



FIRST  
MENNONITE  
CHURCH,  
NEWTON

# FMC CONNECTIONS

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August 2016

## 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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## STARTING UP

It's a hot, quiet Friday afternoon in July, the middle of the summer, the lull in most activity (except, maybe, for building a house!). On this Friday afternoon, I turn my mind toward what comes next. What comes after the temperature drops a little bit? What happens when summer vacations end? What will start up among us?

Well, on August 12, we'll dedicate that house that is being built in Wakefield, Nebraska for the Jimenez Nuñez family. We'll celebrate with that family as they have a new home; we'll pray that it may be a blessing in their lives. We'll reflect in wonder at the many and varied partnerships that enabled this accomplishment. And we'll thank the Task Force for their good and important leadership in helping all of this really happen.

In mid-August, we'll begin the discerning of vision and mission in earnest. Building on some of the questions we've asked of ourselves over the course of this summer and listening in prayer, we'll begin the actual process of "celebrating yesterday, embracing today, and

anticipating tomorrow," as Pastor Joel has framed our work.

In late August, we'll celebrate the faith commitment of three young women as they are baptized. On August 27, at Camp Mennoscah, we'll gather to baptize Kaitlyn Black and Callie Knopp, and on August 28, at East Lake, we'll gather to baptize Emma Krehbiel. Later in the service on August 28, we'll welcome all three into membership at First Mennonite Church and celebrate with them the saving promise of God.

In August, summer programs begin to come to an end, and school year programs begin to gear up. Students and teachers will begin the new academic year, and routines will be re-established. In late September, then, Church Family Night will begin again: a time to reconnect in the middle of the week.

In August, we'll have—as we always have—opportunities to offer hospitality, to each other, to those who are visiting or seeking, to those whose paths cross ours in the dailiness of our living. We offer hospitality when we are gracious, both in like-



Pastor Anita Kehr

ness and in diversity. We offer hospitality when we do as God would have us do: to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We offer hospitality when we see as God sees, that each one really is created in God's own image and is truly beloved.

On this hot, quiet Friday afternoon in July, I give thanks for what will start up next month. But I also give thanks for what has taken place among us in the quieter summer-time. I am grateful for the way that the Holy Spirit is continually moving among us: calling, encouraging, challenging, nudging, and interceding on our behalf when we can't quite find the words for what we need.

With gratitude for each of you—

*Anita Kehr*

## LEE PENNER ALWAYS LENDING A HELPING HAND



This article was printed in the Newton Kansan.

When there is a call for tech help in the

Newton school district, Lee Penner is there to lend a hand. One of several employees at the USD 373 Educational Technology Center, the educational technology support specialist troubleshoots for district staff when they have technological problems.

In addition, Penner stays pretty busy in the summer helping replace computers and hardware that have met the end of their lifecycle and preparing new equipment to be user-ready for the next school year. Currently, he is assisting in the districtwide effort to replace the network infrastructure.

Penner's offer of assistance, however, is not confined solely to school grounds. In addition to aiding district staff when called upon, he routinely helps others in need at the Harvey County Homeless Shelter where he has volunteered since its inception in 2005 and served as a board member for the past eight years. "I think it's a very important service in our community we provide for people who are down on their luck," Penner said.

The current board president, Penner noted that HCHS is a "grass roots" organization that does not receive government funding. Support received comes strictly from the community and volunteer base, whether through donating money or donating time to the numerous shifts at the shelter.

While HCHS has staff on site during the day, overnight (5 p.m. to 8 a.m.) it is operated entirely by volunteers. As a team leader for First Mennonite Church, a role Penner started in and continues to this day, he is responsible for filling those volunteer positions and providing meals one week (four times a year) in each quarter. It is a task he is very committed to, volunteering at least one night himself and then some.

"During my week, as well, I'm there every evening until I'm sure the meal came in and my volunteers showed up," Penner said.

Meals can be brought in from youth groups, Girl Scout troops, etc., and Penner noted once he even received a donation from a group of Emergency Room nurses. Shifts to be filled each night go from 5 to 11 p.m. and 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. To learn more on how to support the shelter, visit [www.hchs-ks.com](http://www.hchs-ks.com).

Growing up in Goshen, Indiana, with parents who routinely provided meals for similar organizations, the ideology of serving others was instilled in Penner from a young age. What really flipped the switch, though, were experiences volunteering with the Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection (DOOR) Network in Denver and Chicago and helping out different organizations like food banks, soup kitchens, etc. in those cities.

"It opened my eyes to the needs of others," Penner said. "Helping the poor is a really Biblical theme and I just really felt like that's something I wanted to continue. I didn't just want to go off once a year for a week and help the poor folks in

some other community when we have people right here who are in need of those services."

That was about the time the HCHS was created, so Penner jumped at that opportunity to get involved. Both he and his wife, Deb, are also advocates for the National Alliance on Mental Illness of which his wife is a board member for the NAMI Mid Kansas affiliate in Harvey County.

Being advocates for NAMI was something that was driven by family ties, Penner said, but some of that also carries over into the work at HCHS. Seeing mentally ill and physically ill individuals at the shelter is not uncommon. For Penner, it adds to his drive to provide residents with the help they need, like one individual (a former resident) he is currently helping to get the necessary medical attention.

"You become connected with people and then you assist people as they need help. That happens. You're still, sometimes, involved in their lives after they're out of the shelter," Penner said.

Connection to the community is what is at the heart of HCHS, not only for the shelter and the residents within, but for the volunteers as well. Penner said he has seen people's eyes be opened through working at the shelter, not only from giving to those individuals in need, but receiving the feeling of joy in seeing someone succeed after getting that help, like a friend Penner had recovering from addiction who went on to become an addiction counselor.

"I think that's the most rewarding thing is seeing people who are grateful for the help and who recover from homelessness and are able to give back themselves," Penner said.

# AUGUST 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 Casa Betania Sanctuary 6:30 PM  Nurture 7:00 PM	5	6
7 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM	8	9	10	11 Casa Betania Sanctuary 6:30 PM  Church Board 7:00 PM	12 House dedication in Nebraska  Sanctuary/FH reserved evening	13 Sanctuary/FH reserved
Homeless Shelter Week—Homeless Shelter Week—						
14 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM	15 Property 7:00 PM Caregiving 7:00 PM	16	17	18 Casa Betania Sanctuary 6:30 PM	19	20 PHP Celebration 7:00-9:00 PM
Homeless Shelter Week						
21 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM	22 Worship Commission 7:00 PM	23	24	25 Casa Betania Sanctuary 6:30 PM	26	27 Baptisms at Camp Mennoscah 6:00 PM
28 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM  Baptism at East lake 8:00 AM	29	30	31			

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Remember to pray for each other!

<b>August</b>	Keith Knopp—8/14	Tonessa Driskill—8/25
Penny Dorado—8/2	Bertha Steinle—8/15	LaWanda Wiens—8/25
Albert Wiens—8/2	Kent Erb—8/16	Pat Denno—8/26
Fern Koehn—8/5	Phil Gaertner—8/16	Dwight Claassen—8/27
Ted Krehbiel—8/5	Anne Groves—8/16	Brent Voran—8/27
Kathleen Neff—8/5	Cindy Erb—8/18	Isaac Entz—8/28
Joey Menninga—8/6	Ryan Weaver—8/18	Alyssa Becker—8/29
Edna Enz—8/6	Rob Thieszen—8/19	Rick Ortman—8/30
Rod Wedel—8/6	Carol Goering—8/20	Edith Harms—8/31
Mike Combs—8/7	Derek Entz—8/22	Henry Nickel—8/31
Hannah Gaertner—8/7	Ethel Wedel—8/22	
Janet Bair—8/11	Kathy Wiens—8/23	
Joanna Epp—8/12	Louise Janzen—8/24	
Rachel Bachman—8/14	Bethanie Wedel—8/24	

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

<b>August</b>	Greg & Melody Bontrager—8/12	Eric & Lori Shelly—8/18
Larry & Carol Entz—8/5	Woody & Nora Miller—8/15	Henry & Marilyn Nickel—8/21
Dwight & Connie Claassen—8/7	Steven & Wynette Voth—8/15	Dennis & Diane Flickner—8/23
Rich & Pat Denno—8/7	Bryan & Anita Kehr—8/16	Greg & Laura Myers—8/24
Alan & Joan Entz—8/8	Brent & Cora Voran—8/17	Ronald & Shirley Dietzel—8/29
Rod & Marsha Schmidt—8/11	Dana & Kathleen Neff—8/18	

### Caregiving and Membership Commission Corner

**Really? Really? Really?** Is it really that time of the year again? Back to school many of us go or at least have knowledge of someone involved in the school system. Have you ever thought about how many relationships exist within the school structure?

Here are just a number of them. Student to student, student to teacher, parent to teacher, teacher to principal, principal to superintendent. How can relationships begin and end on the best footing? The ability of administrators and teachers to enrich or diminish one another's life will transfer to the atmosphere of the school itself. The trust that is built, the generous spirit felt between one another, being helpful and cooperating with one another will spill over into the school itself and will be felt among the students as well.

Conflicts exist in schools as well as everywhere else. Finding the good and the worth in those we teach as well as those we work with will lessen conflict and bring about good relationships. Positive characteristics are within all students and should be recognized and valued. All of us need to recognize the value of those within the school system and remember them in prayer as another year is here.

**Blessings to all school workers and we support you!**

## CHURCH BOARD REPORT

The church board met July 14. Nora Miller led devotions and opened with prayer.

The board had not met since May 12 since our June picnic meeting was canceled due to Jim Schrag's illness. The board recognized that Jim is taking a three-month leave of absence for health recovery, and Brian Kennell will be acting church board chairperson during those three months.

The board appointed Wendy Funk Schrag and Anita Kehr as delegates to Western District Conference, and in addition approved as delegates any other volunteers from our membership, up to the number of votes allotted to our congregation.

Amanda Rempel joined us to report on the Organ Renovation Committee. The \$40,000 projected cost includes a \$3,000 contingency amount for unforeseen work that could become evident as the work progresses. Amanda said the Organ Renovation Committee wondered if, once the funds are raised, does a contract come to the board for approval? Stewardship said that the contract

would first go to the Stewardship/Capital Funds Development Committee, which, with the Organ Renovation Committee, would submit the contract to the church board for approval. Amanda said the committee thinks there needs to be one person as contact and supervisor as the project progresses, possibly from the Organ Committee. After Amanda Rempel left the meeting, the board moved to empower Amanda Rempel to be the supervisory contact person.

Pastor Joel was in Nebraska, but he left a recommendation that the church board be involved in praying for the Vision and Mission Process, be listening to others in the congregation during this process, and be thinking about the weekly questions as written in the bulletin as we begin defining vision and mission for our congregation. In reporting from the pastors, Pastor Anita highlighted her visitation to members of the congregation, gave presentations about the learning tour to Israel/Palestine, in June helped with funerals for Elsie Regier and Mildred Unruh and helped host the AIMM meeting. Pastor Kay reported

that planning and following through with the "Building Together" worship series has been joyful work.

In the absence of treasurer Nancy Waltner, Dewayne Pauls reported that we are \$15,749 behind expenses. We received a \$10,000 gift for the Caring Fund.

Gifts Discernment said that Ryan Koehn has agreed to be nominated to be church board chair beginning in January 2017. Caregiving and Membership Commission moved to suspend "outside" payments from the Caring Fund until it had received enough donations to have a good balance. Fellowship Commission said that there were problems with the dishwasher at one of the funerals. The problem was identified by a service person and Property Committee was notified. Outreach, Missions, and Peace Commission shared that Susannah Epp has applied and been accepted for service in Jackson, Mississippi, and the Histands are returning home from China soon.

The meeting ended with prayer.

## NOT JUST A RUBBER DUCK

This article was in the Western District Conference Sprouts email and was submitted by Olivia Bartel, Camp Mennoscah Director.

Sometimes I hide a small rubber duck for the summer staff. It's yellow and has "Return to Olivia" written on the bottom. I give the staff what I hope is a vague clue and the hunt is on. They look as they go about their chores and I add clues until the duck is found. Whoever finds the duck gets a prize of some sorts, so

there is a bit of competition involved. The prize has been a variety of things, but this summer they can choose between a baked item (like cookies) or 2 candy bars. Nothing big.

I didn't realize what this little thing meant until this past spring. I thought hiding the duck was a nothing activity. A camp director that I don't know well came up to me at a Mennonite Camping Association event. "I hear you hide a rubber duck for your summer

staff." I admit to being startled and somewhat confused. The duck? How in the world did he know about the duck? This is not something worthy of national news.

It happened that he had spoken with a former summer staffer and that staffer had extolled the wonders of the small rubber duck. Huh. So I spoke with other summer staffers. It became clear that this thing that I thought was nothing meant

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## August 2016

more to them than I realized. This simple little thing meant to be fun and silly had a much greater effect on their overall camp experience. It made it better, it seems.

We're working with small things with our summer youth camps this year, hoping they have a positive effect on camper experiences. Meagan Baldwin, a Bal-A-Vis-X practitioner, spent time with us during summer staff orientation and spoke about the most, the some, and the few. How most of us will have a blast at camp just the way it is, some of us will enjoy camp if minor adjustments are made, and a few of us will need further accommodations to get the best camp experience.

This summer we have earplugs for those who are sensitive to noise—we make a lot of joyous noise at Camp Mennoscah and it can be overwhelming. Alternate tables are offered for folks during special meals that we eat without silverware or plates because those meals can be really messy. That can make some of us uncomfortable. We have books for those who want some quiet time with words, and card games and paper and markers for those who like to draw instead of madly dashing around. We have a list of simple things we can do for the some and the few to make their time at Camp Mennoscah better, and we're adding to the list throughout the summer.

It's nothing much, but maybe these small things mean more to the campers than we realize now. Maybe one of these simple things will help a camper have the sort of camp experience that we want everyone to have. You know, one of those "camp is fun, I can't wait to come back" experiences. Which would be great. Because Camp Mennoscah is here—and we are here—to build relationships with God, nature, and others. And we think one of the best ways to do that is by having fun. As one camp director says, camp reminds us that being Christian is fun.