



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

Volume 27, Issue 5

May 2017

TELLING THE STORIES

A few weeks ago, I was cleaning the bedroom where a guest of ours was going to stay. It was our son’s room, even though he had really only stayed in that room for two summers before making us for-real empty nesters. On top of the dresser, he had put a perpetual motion gadget which had been my dad’s and a very old bird book and then a music box which had been my mom’s. As I dusted, I found myself crying: remembering my parents, missing my son.

Over the next couple of days, I kept thinking about those objects in that room which had elicited the tears. And I remembered stories about each of those persons: about my dad who loved gadgets in general and who never came back from any sale empty-handed (unfortunately sometimes!), about my mom who loved birds and took her grandchildren to see the Sandhill crane migration in north-western Indiana, and about my son, who loved my mother and hardly knew his grandfather—although I am sure they would have liked each other very much if they had had the chance.

Telling the stories is a way of keeping those who have gone before us in our hearts. But it is also a way of sharing them—as well as ourselves—with others, including those who are in other generations. Stories in general can be a way of making connections—of revealing parts of who we are. Stories can also share and explore faith gently, without coercion and with invitation.

For a number of months now, I have been subscribing to a newsletter from the Fuller (Seminary) Youth Institute. In April, a blog by Caleb Roose, Project Coordinator for the Youth Ministry Innovations (YMI) and Ministry Innovations with Young Adults (MIYA) research projects, explored this power that story has in making connections between people. He writes:

“In a country starkly divided over political and social issues, it can be easy to vilify those with whom we disagree. Being civil, let alone empathetic, scarcely crosses many of our minds.... “In a world so divided, how can we, as ministers of the



Pastor Anita Kehr

gospel, bridge the gap?

“One possible answer is to leverage the power of stories. By experiencing others’ stories, whether through listening, sharing, reading, or watching a film, those from different generations [and perspectives] can gain empathy for one another.

“By engaging with stories, we can begin to relate to those who are not necessarily like us. Relating to others leads to empathy, and empathy has the potential to turn judgment into hospitality.”

Stories Matter Because:

1. “We engage others’ perspectives. Stories can provide unique windows into others’

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IB AND JUNE THOMSEN SERVING THROUGH SOOP

Ib and I have recently returned from our fourth month-long sojourn in Tucson, Arizona, serving through SOOP (Service Opportunities for Older Persons), a program of Mennonite Mission Network. It gets easier, and it gets harder.

It gets easier in terms of familiarity. Ib has worked at the CHRPA (Community Home Repair of Pima, Arizona) organization each year, and I mainly worked at the Casa Maria soup kitchen in downtown Tucson for the second year. While there are always new residents to serve in each location, many of the staff are folks we already know and enjoy. And the routines are the same as we remember. We pretty much know what is expected in the assignments.

Ib's jobs this year included some plumbing (under-the-sink repairs and toilet exchanges) and lots of roof work. Some of his advisors (wife and family physician) think he should stay off ladders and roofs, but most of the roof work out in the rural desert is on trailer homes—so the roofs are flat and

not very high off the ground, at least that's his story. He came home many days with that white sticky stuff on his clothes that told the tale—roof work again! By the way, this year we learned that GooGone will take off most of the white sticky stuff.

My job at the soup kitchen was to help assemble between 500-600 sack lunches each day for the homeless, indigent or otherwise hungry folks who gather at Casa Maria each morning. These are put together assembly-line style in a small room by a group of 4-8 volunteers working like beavers. It was good to see some of the same staff again, and some of the regular volunteers, as well as new volunteers each day. Some are working off community service hours, some are University of Arizona students, some church group ladies or men. After the soup is served and the lunches distributed, my final job was usually washing down the eight or nine picnic tables where our patrons have rested while eating. This year I was able to develop an exchange-of-smiles relationship

with a few of the regular guests, mostly men, mostly older, mostly with their bundles of tatty belongings.

Another bit of familiarity is the SOOP group that turns up in Tucson. Our friends from three provinces in Canada are regulars, as are several couples from Goshen. We were about 20 SOOP-ers, all told during our month. Besides going out to eat together after Sunday worship there is a SOOP bible study and prayer time on Thursday night and a fellowship time on Sunday evening—popcorn, puzzles and games. Again, familiar routines.

So what gets harder? The intensity of the drive there and back and keeping up the pace of work. We felt the added year of age. But despite the occasional aches and ouches, we have had a good time and would recommend this kind of venture to others. It was good to have a sense of representing the congregation. We counted on your prayers during our month away, and are glad to be back again.

Dear First Mennonite Church,

Your gift is helping Harvey County families build a brighter future through Summer Enrichment program and the Circle of Hope community!

We appreciate your generosity! Thank you for helping us build a thriving community sustained by peace and social justice.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Jennifer Rose
for Peace Connections Board and Staff



CAMP MENNOSCAH NEWS

Cabin Collaboration

By Valerie Klaassen and Kent Erb



Building cabins at Camp Mennoscah has always been a collaborative effort. According to Aaron Hull, author of *Camp Mennoscah: The First Fifty Years*, in 1952, fifty men from Moundridge area churches met at the Moundridge 4-H building and built two cabins in one day! Church groups from Buhler and Inman built two more cabins on site each year from 1952 to 1954 (p. 21-23).

Once the decision was made last September to build a new cabin in the boys' cabin area, members of Grace Hill Mennonite Church volunteered to construct the framework in their church Fellowship Hall, continuing in the tradition of their predecessors. In mid-January, 34 church members, including K. John Klaassen who organized the event, assembled the walls. The flurry of activity and the noise of hammers hitting nails made for a fun and rewarding evening of construction! The frame remained up

for a prayer of dedication from Pastor Weldon Martens on the following Sunday.

After successful construction of a pavilion near the Retreat Center at camp a few years ago, the Men's Ministry at First Mennonite in Newton returned to camp in February, clearing trees, removing sandy soil, and preparing to pour the foundation for the new cabin, under the fantastic leadership of Jordan Miller. It is amazing how God placed the right people in the right situation at the right time to make a project like this happen. When someone with framing expertise was needed, they were there; when welding experience was needed, they were there, and so on.



On the weekend of February 17-18, the Grace Hill group hauled the walls out to camp to erect the cabin on the new foundation. As the building has progressed, John Claassen has been busy in his workshop east of Whitewater, constructing bunk beds for the new cabin.

The bonding the First Men-

nonite group shared the effort well worth it, and though my (Kent's) daughter will never enjoy the comfort of this new cabin, I know many kids will enjoy it in the years to come.

So far, 56 people have collaborated to build this new cabin. Many thanks to each of you who have volunteered! We are amazed and grateful for the many ways volunteers work together for the good of Camp Mennoscah and our guests.



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 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 Andrea Enns Regier—5/30
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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

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 Jake and Maisie Martin—5/28 Paul & Wendy Funk Schrag—5/28
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Caregiving Corner

As we continue exploring the five "Love Languages," we come to the second "Love Language" which is the quality of time. Time is often limited and in great demand. When time is short, making sure that time is of the best quality can be very demanding. It is important to find out how loved ones experience time spent with them. Often love is expressed in the same way that we like to receive it. This may not be the way another person perceives it. Just existing in one another's space is not necessarily quality time. Have you ever tried talking to someone who is looking at their cell phone? Maybe they

are listening but it doesn't feel that way to the other person and certainly isn't quality time. Have you ever begun what could have been a discussion question only to have the other person's next statement be on a totally different topic? Giving of oneself to fully engage with those we love is of utmost importance if we are to make quality time one of our Love Languages. Time spent together can be turned from expected to intentional acts. Be thoughtful and authentic and share activities together, even if sharing just the little pieces of your life is what the day brings. We each need to find out what the love language of the other person is. Quality time is a communicator of love in an emotional and powerful way. If you want to

communicate in a quality conversation, the following ideas may be helpful:

1. Look each other in the eye while the other is talking.
2. Listen to the other person without doing other things at the same time.
3. Listen to the other person to see their emotions and how they are actually feeling.
4. Do not interrupt. Don't be thinking of what you want to say next but listen intently.

We are all blessed with the same number of hours in a day. Make the most of them by committing the time that we can to quality time.

MAY 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Youth Group 7 PM	4 Worship Comm. 11:30 AM Cora Voran's house Nurture 7 PM	5	6 Catechism 10 AM
7 Casa Betania Service 4 PM KS Men's Chorus 7 PM Hesston High School	8	9	10	11 Church Board 7 PM	12	13
14 Casa Betania Service 4 PM FH/Kitchen reserved	15 Property 7 PM	16 Caregiving 7 PM	17	18 NAMI 7 PM	19	20 Catechism 10 AM
21 Casa Betania Service 4 PM Outreach 7:45 AM	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	29 Church Office closed Memorial Day	30	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 20, 2017. Andrea Regier opened with devotions and prayer using a devotion from Our Daily Bread.

The theme of the board's April meeting was Community Connected. Each pastor and Commission/Committee representative reported on their Community Connected goals.

The stewardship committee reported on the status of the Roof Fund, Organ Fund, and Window Fund. The Roof repairs are fully covered. There is a surplus of \$3,000 in the Organ Fund, which will remain designated for future

organ needs. The repairs on the windows were more than expected so an additional \$10,000 will need to be raised.

Dave Wiebe reported on the GRACE assessment progress. 104 surveys have been completed and the deadline for turning in surveys is April 26.

Marsha presented suggested changes to the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and asked for feedback. The Nurture Commission will continue to work on revisions and will also seek feedback from GRACE.

The board approved one delegate for the Mennonite Church USA conference in Orlando. An announcement will be put into the bulletin seeking additional delegates for both the MC USA conference and the Western District conference meetings.

The Board read the FMC vision prayer as a closing.

Ryan Koehn
Chairman, Church Board

BIBLICAL PEACEMAKING: PIECING PEACE TOGETHER

In the summer of 2002, the Nurture commission planned an emphasis on peace education for the children of FMC. Biblical Peacemaking: Piecing Peace Together was the theme. The peace pole by the north entrance to the church was erected that summer. In the summers of 2008 and 2012 the children in the elementary grades again studied the topic of peace.

There is renewed interest in the topic of peace, and this summer, the children in grades 1 – 5 will again be studying the theme of Biblical Peacemaking. We will focus on topics of peace in our families, neighbor-

hood and our world. We will address issues of anger, fear and respect for all. We will talk about fairness and refugees in our world. Two sessions will be devoted to the study of MCC and its mission around the world.

The summer will include activity-based lessons, storytelling and hands-on learning. Each child will create their own mini-peace pole. Families will have an opportunity to take home the basket of activities, books, coloring sheets, and a jar of cookie mix during the summer. Hopefully each family will be able to utilize the peace basket once during the summer.

The Junior High class studied the "Adventures of the Anabaptists" in the summer of 2016, so they will not be taking part in this current summer's activities, but a repeat of last summer's class will be in 2018 so all children will study this curriculum.

THANK YOU!!

Greetings from Camp Mennoscah!

Thank you so much for your gift! Our vision to create a sacred space for people of all ages to renew themselves, their relationships, and their connection with God through Jesus Christ is realized only with your help.

We gratefully acknowledge your contribution toward our General Contribution fund. Thank you for your support of our camping ministry in so many ways!

With peace and prayers,

Olivia Bartel, camp director



Dear friends,

We thank you for your recent contribution toward Health Ministries Clinic's mission.

Bless you for giving!

Matthew Schmidt
Executive Director

Dear First Mennonite Church Members,

Thank you for your generous donation of continued support for the families we serve.

With more than two decades of outreach and advocacy services in Harvey County, the Harvey County Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Task Force is undergoing some big changes, including an expanded service area, and a new name. As announced, the agency is now officially called *Safehope*, and provides services in Harvey County, as well as Marion and McPherson Counties.

Thank you!

Respectfully,

The Staff and Board of Safehope

Dear children of First Mennonite Church,

Thank you very much for raising money to support the new playground structure at Camp Mennoscah! We look forward to having you out to camp to play on it in the coming year! We value all of you as part of the Camp Mennoscah community.

Camp Mennoscah Board of Directors

FMC Connections

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May 2017

Continued from front page

worlds. It can be difficult to empathize with someone with whom you do not share common experience....Our often-narrow mindsets, rooted in our own experiences, are challenged and expanded when we truly listen to the experiences of others.

2. "We open up to others' pain. Stories have a way of overcoming our natural defenses and making their way into our hearts.... Stories help us understand a person's struggles *in context*—that we might see them as whole human beings rather than mere victims of pain.
3. "We humble ourselves. If we listen closely, stories reveal how

little we know about others. Rather than filling in the gap between our differences with judgment and superiority, we can learn to experience others' realities from their perspectives rather than our own....

"In a climate rife with division, storytelling—and story-listening—can be a bridge [across the chasms]."
(fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/stories)

So please tell your own stories, with honesty and with openness. Listen to each other's stories, with heart as well as with mind. Begin to build the bridges.

With thanks for each of you and for each of your stories—

