtures in the Kitchen and Fellowship Hall have been replaced with LED's
- One of our five furnaces on the Sanctuary side was replaced
- One of the three heating water distribution pumps in the Education Building was replaced
- Sidewalk work is beginning as we attempt to stabilize some sinking concrete and remove trip hazards

In addition to these physical aspects of our work we also attempt to maintain good relationships with our tenants and neighbors. In the coming year we are just starting to assess some stained glass window priority maintenance items. (We are grateful to Bob Mack and his contacts with expert artisans.) Keeping up this old building is often painful but that is far outweighed by the worship and fellowship it makes possible.

Trustees: Amy Bradshaw Kaiser, Glenn Geissinger, Darrell Martin

Christian Education

Although I was the sole designated person on the Christian Education Commission, many others including Joan Kreider, Andi Kuenning, Pastor Caleb Yoder, Candace Lautt, Phil Stoltzfus, Kristi Zabriskie, and Virgil Wiebe provided meaningful leadership for youth and adult CE classes on Sunday after worship. The size of this class has ranged over time from 3 people to over 20 people, depending on the topic.

- 1. From fall 2023 through spring 2024, Joan Kreider has taught the youth class (1st grade to junior high age) using several Anabaptist resources that were well-received by the youth. In Winter-Spring 2024, Karin Larsen Krisetya accepted the invitation to be Joan's assistant for the youth class. Kristi Zabriskie also offered to help with this youth class.
- 2. Andi Kuenning taught a preschool class for the younger children from fall 2023 through spring 2024.
- 3. The foundation of the Adult CE class has been Scripture study based on the Scripture from the worship service with the use of a talking circle process.
- 4. Occasionally others presented and led discussions of meaningful topics such as: Apache Stronghold, Mennonite Action for Ceasefire in Gaza, Anabaptist essentials beliefs and practices.
- 5. Virgil Wiebe recently began a four-part CE class for teenagers focused on issues related to choosing to be conscientious objectors (CO). Youth from other Mennonite

- congregations have been invited to join these classes. The Adult class are also interested in having Virgil teach this CO class to them in the future.
- 6. To enhance and deepen our faith community's knowledge and application of Scripture in our lives, the Scripture verses for the upcoming Sunday from the Narrative Lectionary are listed in the Sunday worship announcements and the Midweek Update. We encourage all to engage in Bible study focused on these and other Scriptures throughout the week.
- 7. If any FMCers are interested in sharpening their mental acuity and memory skills by working on Bible memory of favorite Scripture passages, please contact donnaminter@comcast.net.

Fellowship Commission

The work of fellowship commission this past year included the following:

- Scheduled monthly potlucks or special fellowship events, and recruited volunteers to organize those events
- Scheduled and organized a few events with extended time gathering outside the usual post-worship fellowship time:
 - Second summer Day at the Lake held 9/23/2023; we chose to hold this year's gathering in September (the first was August 2022) in order to include Pastor Caleb and his family. This year's gathering also took the place of having a fall congregational retreat.
 - Second annual Talent Show and Pie Social 11/19/23. We started this tradition in Nov 2022 as a way to bring back the tradition of the Saturday night talent show during overnight congregational retreats (pre-pandemic); we combined the talent show with the longstanding tradition of holding a pie social in place of a potluck on the Sunday before Thanksgiving
 - Second winter Day at the Lake held 2/25/24.
 - We appreciate Donna Minter and Bruce Brunner opening up their home and backyard for the Day at the Lake events the past two years.
- Brought back pre-pandemic practice of having beverages and snacks during fellowship time after worship; we've been recruiting and maintaining schedule of volunteers to set up and clean up, and provide optional snacks.
- In 5/2023 we provided a meal for a group of Goshen College students and advisors traveling to Red Lake for a volunteer experience; we are scheduled to host a similar group next week (5/1/24)
- We are working on a potluck schedule for summer 2024 and for the 2024-25 school year, with plans to consistently hold monthly potlucks on the 3rd Sunday of the month.
- We welcome Kristin Borntrager to fellowship commission starting May 2024; she will replace Alisa Bardo-Martinson who is completing 2nd term. Shelly Hendricks will remain on the commission.

Worship

In the past 12 months, the worship commission successfully coordinated worship over a summer without a pastor. We have supported Caleb's transition into leading our church's worship. We have found ways to share with Caleb our church's worship traditions while empowering him to make changes and decisions that enable him to be the faith leader he is called to be. We ended the practice of having monthly fully online services, while continuing to offer quality hybrid online and in-person worship. This enables people to stay connected and to fully worship with FMC, even if they are homebound, travelling, caring for young kids, or otherwise not able to make it to the church building. We held special services such as an outdoor worship service and evening Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Taizé services. We have been able to hold Children's Time more regularly, and we are thankful for all who have stepped up to make that a standard practice in our church again. We followed the Narrative Lectionary September-May, which has brought some beloved, challenging, and refreshing Biblical stories into our worship service.

Youth and Conference Attendance

Youth

Candace Lautt and Phil Stoltzfus coordinated an opportunity for youth and young adults to attend the July 7, 2023 Youth/Young Adult Climate Summit. Sophia Harder Kouay, Elia Krisetya, and Candace (sponsor) attended the event focused on climate change, spiritual activism, and social justice. This collaboration of Anabaptist Climate Collaboration, MC USA, and Mennonite Creation Care Network took place in Kansas City, MO connected to the biennial convention of Mennonite Church USA. Phil attended the delegate session part of the convention at the same time.

Submitted by Candace Lautt

Moderators Report

Two and half years ago, Donna Minter (at that time she was moderator elect) approached me to be on the pastoral search team, which I then became the chair. Just a few months later, while still in the thick of our search process, I agreed to be Moderator Elect. Last night while reflecting on this, I was having a very hard time believing that my tenure in these two leadership roles was just 2 and a half years. Not because two and half years actually felt like a decade, but more because we have had a lot happen here in the last 4 years. Covid shut us down. We hired a transitional pastor who was here for 3 years. We started a search process that concluded with our congregation voting nearly unanimously to welcome Caleb and his family to join us.

We are a very fortunate congregation to be where we are today. We had a handful of new members join us today. We have seen even more people joining us on a weekly basis as regular worshipers and our finances are more stable than they have been in the past—not to imply we were ever in a tough place financially.

One thing that has been a priority for Caleb, Matthew and me this past year was rethinking our commissions and the overall structure. thom shared a lot about the lifecycles of congregations with us during his time working with us. One thing that stuck with me was during the efforts to move from an aging congregation to a more youthful congregation was letting go of management. When he said this 2-3 years ago, I didn't understand what that looks like. But now I see our work with commissions and church leadership structure as an example of us letting go of management.

What does this look like? First, our handbook or by-laws were suspended more than a year ago to allow us permission to work outside of the rules a bit. Second, as we have made changes, it also allows us to not feel forced to immediately update our handbook based on the changes we are trying to make. Our handbook will need to be updated soon, but again, let's let go of that need to write it all down and vote on the new structures asap. Let's try some new things out and see where they go.

So what changes have been made and what things are we trying out? Last fall, we had a series of Saturday morning meetings open to everyone here in the congregation. Our discourse in small groups was focused on what we value here at FMC and then building into what aspects of congregational life need some attention. The big themes or needs that emerged fell under two areas: hospitality and children and their families.

In some ways we do hospitality well. We are great at getting meals to people when in need; we put on great pot-lucks. But how well do we welcome new members and visitors? Our programming and support for children and families has never been well-attended to. Not because people aren't trying or because people here don't want to, but rather because none of the roles that support children and families are within our current commission structures. Mentors, parenting partners, youth leaders and nursery leaders are all listed as roles to support children and youth, but in our current handbook, they fall under no commissions. So who do these people asked to mentor a child or be a parenting partner look to if they have questions, concerns or ideas? The pastor? The moderator? The people on gifts discernment who recruited them?

Throughout our conversations about hospitality and families and children, the need to place these roles under commissions became more and more apparent. Will this magically solve all our problems? Of course not. But having a commissioner, or group of people on a commission keeping an eye on these things is a start. The slate of officers are all listed on pages 1 and 2. These are the folks who will serve on the church council and lead our church. Pages 3-4 list the other roles within our church, many of which are not listed under any commission. This winter and spring putting all the thoughts and ideas brought out in our conversations, with Deacons in particular, we have made an effort to house all of these roles under commissions.

This may make some of us who are already working hard, volunteering on a commission, a bit uneasy as we ask you all to do a little more. Deacons have agreed to take responsibility for a lot of our roles supporting children and families. But remember, we have let go of our handbook and we are continuing to let go of some management. Let's try the shoes on and walk in them for a while before we make too many permanent expectations. We have also added a deacon to their roster which will hopefully help them define how they do the work supporting families within our community—a new ask of the deacon commission.

But this doesn't mean Deacons will BE the parenting partners. It doesn't mean the deacons will BE the mentors. But rather, deacons are there to keep an eye on whether or not we are

supporting families within our church or if we are letting that need slip through the cracks. That is the thing we have been lacking–someone to keep an eye on some of these roles and be a voice advocating for families and children.

One other shift we have made to the gifts discernment process is to shift the work of finding replacements and new members to those on the commissions. This will help on a few levels. First, those who are coming to new recruits can actually speak to the work being done. They are the current members; they know the commission. The other part is it takes some of the painful work off the plate of those on the gifts discernment team. They will continue to survey the congregation and fill in the gaps but if worship, deacons, and others can all find new members it may prove much more efficient for all.

A lot of our conversation this year focused on these two areas and ultimately much of it is about the work of our deacons. I want to thank all of them for meeting with us, bringing their thoughts and concerns and ultimately agreeing to try this structure out for a while.

Another structural area in need that only started emerging this last year, was our peace and justice ministries. This year, when new ideas came forward, we observed people gravitating toward either taking their ideas to the Repair team or directly to council. In conversation with Caleb and Matthew, we started asking why they don't first approach the commissioner on Missions and Service? Is there something about that commission that doesn't signal that? Or something else?

I think this is the next structural conversation leadership and council should engage in. I have never been on Missions and service so I will keep my personal opinions to myself, but I have heard at least two people who have been on this commission muse something along the lines of: should we rename this commission? Or maybe we should dismantle missions and start over? These casual comments make me think some reflection and restructuring may be good for this commission as well. To what extent? I don't know—that is a conversation for them to consider.

But as we move forward to take a vote on our current slate of officers, I want to express my gratitude to all of you who helped me, worked alongside me, and met with me over the last two and a half years. I've been candid lately, joking about how many weeks, days or hours I have left as moderator here. Now it's just minutes! But truly, being on the search team and then serving as a moderator has been a rich spiritual experience for me, engaging with people here at FMC in a way I haven't before. Some people I have known for years while others became new friends. We have been through a lot as a church since March of 2020 when Covid hit and Ry announced his departure. But today we have stabilized with Caleb and his family here with us.

When I joined the search team, I couldn't have imagined our search process would land us in such a great place. We are truly blessed. While we all were a part of this process, thank you all for praying for our church throughout this process; and practically speaking, thank you for trusting me and allowing me to lead our church.

Pastor's Report

I still feel like a newbie, after beginning at the beginning of September last fall. The time has gone quickly, and my family greatly appreciates the welcome we have received.

This time has largely been spent getting to know this congregational community and culture, and becoming acquainted with the worship practices at FMC. The gatherings organized by the deacons, fellowship events, leadership retreats, the men's retreat, and Christian Ed conversations have all been wonderful opportunities to deepen relationships with you all.

I have connected with a number of committees or commissions, particularly the deacons, worship commission, the repair team, and regular leadership meetings with Andy and Matthew. I led a Christian Ed series about Anabaptist emphases and look forward to leading future Christian Ed series.

In addition to regular preaching and involvement in worship, I also had the meaningful opportunity to share pieces of my own life and faith story in four segments. At Faith Mennonite, I have a space where I can be myself and talk about the ways I have wrestled with faith and life. We have heard faith and life stories of several members and I look forward to hearing additional stories.

I view the people and ministry of FMC very highly. A small group of people really do a lot of coordinated work! It's exciting to see new energy and people returning. There are people dedicated to ministries of worship, children's education, prayer, supportive relationships with each other, and involvement in justice issues such as repair work and calls for a cease-fire in Gaza. I look forward to fostering good communication to support FMC leadership and our social justice efforts.

One priority Andy, Matthew, and I have discussed in the past months is the need to extend hospitality to newcomers, offer support to young families, and foster relationships. I am excited about the work the deacons are doing to facilitate this, especially with an additional member.

Finally, I am deeply grateful for the concern and support the congregation has shown with the uncertainty of my mother's illness, and your understanding as we have made a few trips to see my parents. Thank you for entrusting the task of pastoral leadership with me. May we experience the blessing of God's Spirit as we work together.

~Caleb Yoder