



FIRST
MENNONITE
CHURCH,
NEWTON

Our Mission is to glorify God:

- ✦ Through expressing our love to God in worship.
- ✦ Through experiencing love in Christian community.
- ✦ Through extending God's love to the world.

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FMC CONNECTIONS

Volume 26, Issue 5

May 2016

ODDS AND ENDS

- Last month, I wrote about the discernment process of our congregation's vision and mission. We thought that we would begin that process more actively at the April congregational meeting. However, we've decided to wait until after the busy-ness of the spring and the many activities of the summer subside. We'll hopefully hit the ground running in late August in order to be ready for action at our Fall Congregational Meeting. In the meantime, continue to pray for our congregation, for ears to hear and hearts to understand.
- Two months ago, I wrote in anticipation of the Learning Tour to Israel/Palestine that I was scheduled to participate in. Now, after returning, I want to thank you again for granting me the time

to go on that tour. It was a formative experience for me in thinking about the situation in that part of the world. It was also both very good and very difficult. I shared a little bit about the Learning Tour in worship on April 24, but I would like to share further with other groups both smaller and larger if I'm asked. Let me know if you're interested!

- During the month of May during our Sunday morning worship, we will be exploring various aspects of prayer. How do you pray? What is the content of your praying? How do you listen for God as you pray? Why do you pray? The impetus for this theme emerged from the January all-commissions/committees retreat when both the Worship Commission and the Caregiving and



Pastor Anita Kehr

Membership Commission sensed a call to prayer—the Holy Spirit at work! May we all enter into this season of learning about and growing in this vital practice of the Christian life.

- The Nuñez Partnership Home Project is widening to include a number of other congregations, which is a good thing. However, now is the time to look at your own calendars and plan for when you can go to Wakefield, Nebraska! You will be helping to

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DONOVAN AND NAOMI UNRUH

Dear friends at First Mennonite Church,

Following is a rather long report which we would like to share with you, since we know of your interest, and prayers from First Mennonite. Our trip was successful and today is a week and one day we are back. Today is the first day I have really felt back to normal since our arrival here last week Friday night about 20:55 in the evening. It was a cold wintry blast of dry air that met us as we walked out of the airport, something that we had not encountered the prior 30 days in the Congo. In fact while we were there daily temperatures hovered around the nineties to 95 daily and in Kikwit even more heat and humidity. It was something that even the Congolese were complaining about, and as a rule they do not comment on the weather. They were asking us about climate changes, because they notice things are not as they used to be, and 30 years later, we even noted that when at Mukedi for example there would often be an evening breeze from the North East, that no longer was happening, just still and hot. We did not spend comfortable nights in the guest house at Mukedi, and to Naomi and I that was a surprise.

We hardly had time to put our feet down in Kinshasa, we arrived there rather late in the evening, about 18:45, on the 11th, and a couple of hours to check out the baggage and paperwork. We had a good hour and half drive back into town. We were happy for that bed at the MPH guesthouse, as neither of us slept very well on our flight from Chicago to Bruxelles, and then just a couple of hours later on to Kinshasa. Fortunately on that length of the trip we were in an Airbus 360 I believe, and pleasant to us was the fact that they do give more room for your legs, and even to recline a bit in your seat. That was a lovely flight and the Air Bruxelles line is doing their best at

customer service. We would recommend that airline, much improved from the SABENA (acronym for Such A Bad Experience Never Again).

We had Saturday to recover a bit, and then Sunday morning we were on the road to Kikwit. We had a good trip, no breakdowns, no flats, just straight away good trip. Arrived there around 17:00 hrs, just a bit of evening light that greeted us, and friends and believers who were there to meet our car full from the Mother Parish of PEMBA. We were welcomed to the Guest House of Maccuire, an important layman in the CMCO community, who hosted us that night free of charge. Food was brought in from the outside, and we were well fed the ever ubiquitous ball of Manioc mush and delicious greens and a small bit of beef. The greens, Naomi and I feasted on, always a favorite of ours, and we really didn't miss the meat that much, but the ball of Musa (as it is called in Giphende) was so welcomed, we love that stuff, and the wonderful hot Pili Pili. A good reminder that we were back in the Congo, among people whom we loved and the love was returned to us as well, but a well laden table of native foods. All of our team that was traveling with Charlie was present in the same guesthouse, so that we could all leave on Monday Morning. We got away around 9:00 AM, and arrived at Mukedi around 12:00. A four hour trip that was unthinkable even 3 years ago, with extended pavement out of Kikwit, and beyond. There is an Arabic construction company that is doing the road work from Kikwit to Tshikapa. But of course, now we see mosques where they never were present 30 years ago. That presents a new challenge for the church. Obviously!

Arriving at Mukedi at noon, and with our arrival also a rain storm, from the right direction from the North

East, and a major downpour for the next 2 1/2 hours. At 3:00 PM we heard the bell and drum, Mukedi was ready to start the Seminar. It was a time of celebration, a full fledged worship service with preaching, they asked me to preach, which I did, I was prepared, and choirs and lots of singing. They were going to start this off right. People had come from as far as a 100 kilometer, by whatever means a lot of it was on foot. They were excited about this event, it had been a long time that something of this magnitude had been prepared specifically for pastors and leaders. The next morning the seminar began in earnest. Charlie Buller had prepared well, and the theme was to create a coaching network, to mentor one another, with accountability. Sheldon Sawatzky, whom you will remember from First Mennonite suggested that I speak on Servanthood from a Biblical perspective instead of some of the current writers on that subject. Was so glad that I accepted that advise. It was about the most important decision I could have ever made. And shared from personal and biblical examples. During the seminar people who had come from a long distance slept on the concrete floor of the Church. Their attitude and attention through the 4 days was remarkable.

From Mukedi we went to Kikwit, we arrived there on a Friday evening, and people from the community kept various of us in their homes. Charles, Naomi and myself were housed with Maman Kafutshi Khakhesa. While a prime location on the plateau, it certainly lacked air circulation with a wall around the parcel, and we spent many a hot and miserable night there with near a breath of air coming in our rooms. Even the cold buckets of water barely cooled us off for night, and we often went outside to enjoy the full moon that was in the making sometimes as late as 10:30 in hopes that a bit of cooler air would make it into

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DONOVAN AND NAOMI UNRUH CONTINUED

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our rooms. Never remember Kikwit so hot, and only one day did we have rain which broke the spell for a few hours. The seminar in Kikwit, while off to a different start, this was an urban community, and a different mindset from Mukedi, by the end even the most skeptical was with us. I was asked to preach on Palm Sunday morning, on the passage from Luke. No warning on that, but fortunately through the many choirs that sang was able to collect my thoughts and gave a thought provoking message. At the end of the seminar, we spent a couple of extra days as did our driver, Kiswangi Leonard, also one of the members of our team, who had family in Kikwit, as did his wife. Naomi and I went to a small chapel in Kikwit II, called Misengi, a chapel in which members of my family had input in helping to build with some finances. It was a wonderful day spent with a lot of music, and then at the end of the service in which I had preached, they asked me to celebrate Holy Communion with them. What an awesome and Holy Moment that was. There was a special presence of the Holy Spirit at work in that service, I was personally moved to tears. There are now about 160 members in that small community, way out of nowhere. We got close by car, but then still walked a kilometer to Church, and afterward following the service, Communion and the meal, we walked 4 kilometers back in the tropical sun, to Pemba where we were picked up.

Monday we made our way back to Kinshasa. We had a flat tire about 30 mins from Khenge, one of the important stops on the Kinshasa Kikwit road. That flat sat us back about 2 hours, but believe it or not we did make it all the way back to Kinshasa on the spare. We called Cindy Dunn of the Methodist-Presbyterian Hostel, that we probably wouldn't make supper. She absolutely would not hear of

that and said that food would be waiting for us when we came. We were so delighted that Cindy Dunn had made prior arrangements to keep us there until our return to the U.S., it made a nice place to meet friends who wanted to visit. Also had one other lovely experience on the following Sunday to speak at a small chapel in Yolo, belonging under the leadership of Robert Irundu, who is the president of youth of CMCO. What a deeply blessed experience there with a vibrant worship, and response to the teaching of this morning, simply the whole congregation kneeled on the dirt floor to pray together with us, as we were called to bless them. A deeply humbling experience, but also shows the engagement and the seriousness with which people engage with their faith. Their Chapel or Parish is called the New Covenant, or "Nouvelle Alliance" in French. Also while waiting in Kinshasa we had a marvelous experience of receiving a group of five people from Kabeya Kamuanga in the Kasai. This was a parish that Pastor Kabangu Thom was responsible for so many years. A passionate and very engaged Pastor during the missionary era of the Church. I personally knew him and responded to his request to come. I had gone there for a seven day teaching ministry at their request on the Holy Spirit in 1982. That grew out of the renewal movement that swept a lot of the Congo at that time. There were two men and their wives earlier had sent me a long report via Charlie Buller about their extensive missionary work in the Kabeya Kamuanga area growing out of that renewal revival. They testified that they had prayed to God that they would be granted to see Mr. Don yet one more time, and when they heard we were in town they considered that an answer to prayer. We shared deeply, and prayerfully and what a surprise blessing from something so many years ago that

has born fruit over and over. Sometimes we often don't know or realize how our lives have impacted others. Naomi and I were deeply moved, and as soon as they left I called another Pastor, Khelembo from Kikwit, who many years ago was a member of the team that Mark Weaver flew into Kabeya Kamuanga for that week of meetings. Together we simply praised God.

While we were at Mukedi, there was a terrorist attack in Bruxelles, and while we would have made arrangements to return earlier, we were stymied in those plans, and rewrote our ticket to Bruxelles, the first flight out of Kinshasa to Bruxelles and then routed to Washington D.C., and 8 hours and 50 mins flight that seemed to go on forever!!!! 36 hours we arrived at home. And until today, feeling the experiences of jet lag, but with lots and lots of fond memories of our time in Congo. Naomi and I have felt that this was the last time, but the people all reminded us that never to say never? We will see what the future brings in a couple of years when Charlie make a return trip.

If you haven't been following us, there is a facebook link on the Congo Leadership project, under Charles Buller. Click on the youtube in which he gives insights and highlights of the meetings from Mukedi and Kikwit. I think you will all enjoy it.

Just sharing this because I know that you have remembered us during our travels. It is that kind of faithful prayer that sustained us sometimes through trying circumstances of the heat, long hours, and a different but welcomed diet given out of gracious hospitality.

Sincerely to the Members of First Menonite.

Donovan and Naomi Unruh

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Remember to pray for each other!

If you see these people, wish them a Happy Birthday!	Jerry Hiebert—5/6 Olivia Miller—5/6 Amanda Entz—5/7 Jenson Kingsley—5/8 Wenda Black—5/9 Ilene Hackney—5/10 Jerald Jantz—5/10 Elizabeth Frey—5/11 Chloe Denno—5/12 Jim Huxman—5/13 Vernon Frey—5/14	Anna Marie Harder—5/14 Emma Krehbiel—5/15 Jared Ratzlaff—5/16 John Wiebe—5/16 Tanner Pauls—5/18 Deb Ratzlaff—5/19 Sheralynn Neff—5/20 Greg Bontrager—5/21 Alice Huxman—5/21 Bob Schmidt—5/21 Gracen Hiebert—5/22	Morgan Murphy—5/22 Mitchell Murphy—5/22 Taylor Stahly—5/23 Dave Wiebe—5/23 Ruth Abrahams—5/24 Velma Frey—5/25 Jim Gillmore—5/25 Karen Regier—5/25 Andrew Walker—5/25 Heath Kerr—5/26 Eric Murphy—5/26	Mary Gillmore—5/27 Bryan Kehr—5/27 Schlyer Entz—5/28 Wynette Voth—5/28 Melody Enns—5/29 Chris Weaver—5/29
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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Gary & Carla Hstand—5/4 Ben & Andrea Enns Regier—5/12 Ron & Karen Bachman—5/15 Galeard & Ilene Hackney—5/15 Dan & Cindy Epp—5/18 Tim & Anne Wiens—5/23	John & Janett Wiebe—5/24 Ivan & Linda Goering—5/25 Gus & Penny Dorado—5/27 Don & Marlene Schmidt—5/27 Paul & Wendy Funk Schrag—5/28
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Caregiving Corner

"Shower the people you love with love, show them the way that you feel..." You can almost hear James Taylor sing this if you listened to him in the 1970's. He may not be a theologian or a social worker but his advice is a good reminder for us to show our respect and love to those around us. We are good at taking things and those who are closest to us for granted and expecting them to make our lives easy and comfortable.

We all are the product of our genetics and the nurturing that we have been given. It is humbling to realize that who and what we are results from the investment of many persons' time, talent and energy in us. God has gifted each of us. Parents, teachers, coaches, and many other adults and peers have invested in us with time and energy. When we realize that we are not self-made persons, we become wiser and more aware of the ways that we have been influenced by the people who surround us. The phrase, "it takes a village to raise a child," teaches us that we were once that child and that we also are the village for another child.

This month, let's take an inventory of the many good influences who

have made us who we are today. Make an effort to thank the people who you know have helped to make you who you are today. Is it your mom or dad? Maybe a swim coach? Maybe a Sunday School teacher or youth leader? A pastor or mentor? Maybe even a church member who wrote a note during a tough time? As the seasons change, make someone's heart sing with a "shower" of a note or word of thanks for their time and investment in you. I promise it will not be wasted and you will feel good because you have made gratefulness part of your day and showered someone with love and appreciation.

MAY 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Casa Betania Church Service 3:30 PM Outreach 7:45 AM	2	3	4 Youth Group 7:00 PM Worship Band-8:00 PM	5 Casa Betania Sanctuary-6:30 PM Nurture-7:00 PM	6	7
8 Mothers Day Casa Betania Church Service 3:30 PM	9 Church Board reports due	10	11	12 Casa Betania Sanctuary-6:30 PM Church Board- 7:00 PM	13 FH and Kitchen reserved-5:00- 9:00 PM	14
			HOMELESS		SHELTER	
15 Casa Betania Church Service 3:30 PM	16 Property-7:00 PM Room 224	17 Women's Fellowship @ MCC 9:30 PM	18 Worship Band-7:00 PM	19 Casa Betania Sanctuary-6:30 PM	20	21
WEEK						
22 Casa Betania Church Service 3:30 PM	23	24 Caregiving 7:00 PM	25	26 Casa Betania Sanctuary-6:30 PM	27 Wedding rehearsal- Sanctuary reserved	28 Wedding-Sanctuary reserved 4:00 PM
29 Casa Betania Church Service 3:30 PM	30 Memorial Day- Church Office closed	31				
						

All events must be scheduled in the Church Office and cannot be scheduled more than six months in advance.

CHURCH BOARD REPORT

The board met on April 14, 2016. Kevin Hamm led devotions and opened with prayer.

The board approved that the June meeting date be changed to June 16 and that they would meet at Jim and Judy Schrag's house for a carry-in meal. They gave final approval to the April 24 congregational meeting agenda.

Pastor Joel reported a plan to lead the congregation in a mission and vision process. This is slated to take place in early fall. The plan was approved. The board also approved communication guidelines for the congregation, written by Ron Ratzlaff.

Pastor Anita gave a report on her MC USA learning tour of Israel and Palestine. She plans on sharing more with the congrega-

tion through Sunday School, Sunday morning worship time and perhaps in other ways. Pastor Joel said he has three youth in catechism this year. They meet two times a month. He gave an optimistic report on the Nuñez Partnership Home Project. Four other congregations are partnering with FMC. The youth group is going July 10-16 with two other youth groups accompanying them. Pastor Kay expressed thanks for the Worship Commission's work on the Maundy Thursday service.

The Treasurer's Report indicates that to-date expenses are \$15,359 above income. The Property Committee reported that the south wing roof replacement and east-side drainage project, along with tree removal on the north side, have all been accomplished. The

Nurture Commission reported that the Safe Sanctuaries Committee has worked to recertify everyone who is a teacher. At the request of the commission Cindy Combs will be asked to assist the Nurture Commission this year but not as a voting member.

The Outreach, Missions, and Peace Commission reported that the website is operational. It was difficult to find an MCC Relief Sale representative this year. They are working on guidelines for how to support our short-term mission workers better. The Church and Staff Relations Committee reported on the review process for Pastor Anita which will be completed at the spring congregational meeting.

Jim Schrag, Church Board Chair



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- offer care to a family who has experienced one hardship after another.
- And on a personal note: There are lots of transitions happening in our family in the next little while. Sometime this month, Bryan and I will become grandparents to a new baby boy, this one to be born in Iowa to our

daughter, Maya, and her husband Matthew Yoder. That means that sometime before too long, we'll be spending a little extra time a couple of states north and east of here! Our daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren who have been living here in Newton will be moving to Goshen, Indiana midsummer. And our son, now living in St. Paul, Minnesota, will be getting married in July. I'd

be grateful if you could offer up some prayers for peace and joy in it all.

Thanks to each of you for your desire to serve God faithfully.

Anita Keh

THANK YOU!!

Dear First Mennonite Church,

Thank you so much for supporting the Peace Connections vision for thriving communities sustained by peace and social justice.

We appreciate your generosity and are pleased to partner with you in the work of promoting peace and building community!

Jennifer Rose
For Peace Connections Board and Staff



Dear First Mennonite Church Family,

Thank you so much for your on-going support and partnership in the work that I am doing with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship. Your faithfulness and generosity are incredible gifts to my family and I. They are a fragrant offering to the Lord. Because of your partnership, the lives of students and faculty are being touched and transformed. You are helping to bring the gospel to the people in new and exciting ways. Thank you!! I pray that you find joy and blessing as you give to this kingdom work.

Warmly,

Rod, Andrea and Mattea Pauls

Dear Friends at First Mennonite Church,

Thanks you once again for another wonderful gift to MCC! Your generosity is truly making a difference in places all around the world.

Thank you for supporting MCC's work in places like the DRC where MCC is helping to revitalize 8 Mennonite hospitals, including Kajiji Hospital, where young people are training to become nurses.

We really appreciate all you do for MCC!

Anna Yoder
Donor Relations Coordinator
MCC Central States

FMC Connections

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May 2016

HOPE EWY RECEIVES AWARD



Each year the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (KFAC) sponsors an art contest for Kansas elementary school students. This year's theme was "Pollinators Put Food on the Table." There were over 900 entries from across the state and a

winner chosen from each grade level from K-6. FMC's Hope Ewy was this year's second grade winner for her bookmark design on the theme. There are some other FMC "connections" (pun fully intended) to the contest: both Eli Regier and Ethan Entz are winners from past years. Each have enjoyed a trip with their families to Topeka for the awards ceremony, and a short visit with the Governor at the capital. Thanks to teacher Kathy Murphy, who encouraged Hope to enter and drove all

the way to Topeka to support Hope. For more information on the great work of the KFAC, visit www.ksagclassroom.org.

