



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 3

March 2017

## REMEMBERING THE END IN ORDER TO LIVE

On Wednesday evening, March 1, Pastor Kay Schroeder and I will lead an Ash Wednesday service in the last half hour of Church Family Night. This will be the fourth year that we’ve offered this service that begins the season of Lent.

Ash Wednesday is another one of those observances which I knew nothing about when I was growing up. I experienced my first Ash Wednesday service while I was at seminary but never helped to lead one until that first one here at FMC in 2014.

The tradition is that the palm leaves from the prior Palm Sunday celebration are saved and then burned in order to make the ashes that are “imposed” on the foreheads of anyone who wishes it. For that first service—because we hadn’t known that we would need to save the palm branches—I gathered leftover ash from our fireplace. (That’s a confession!) Since then, we’ve saved the palm leaves and have used them to create the ash that smudges the sign of the cross.

The words that go along with the sign of the cross on the forehead are these: “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” This is a hard truth. It is an especially hard truth to say to those whose end is far more distant than mine.

It is, of course, not the only truth. Those who are in Christ are promised far more than dust at the end of this life. “For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.... Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:53, 54b-58)

The gift of Ash Wednesday is the facing of our own mortality at the beginning of the Lenten journey that takes us to Easter. When we remember that our time



Pastor Anita Kehr

is limited but that our hope is eternal, we are freed to “be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because [we] know that in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain.” When we are not held in the grip of the fear of death, we are released to live fully and faithfully.

We are indeed dust and to dust we shall indeed return. At the same time, we are being transformed from one degree of glory into another. (2 Corinthians 3:18) This is our sure hope, and by this sure hope we live.

May we live in the freedom of that hope,

*Anita Kehr*

# THANK YOU!!

Dear First Mennonite Church:

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

We appreciate your generosity!

Jennifer Rose  
For peace Connections Board and Staff

Dear First Mennonite Church:

Thank you for your recent donation to The Salvation Army.

Most surely your gift is a reminder of that greatest of all gifts, Jesus Christ.

Thank you!  
Wendy Basye

Dear Friends at First Mennonite Church,

Thank you for your recent gift to MCC! As always, we really appreciate your support.

It is because of you that MCC can support savings groups in Rwanda, helping people start new businesses or have a safety net for their families' future.

Thank you for making a difference.

All the best,

Anna Yoder  
Donor Relations Coordinator  
MCC Central States

Dear First Mennonite Church Family-

We truly appreciate your continued support and donations. We truly appreciate it and put it all to good use!

God's Blessings-  
New Hope Staff and Residents

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.

On behalf of the Camp Mennoscah Board of Directors and Camp Mennoscah staff, I would like to thank you for your donation to Camp Mennoscah. Your gift will be to continue our mission to provide a retreat for people of all ages.

With peace and prayers,

Olivia Bartel, camp director

Dear First Mennonite Church Members:

Thank you for your recent 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. The agency is now officially called Safehope, and provides services in Harvey County, as well as Marion and McPherson Counties.

Thank you again!

Respectfully,

Jan Jones  
Executive Director

Dear First Mennonite Church—

Thank you for partnering with Mennonite Mission Network to share Christ's love around the world! We praise God that FMC chooses to join us in carrying out God's mission, and are grateful for your generosity of \$21,117.84 in 2016.

Gratefully,  
Joe Sawatzky  
Church Relations Representative

# ERWIN AND ANGELA REMPEL'S NEW BOOK

Newlyweds Erwin and Angela Rempel were unexpectedly asked to spend a summer serving at a Mennonite church in Pennsylvania. Accepting that invitation impacted them for the rest of their lives. Other unexpected invitations followed, leading Angela, with Erwin's help, to write a book about their experiences: ***Unexpected Invitations – Surprises, adventures, and opportunities in Mennonite ministry.***

Both Angela and Erwin grew up at the fringes of the former General Conference Mennonite Church but eventually were led to serve at the center of the denomination at Conference headquarters in Newton, Kansas. Their path included a seven-year Pennsylvania pastorate and missionary assignments in Brazil and Botswana. Their families experienced loss and estrangement. They were challenged by changing lifestyles and technology. More surprising invitations came after they retired.

Angela began the writing project to inform their children and grandchildren about the family history and God's providence. When writing coach Laurie Oswald Robinson read the manuscript, she encouraged sharing it more widely. "This is church history," she said about the Rempels' experiences with church administration and the merger that produced Mennonite Church USA and its mission agency, Mennonite Mission Network.

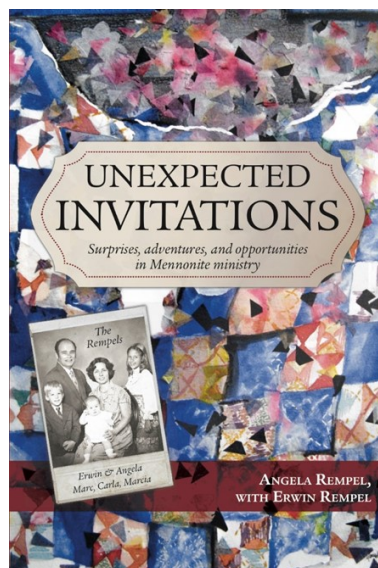
Erwin and Angela and their three children were active members of First Mennonite Church for about 30 years. They currently live in Harrisonburg, Virginia, close to two married daughters and four grandchildren.

Mennonite Press of Newton recently printed the softcover, 465-page book. Angela plans to be in Newton on March 24-26. Faith and Life Bookstore is hosting a book signing on March 25 from 1-3 PM. She will also be at First Mennonite on Sunday, March 26.

For more information: <http://unexpectedinvitations.com/>

To preview and turn pages through some sample sections, see: [https://issuu.com/mennonitepressinc/docs/unexpected\\_invitations](https://issuu.com/mennonitepressinc/docs/unexpected_invitations)

Price: \$19.95 (cash, check, or credit/debit card)



*Unexpected Invitations—Surprises, adventures, and opportunities in Mennonite ministry* by Angela and Erwin Rempel. 465 pages

Comments about *Unexpected Invitations*:

...unvarnished and compelling. God's call inserts the Rempels into uncommon experiences. It is a story filled with pathos, passion, and the pursuit of their desire to be agents of healing and hope in the world. — STANLEY GREEN, Executive Director, MMN

*Unexpected Invitations* brought me many unexpected moments of tears, chuckles, and amazement! —

JEANNIE ZEHR

Former mission worker colleague

"Here am I. Send me!" And did the Rempels get sent – from anywhere in the U.S. to everywhere in the world; from humble beginnings near the edges of the Mennonite community to the core of forming a new, missional Mennonite Church USA. Be inspired by God's providential invitations! — CLARENCE REMPEL former pastor and area conference minister

# MARCH 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 CFN Meal 5:30 PM Choir 6:45 PM YG 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	2 Nurture 7:00 PM	3	4 FH reserved 2-7PM
5 Casa Betania Service 3 PM FH reserved 4-8PM	6	7 Worship Commission 7:00 PM	8 CFN Meal 5:30 PM Choir 6:45 PM YG 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	9 Church Board 7:00 PM	10 FH and Sanctuary reserved	11 FH and Sanctuary reserved
12 Outreach 7:45 AM Potluck 12 Noon FH reserved 2:30 PM Casa Betania Service 4 PM	13	14	15 CFN Meal 5:30 PM Choir 6:45 PM YG 6:45 PM Bible Study 6:45 PM	16	17 St. Patrick's Day  	18 Men's Grubfast 8:30 AM
19 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	20 Property 7:00 PM	21 Women's Fellowship 9:30 AM  Caregiving 7:00 PM	22	23	24	25
26 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	27	28	29	30	31	
						

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.

# HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN, JIGGETY—JOG

As we rounded the last corner and arrived back home, I would often repeat the nursery rhyme, “*Home again, home again, jiggety-jog.*” Home means different things to different people and in different situations, but I said the rhyme in recognition of a day well spent and in gratitude for the physical, mental and spiritual protection we had experienced. Home in Kathmandu was a place where we could relax and reflect on the day, and rest and recharge for the day to come. Now that we are home in Newton, we are reflecting on our time in Kathmandu and on our calling for the future.

Even before we arrived in Kathmandu we were hoping to use bicycles as our primary mode of transportation, but that didn’t happen until mid-November. Michael and Lupe Geiss have spent the last decade or so walking from village to village in the Himalaya sharing about Jesus. When they are in Kathmandu, they attend the Koinonia Patan Church. We noticed that they had bicycled to church and we told them how much we missed being able to get around on bicycles. Immediately they offered bikes which they weren’t currently using. Bicycling provided us a much richer experience of the streets than we had had on the motorcycle; it was similar to walking, but we could go further. On one of our first rides, we headed south out of town, and for the first time were able to look over the ridge and into the next valley. Elena says it was one of the most difficult rides she’d ever experienced, but the smile on her face spoke louder than her words. On other rides we went to the highest point in the city, the Swayambhu stupa, and up a hill to the southeast of the city. It seemed like we were drawn to places where we could look out over Kathmandu and get a sense of perspective, of the size and sprawl, that

was impossible to see from street level.

As we entered Advent and Christmas approached, our experience was truly multicultural. We had joined the Kathmandu Chorale and were preparing for their Christmas program. We decorated the shop and asked customers (including many from the nearby British School) what Christmas treats they would like us to bake. We waited with interest to see how our churches, Nepali on Saturday and English on Sunday, would celebrate Christmas.

Both performances of the chorale were well attended by an appreciative audience, as was an impromptu performance at a local Christmas fair. We baked delicious mince pies and peppernuts and made English toffee. English church did a dramatization of the Christmas story on December 18. But we still weren’t sure of what would happen at the Nepali church next door. On Saturday, December 24, I was given the opportunity to give the message. Through a translator, I challenged the congregation to think about how to bring the Kingdom of God to Kathmandu. I asked them to pray a paraphrase of the Lord’s prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, in Kathmandu as it is in heaven.” I’m not sure how well it translated, but I had and still have a strong sense that the Kingdom is active in Kathmandu. We were told that there would be a Christmas day service starting at 10:00 AM, followed by a meal and a gift exchange. What an understatement! We arrived at 10:00 AM and fellowship was happening around meal preparation. The worship service began at 11:00 AM. Then around 12:30 PM, we enjoyed fellowship around the

meal. Around 2:00 PM the service resumed, and then we had a very lively gift exchange. It was about 4:30 PM before we arrived back home. It was truly a Christmas well-spent.

Dale and Bethsaba Nafziger arrived home on January 1, and the next few days were spent debriefing, but we still had unfinished agenda. When we first arrived in Nepal, Elena’s knee was still healing from surgery. We weren’t sure whether she would be able to walk to the Top of the World coffee shop, so certainly trekking was impossible. But by January her knee was feeling good so we planned a short trek. We visited Pokhara, a local tourist destination, and from there did a three-day trek to Poon Hill. It was wonderful to be in the Himalayan foothills and be able to see the 20,000 ft. peaks up close and personal. Our second day of hiking was a Saturday, the day of worship in Nepal. It was mid-morning when we heard the sound of a guitar and drums. As we continued up the path we heard singing, then we saw the church. We stood in the doorway and listened for about 10 minutes before continuing our hike. Until 2007, Nepal was officially a Hindu Kingdom. In 2015, they adopted a new constitution and are now a secular democracy. According to long-term service worker Miriam Krantz, 50 years ago there was only one church in all of Kathmandu, now there are 17 within walking distance of her home. We knew that the church was growing at a phenomenal rate in Nepal, but experiencing a local church worshipping along a major trekking route brought it to life for us.

We arrived home on January 13, and in some ways life has quickly returned to normal. We brought a piece of Nepal home with us, but now we are praying, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in Newton as it is in heaven.”

Dave and Elena Wiebe



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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

Alex Goering—3/1	Maura Thieszen—3/6	Sara Reimer—3/19	Jakob Graber—3/27
Luke Myers—3/3	Jeff Enns—3/7	Kim Stahly—3/19	John Good—3/28
Ava Ray—3/3	Kevin Miller—3/8	Paul Koehn—3/20	Christina Stang —3/29
Larry Becker—3/4	Rebecca Schrag—3/8	Tim B. Wiens —3/20	June Thomsen—3/29
Sharon Harder—3/4	Jordan Miller—3/10	Renee Hamm—3/21	Kelson Graber—3/30
Allen Schmidt—3/5	Madelynn Hamm—3/13	Aaron Myers—3/22	
Jeremy Ewy—3/6	Clarence Rempel—3/13	Otis Unruh—3/22	
	Jean Ann Unruh—3/15	Anne Wiens—3/23	
	Ken Regier—3/17	Cruz Dorado—3/24	
	Sarah Myers—3/18	Nancy Waltner—3/24	



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Rick & Helen Ortman—3/13  
Loren & Nancy Entz—3/16  
Monte & Christa Hiebert—3/18  
Joey & Amanda Menninga—3/19



**Don't forget:**  
Daylight Savings Time begins on  
Sunday, March 12.

## CAREGIVING CORNER

### Love Languages

It's February 1 today. Stores are filled with red and pink heart shaped items for purchase, in order to express love to others. It's a yearly ritual for most of us—but does it work? Do our loved ones feel loved when we give them things?

One of our congregational goals this year is to “love well.” In 1972, Gary Chapman wrote a bestselling book, “The 5 Love Languages: the Secret to Love that Lasts,” now in its fifth edition. The essence of the

book is that there are five primary ways that people express and receive love: touch, words, deeds of kindness or service, gifts of time, and material gifts. Chapman's contention is that each of us has a dominant love language, which is how we can best receive love. Our natural tendency is to express love in our own dominant love language to others. And therein lies the rub: the other person's love language may not be the same as ours; our honest attempt to express love may not be felt as love by the other.

So, even though Valentine's Day is past for 2017, we invite each of us to be curious about the love language of those around us to whom we hope to express love. One big clue may be the way that they express love to you! Do they give material gifts, like to spend time with you, enjoy touch, use words or do kind deeds for you? Use that as your key and express love back to them in that way. And be open about your own love language, too. Let's “love well” in 2017.

## CHURCH BOARD REPORT

The board met on February 2, 2017. Ryan Koehn opened with devotions reading James 1:5 and Matthew 7:7-11.

The meeting was dedicated to discussing a path forward to help with congregational healing in regards to the continuing hurt due to Mike Comb's actions and arrest.

A report was provided from the Nurture Commission regarding actions they are taking in their ministry areas to help protect the children in our church. They have a three-member committee reviewing the Safe Sanctuary policy. They will identify changes that need to be made considering lessons learned over the last year. When complete, the Nurture Commission will bring recommended changes to the church board.

The board aligned on the areas of focus as action plans are developed. Below are the 6 areas:

- Trauma – Provide support for those individuals in the congregation that are hurting due to sexual abuse and review the church's actions over the last year to understand what changes should be made
- Sexual Protection – Evaluate and revise the Safe Sanctuary policy as necessary, considering lessons learned over the past year
- Education – Provide education to understand how to best deal with sexual abuse situations.
- Victim care – Understand how we can best care for victims

- Conflict Resolution – Provide an environment for conflict resolution where relationships have been broken
- Entry – Prepare for entry of individuals with a history of being a sexual predator into our congregation

The Caregiving Commission offered two options for third-party help in the processes of healing. After a round-table discussion, a motion was made and carried to leverage one of the third parties presented. This motion carried contingent on being able to meet with the third party prior to engaging their services.

The board met on February 9, 2017. Janice Good led devotions from "God's Message for Each Day" and led the board in prayer.

The church board met with the third-party organization that will help the congregation deal with the hurt due to Mike Comb's actions and arrest. The leader of the organization provided the proposed planned approach for First Mennonite Church. Each board member was given an opportunity to ask their questions. The board plans to proceed. Ryan Koehn will work with the third party on the next steps of engagement. This will include a communication plan for the congregation.

The theme of the board's February meeting was Faith Focused. Each pastor and commission/committee representative reported on their faith focused goals.

The Property Committee reported that the storage shed will be replaced soon. They are working on security and access to the church. A donor has given money for this. A key pad access system is being investigated.

The board approved the following:

- Filling the following open commission/committee positions: Fellowship—Denetta Denno; Nurture—Bryan Kehr; Gifts Discernment—Betty Pauls; Outreach, Mission, and Peace—Jeff Enns
- Placing a sign in the churches front lawn which was requested by the Radical Hospitality class. The sign invites us to love our neighbors.
- Forming a committee to develop plans for the Capital Fund Development Committee Phase 2 parts 3 and 4 to be reviewed by the church board and the congregation

Ryan Koehn  
Chairman, Church Board

## FMC Connections

First Mennonite Church  
PO Box 291  
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March 2017

# YOU ARE INVITED TO THE YOUTH GROUP'S BI-ANNUAL AUCTION

Wednesday, April 26, 2017  
Free Meal at 6:00 PM; Auction at 6:45 PM  
First Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall



Proceeds will go to help pay for our July trip to  
the Mennonite affiliated DOOR program in  
Chicago, Illinois.

