



FIRST  
MENNONITE  
CHURCH,  
NEWTON

**OUR VISION:** Together in Christ: rooted deeply, reaching widely, loving well

**OUR MISSION:** With Jesus as our center, we are called to be:

- Faith-Focused—Growing spiritually, anchored in God’s love and faithfulness
- Mission-Minded—Sharing hope and grace through Spirit-inspired, passion-driven faith in action
- Community-Connected—Worshiping together, welcoming, accepting, encouraging, and inviting all to follow Christ.

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# FMC CONNECTIONS

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## REMEMBERING IN ORDER TO KNOW BETTER



Church was cancelled on January 15, the day before the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. However, February is here, which—since 1976—has been designated by each succeeding president since Gerald Ford as Black History Month.

It is a good thing to reflect on this history, to remember the accomplishments of leaders and thinkers and doers who have so often been neglected in our written memory. I attended the movie, “Hidden Figures,” this past month and was struck by the brilliance of three African American mathematicians, women all, who were instrumental in the space program of the United States. It was an unknown story to me, who knew other names of that era and from that space program,

and I am glad it is now being told. There are, however, so many more stories that are hidden behind the other, more dominant, narratives of our nation’s past.

It is also a good thing to reflect on this history, to remember the legacy of slavery and racism, of public policy and urban planning, of a disparity in the way the criminal justice system works. The weight of this legacy continues to shape the lives of too many in our country today.

This year, one blog entry was read by more readers of *The Mennonite* than any other. It was written by Regina Shands Stoltzfus, assistant professor of peace, justice, and conflict studies at Goshen College and also speaker at this year’s MLK Day celebration at Bethel College. Below is a portion of what she wrote in an article entitled, “I cannot speak of love to you today.” May we hear her words and her challenge and act upon them:

“A few weeks ago, I had a conversation with a perfectly nice and well-meaning young white man. He explained to me how much easier it was for him to understand racism, and be motivated to

work against it after having developed a friendship with neighbors who are people of color. The young white man explained to me that it was this friendship that really helped him understand, and care more about racism. The love and affection he and his family had for their neighbors – the meals and the stories they have shared – had done far more than any anti-racism training or other educational piece had done. He was making the argument that absent of personal relationships, we cannot advance the fight against racist oppression.

I used to believe this too. When I first started doing anti-racism work, I leaned heavily on the power of personal relationships. I still believe in their power. I believe in the power of love. I believe, as a follower of Jesus, that I am called to love.

However, the systemic nature of oppression means that oppression functions despite the good will, intentions, and yes, the love, of many, many people. And at the end of the day I am more interested in my son coming home alive than I am with someone learning to love him.

(Continued on page 3)

# NEW HOPE SHELTER (REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!"-Isaiah 43:18-19a

Every new year ushers in the ameliorative new year's resolution. Resolutions which are set to bring about a new body, a new mind, a new spirituality, or to give up or take on anything else which might lead us to become that new person we have always wanted to be. Much like a fine tuned sports car on the showroom floor, the appeal of a new life with all its polished appearance and new abilities attracts us with all its new possibilities. No matter what shape or form it comes in, newness is exhilarating.

2017 is going to be a year of celebrations for New Hope Shelter. Yes, the name change is complete and a new era has begun. No, we are not a brand new fine-tuned sports car sitting on the showroom floor. We aren't that polished and we have some wear and tear to show for our years. However, I know someone that can make all things new! This year will be a year in which we finally take shape and take flight. We have defined our service area, determined who we can serve, and how we can serve them. The greatest piece is that Christ will be allowed to flourish. No longer will it only be a roof over your head and food in your belly; it will also be Jesus in your heart.

As we move through 2017, I invite you to stay aware of the ministry happening at New Hope. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Subscribe to our newsletter and email on our website: [newhope-shelter.org](http://newhope-shelter.org) and see what we are doing and how lives are finding hope and promise. See how the Spirit leads us and drives us to compassionately care for our neighbors. See how the love that Christ has instilled in us is poured out on anyone who walks through our door. Then, become a part of it! We are your ministry Harvey County! We are your ministry Marion County! We are your ministry McPherson County! Maybe you can volunteer for a shift or a service project. Maybe you can donate to financially support this local, vibrant ministry. Maybe you would like to take a tour, hear what we do, and discuss how you can become a part of a ministry that has the potential to touch and transform so many lives.

We are working hard to polish 2017 because we know that it will be a year of shinning forth the light of Christ at New Hope Shelter. We are revved up and ready to go!

*The mission of New Hope Shelter, Inc. is to provide a sanctuary for those experiencing homelessness in Harvey, Marion and McPherson Counties by uniting the local church into a nurturing community which restores hope through a growing relationship with Christ.*

#### December Volunteer Numbers:

101 Volunteers  
688.25 documented hours  
6.81 average hours

#### 2016 Year End Volunteer Numbers:

1,056 documented volunteers  
7,310.25 documented hours  
6.92 documented average hours

7,310.25 x \$23.07 (current hourly rate  
Per United Way Worldwide)  
= \$168,647.47



## New Hope Shelter, Inc.

Following Christ, Building the Community

## CHURCH BOARD REPORT

The board met on January 12, 2016. Ryan Koehn opened with devotions and prayer using an article from AllAboutGod.com titled "A Biblical Model of Spiritual Leadership."

The theme of the board meeting was "Planning for 2017." Ryan shared his plans for the board continuing to serve as spiritual leaders of the congregation. This year will be focused on implementing our mission. Each board meeting will have a theme from the mission statement (Faith-Focused, Mission-Minded, and Community-Connected). At each board meeting, each committee and commission representative will be asked to share their work toward the mission theme. Each month a board member will also share in the worship service based on the mission theme. They can share a

personal experience, or report to the congregation what their commission is doing to support the mission.

The board members took time to each share their hopes and dreams for First Mennonite in 2017. It was an uplifting time of sharing. Many good ideas were shared and there was encouragement to work towards the many good ideas.

Joel shared that the youth group has completed activities to get acquainted with the new vision and mission statements. It was great to see how our youth group is beginning to connect to the new statements and what they mean.

The board spent time discussing its role in leading the congrega-

tion through a healing process. Mike Comb's actions and arrest continues to impact people in various ways. We continue to evaluate what lessons we should learn and what improvements should be made for the future. Reports were provided from the Nurture Commission and the Caregiving and Membership Commission.

Ryan Koehn  
Chairman, Church Board

# Youth Group Verenika Meal

**Wed., February 15, 2017**

**5:30-7:00 PM**

**FMC Fellowship Hall**

**MENU:** Verenika (youth made),  
Home-grown Grilled Sausage,  
Cherry Moos, and Zwiebach (youth made)



**DONATIONS** will give youth a mission experience with  
DOOR in Chicago, July 16-21. 2017.

# FEBRUARY 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 CFN Meal 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:45 PM Choir 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	2 Nurture 7:00 PM	3 Kitchen & FH reserved 3:00 PM-evening  Camp Mennoscah Work day	4 FH & Kitchen reserved 8:00 AM-5:00 PM  Camp Mennoscah Work day
5 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	6 Camp Mennoscah Work day	7 FH and kitchen reserved	8 CFN Meal 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:45 PM Choir 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	9 Church Board 7:00 PM	10	11
12 Casa Betania Service 4 PM  Potluck—FH 12 Noon  FH reserved 2:30 PM	13	14 FH and Kitchen reserved	15 Youth Group Meal  CFN Meal 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:45 PM Choir 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	16	17	18 Youth Group Winter Retreat
19 Casa Betania Service 4 PM  Youth Group Winter Retreat	20 Youth Group Winter Retreat  Property 7:00 PM	21 Caregiving 7:00 PM	22 CFN Meal 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:45 PM Choir 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	23	24	25
26 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	27	28				

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

\*Church Family Night. A meal is served at 5:30 PM and activities for all ages start at 6:45 PM.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

If you see these people,  
wish them a Happy Birthday!

Tim Regier—2/1	Wes Regier—2/10
Jane Entz—2/2	Lexi Pauls—2/13
Eric Shelly—2/4	Brooklynn Black—2/14
Luke Wiens—2/4	Carol Gerbrand—2/14
Charlynn Reimer—2/6	Arlene Schmidt—2/14
Kara Schmidt—2/7	BJ Stahly—2/17
Joshua Kennell—2/8	Conner Hiebert—2/19
Stan Claassen—2/9	Carla Histan—2/23
	Marilyn Nickel—2/25
	Daryl Unruh—2/28



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Keith & Stefanie Knopp—2/1	Heath & Tracy Kerr—2/14
Stan & Jan Claassen—2/14	Chris & Stephanie Weaver—2/27



I said as much to the young man. I affirmed his friendship with his neighbors, and tried to convey with my words that I did not belittle the transformative power of that relationship. But in 2016 America, if I have to choose between being loved and being treated with justice, I'm going to choose justice....

I recognize that my words are limiting 'love' to a feeling, and that the biblical command to love is much more profound than a feeling. This reflects my belief that the willingness to love across the boundaries of difference and the weight of history has not sufficiently met the biblical command.

Can you affirm my humanity and my right to exist without loving me; that is, having warm feelings about me? What if I'm not lovable that day? Do you get to mistreat me then? Do I have to prove my lovability – my worthiness of your love – over and over and over again? Or do I just get to be? These are serious questions....

So you see, well-meaning friends of all colors – it's going to take more than love to change this. Those of you who love me and mine – I see you. I appreciate you. And I love you back. Those of you who don't yet love me or just don't – you don't have to. But you can still co-create a world with me that reeks of justice instead of despair. And frankly, I'd rather have you pay attention to that.

Beloved, yes, let us love one another. But today, my siblings, understand we cannot wait on your love if it is limited to feeling warmly about us.

Learn our racialized history. Learn about the road to eventual emancipation from slavery (yes – old history!) that was followed by a hundred years of legalized segregation (a newer history that we are barely 50 years removed from). Study the statistics that show that Black boys and girls are routinely and repeatedly disciplined and expelled from school far more frequently (for the same offences) than white children.

Read about how job applicants with 'Black' names get far fewer call backs than white applicants who have the same education and credentials.

Arm yourself with love and knowledge, and let's work together for justice." (1)

May it be so—

*Anita Keh*

(1) Regina Shands Stoltzfus, "I cannot speak of love to you today," *The Mennonite*, July 11, 2016, <https://themennonite.org/feature/cannot-speak-love-today/>

## FMC Connections

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February 2017

## CAREGIVING CORNER

One of the delightful aspects of the work of the Caregiving and Membership Commission is meeting with people who wish to become members of the congregation. Our church constitution states that the Commission “With the pastoral staff, discerns the spiritual commitment and readiness of candidates for baptism, approves candidates for membership, commends them to the congregation, and encourages members to full participation in congregational life.”

This discernment usually takes the form of hearing about the

spiritual journeys of those who wish to join, followed by discussion. What a joy it is to hear how God has uniquely led each person! Spiritual journeys sometimes include the influence of early church experiences, the contributions of teachers and/or mentors, doubts and surprises, and camp experiences.

It is wonderful to hear is that these precious people wish to be with us – that they have found a welcome here, a worship and fellowship that calls them into community. May

our welcome be so genuine and loving that when they realize how human the rest of us are, they will be able to love us back, and join with us growing into the community that God is calling us to be for the sake of the world.