



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—Worshipping together, welcoming, accepting, encouraging, and inviting all to follow Christ.

Inside this issue:

Beyond the GRACE Assessment 2

Vacation Bible School 2

FMC CONNECTIONS

Volume 27, Issue 6

June 2017

PENTECOST

On June 4, the season of Eastertide comes to an end as the day of Pentecost arrives. For us here at First Mennonite, that day will include worship and a picnic at Athletic Park, as well as hearing what the children have learned during Vacation Bible School.

Still, even though we probably won’t celebrate Pentecost directly, that day marks an important event in the movement of God for and among human beings. After Jesus ascended into heaven, those who had followed him continued to meet together and pray in expectation of the gift Jesus had promised—the Holy Spirit, which would empower them to be Jesus’ witnesses “in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). On the day of Pentecost—fifty days after Passover and also the Jewish celebration of God’s gift of the Torah—“they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were

filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:1-4a).

With that gift of the Holy Spirit, those followers of Jesus who had been keeping to themselves were empowered to become witnesses to the Messiah. With that gift, those disciples who had so often misunderstood what Jesus was trying to teach them became themselves compelling teachers of Jesus’ way. With that gift, the Church was birthed—the Body of Christ that spans nations and ethnicities and genders and generations.

The gift of the Holy Spirit that was for then is also for now. The Holy Spirit is the real presence of God with us. This is not a gift to turn away from but, instead, to rely on.

What the Holy Spirit does is *transform*. It transforms many into one Body of Christ, unified by common faith and woven together by the movement of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:1-6). It transforms each of us into children of God who grow into the character of their parent with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 4:6-7,



Pastor Anita Kehr

5:22ff). The process of “being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” begins and continues, “for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18b).

It is true that there have been abuses in the name of the Holy Spirit; chapters 12, 13, and 14 of 1 Corinthians offer a corrective to some of those misunderstandings. However, it is also a lapse to ignore the great gift that God offers: to advocate for us, to challenge us, to lead us, and to empower us, too, to become witnesses of Jesus in our world, woven together in the one Spirit.

May it be, then, that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you and with us all together (2 Corinthians 13:13), transforming us to become who we are called to be. Amen.

BEYOND THE GRACE ASSESSMENT

I often reflect on the events of the last two years that have caused us to embark on the assessment with GRACE: the shocking news of an active and respected member of our congregation, Mike Combs, being arrested for sexually abusing a family member. There was deep hurt that developed in the aftermath, especially with members of our congregation who are survivors of sexual abuse. One is never fully prepared to deal with difficult news like this and the impacts that follow. We try to support each other the best way we can, but sometimes we fall short.

The FMC vision is: Together in Christ: rooted deeply, reaching widely, loving well. In our society, the effects of sexual abuse are all around us. For us to reach widely and love well, it is important that we as a body of Christ assess the

steps taken over the last two years to find ways to improve. This will open opportunities to equip ourselves to journey with and care for children and adult survivors of abuse.

Thanks to all of you who have participated in the GRACE process so far. Many of you responded to the survey. We had a total of 151 surveys filled out! Charissa Dvorak was onsite May 8 through 10 to conduct interviews, and since then has conducted additional phone interviews. The next step is for Charissa to complete the assessment and recommendations that will be presented to us. We anticipate receiving the final assessment and recommendations during the month of June.

FMC has a significant opportunity in front of us. In fact, it is an in-

flexion point that will define who we are going forward. I believe the journey that started in November 2015 will help us become a community focused on caring for victims and survivors of abuse both within our church and in our broader community. I believe we can become a place where other churches can come for advice and guidance based on our experience. God has placed this opportunity in front of us and I pray that we will fully embrace it.

There are multiple ways that we can be active participants on this journey. Prayer is the most important. Pray for guidance on our journey so that we can make the most of the opportunity God has given us. Pray that God will be glorified through the improvements we make and the survivors we

(Continued on page 7)

Vacation Bible School Information



The Vacation Bible School theme is *Peace Around the World*. On Friday, June 2, 5:30-7:00 PM, we will kick off VBS with a free cookout at FMC in the parking lot by the playground and free swimming at the Newton public pool, 7:00-9:00 PM. On Saturday, June 3, VBS will run from **9:00 AM to 4:00 PM for grades K-5**.

Preschoolers will have a shortened day ending at 12 noon. Lots of fun activities have been planned around *Peace*. Children will decorate t-shirts, learn how to say peace in several languages, make peace garden stakes, learn songs about peace and learn Bible stories. During the church service on Sunday, June 4, the children will participate by reading peace prayers from different countries, sharing the activities from Saturday and participate in an interactive art project with the congregation. Invite your friends and neighbors to FMC for Bible School! VBS committee is Marsha Schmidt, Angela Black, and Cindy Combs.



VOLUNTEERING AT MENNO-HOF

Clarence and I enjoyed an incredible month of ministry in March as volunteer hosts at Menno-Hof in Shipshewana, Indiana. Menno-Hof is an Amish and Mennonite Information Center in the heart of an area with a high Amish population—around 24,000 in LaGrange and Elkhart counties.

We arrived around 10 p.m. on February 27. The apartment for volunteers on the second floor of the Menno-Hof house was ready for our occupancy, and we fell into bed after unpacking. The next morning at 9:45 we made our appearance for the regular staff devotional time before the doors opened for visitors at 10:00. We had periods of orientation during that day, were given a notebook of instructions and information to read on our own, and began hosting!

Visitors at Menno-Hof are invited to sign the guest book before they take the tour. During the month of March we had visitors representing *twenty* different countries on six continents, and *thirty* states—Alaska to Rhode Island to Florida to Arizona. Many guests came in two's and three's. Some came as college student groups. Several local Amish schools sent a number of "scholars" along with parents, teachers, and board

members. Another group came as a church, and one group represented a business. Christian denominations were spread from Assembly of God to Unitarian. Other religions included Hindu, Baha'i, and atheist.

The Menno-Hof tour includes multi-media presentations in several different historical environments as well as a self-guided section. The visitor learns about our faith beginning with the birth of Christ to the Reformation in the 16th century. Then the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in 1525 is depicted followed by stories of persecution in the dungeon room. A walk through a sailing ship replica tells about migrations to North America. Finally, the visitor learns about Amish, Mennonites and Hutterites today. The last room is a meeting house (church) and invites personal faith reflection from the visitor.

Many adult visitors left in a spirit of appreciation with comments like "That was *wonderful!*" and "Very inspiring." A Catholic woman who had visited previously now brought her friend with whom she really wanted to share the Menno-Hof experience. Before the tour, with tears in her eyes, she told us how

her life had changed after her previous visit. She had realized that her life was full of too many things. The result from her previous visit had been a paring down of "stuff" for a life of greater simplicity and meaning.

We were asked a variety of questions. From an Independent Fundamental Baptist: "I was baptized as a believer. Does that mean I am an Anabaptist?" Other questions included: "Is it true that the buggy horses that run on hardtop roads don't last very long because they get shin splints?" "Do Amish use refrigeration?" "Do the Amish still practice shunning?" "Are you Amish?" Of course there were some questions we simply answered with "I don't know." If the question was easily referenced from one of the many books for sale at Menno-Hof, we could sometimes report the answer at the end of the tour.

We are glad for Menno-Hof's influence as it seeks to interpret the beliefs and practices of the Amish, Mennonites and Hutterites, a faith that is rooted in the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amanda and Clarence Rempel

CAREGIVING CORNER

The Love Languages: Healthy Touch

We have considered two of the five love languages (quality time, words of affirmation) that can help one express love to another person. We come now to the third, touch. Physical touch is incredibly important to the well-being of most people. Infants who are not held and cuddled do not

thrive—and neither do the rest of us.

The Gospels are replete with examples of Jesus touching people for healing or blessing. Many of them were considered marginal people or outcasts of that time—lepers, diseased, women, and children. But Jesus reached out, touching their lives as well as their bodies, seeing their internal pain as well as their physical disease.

And in that touch they were healed, restored to wholeness.

Touch can, of course, be hurtful and inappropriate, both within family relationships and congregations. As a congregation we are in a season of considering the results of abusive and hurtful touch—and also working hard to insure, as much as humanly possible, that all touch here is appropriate and loving.

(Continued to back page)

Response from an Immigration Detention Center to the FMC Radical Hospitality class

This past winter, many adults from our congregation participated in an intergenerational Sunday school class in Fellowship Hall to study the MCUSA "Radical Hospitality: A closer look at the issues of immigration" curriculum. At the end of one class, we wrote & signed a simple letter for our immigrants in detention centers near Tuscon, AZ. Linda Shelly translated our message into Spanish. Individual members of the class signed the border of the greeting. About one month ago, I received several thankful responses in Spanish from nine women in the Eloy Detention Center in Arizona, and a letter from Pastor Tina Schlabach in Tuscon, AZ who visits them. She writes:

"This morning I visited with nine women from Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico in the chilly visitation room of the Eloy Detention Center. This is a prison-like facility housing about 1400 immigrants from many different countries, owned and operated by Core Civic, a for-profit company that contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Our congregation, Shalom Mennonite Fellowship in Tuscon, AZ supports our community visitation program into this detention center by providing us with fiscal sponsorship, and by writing letters and attending court hearings.

Today we sit, talking together across from each other on hard, plastic grey furniture, with vending machines in the background and a guard watching over us. Tears often flow and smiles and laughter break through also.

Ingrid, a large, expressive Guatemalan woman in her thirties, has endured more than two years here in this detention center, fighting to stay in this country where her three young children live, two of which are U.S. citizens. A community has rallied around Ingrid, to support her perseverance - Ann from our congregation writes letters back and forth with Ingrid, our congregation has given money to the needs of her children who are cared for by their grandmother, and friends take turns bringing Ingrid's children to visit her about once a month. Maribel and Augustina are shy indigenous 18 year old twins from Oaxaca, Mexico who have just arrived, fleeing the threat of gender violence and forced marriages in their village. My main role with them turns out to be advocating that they need an interpreter to tell their story, as they speak only the Triqui language. Everything is bewildering to them.

Quemima lived in the U.S. previously, was deported to Honduras in 2005, and took her three young daughters with her. Last summer, the father of her children was murdered in front of the family. In great fear, Quemima made plans: she flew her daughters, who are U.S. citizens, to stay with friends in the U.S., while she herself asked

for asylum at the border. To her dismay, she was transferred to this detention facility while she makes her asylum case in front of an immigration judge, a slow process involving several hearings. The three girls find themselves in a new city, in a new school, separated from their mother. One of the girls has begun self-harming behavior.

Beatriz is an older mom from Mexico, who had previously made her life in the U.S. for 30 years. She has six children, from 6 years to 23 years. Because she made a serious mistake and was arrested once for driving while under the influence of alcohol, she has lost her opportunity to gain residency, and has been ordered removed from the U.S. Today she cried and cried, and we sat with her and listened, our hearts heavy. She will appeal, and keep trying to find a way to stay with her family. In the meantime, her children live together and try to pay bills and care for each other.

Two weeks ago I received a bulky envelope from First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas. What a surprise! Inside were two colorful large notes, filled with scripture, words of hope and signatures from many people from the church! This congregation participated in the MCUSA curriculum about immigration issues, "Radical Hospitality." Sending these personal notes to persons held in immigration detention

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

was one of their action responses to what they learned. They asked me to take their notes to the women I visit.

So this morning, I passed these notes around the visitation room, and the women smiled. One asked to keep them, to post them in their unit, on the wall, for all to see that they are remembered!

Separation from family and the sense of isolation are the hardest parts of immigration detention, the

women tell us. When we visit, when we write letters back and forth, when we take time to listen to the stories of these women, even when it is hard to hear them, love finds its way through the walls and barbed wire of immigration prison. Isolation shrinks, there is more room to breathe, hope rises. The outrage over the great injustices harming families due to our broken immigration system fuels love-energy to reach out. We are all generously and mutually blessed, in our connections and new understandings."

If you would like to send more letters to any of these women, or to the group as a whole, please give to Andrea Enns Regier or send it to:

Pastor Tina Schlabach
3010 E. Loretta Dr.
Tucson, AZ 85716-2527

WELCOMING PLACE TIPS FOR WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

- **Look around!** Get to know the people who sit around you in church. It may be impossible to meet & greet every newcomer. But can you greet the newcomer in your section? Make it a goal to learn the names of the people who sit near in the pews around you.
- **Make it a habit!** Write your address in the Welcome Pads so that newcomers down the row don't feel strange doing it.

- **Don't be shy!** It's impossible to make a mistake if your heart is in the right place. It's alright to ask someone their name (twice)! It's ok if you make a mistake, or do not recognize someone....people change, styles change, kids grow up! Better to ask for a name twice, than never to have asked at all!

- **Genuine, caring relationships are 1000X better than a "Welcoming System":** wise words from one of our newest members. This is something FMC already does well, but we can always do better. It's up to

each one of us to show the love of God to everyone who walks in the door. We're ALL members of the FMC Love Committee! Let's pass it on.

From the Outreach, Missions, and Peace Commission

JUNE 2017

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat



				1	2 Bible School Cookout 5:30-7:00 PM 7:00 PM Swimming Newton public pool	3 Bible School 9:00 AM-4:00 PM
4 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM Worship in the Park 10:30 AM NO Sunday School	5	6	7 Worship Commission 12 Noon	8 Church Board 7:00 PM	9 Catechism 10 AM	10 FH/Kitchen Reserved all day Sanctuary reserved 9:00 AM-12 Noon
11 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM FH/Kitchen reserved Women's Program 3:00 PM—FH	12	13 Caregiving 7:00 PM	14	15 NAMI 7:00 PM	16 FH/Kitchen-reserved	17
—————Homeless ———Shelter—————						
18 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM	19 Property 7:00 PM	20	21 Youth Group 7:00 PM	22	23 FH/Kitchen/ Sanctuary reserved	24 FH/Kitchen/ Sanctuary reserved
—————Week—————						
25 Casa Betania Service 4:00 PM	26	27	28 Youth Group 7:00 PM	29 Nurture 7:00 PM	30 FH/Kitchen-reserved	

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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

Leon Salmons—6/1	Lee Penner—6/9	Alec Stahly—6/19	Nathan Murphy—6/29
Judy Schrag—6/1	Betty Bartel—6/10	Bill Black—6/21	
Savannah Simmons—6/1	Kaitlin Abrahams—6/11	Linda Gaertner—6/22	
Ron Sybesma—6/2	Connie Weber—6/14	Laura Myers—6/23	
Riley Kingsley—6/3	Irene P. Schmidt—6/15	Terry Pryce—6/23	
Melody Bontrager—6/5	Angela Black—6/16	Shawn Bontrager—6/24	
Camryn Entz—6/9	Gus Dorado—6/16	Christa Hiebert—6/24	
	Zachary Kennell—6/16	Justin Dietzel—6/26	
	Wade Nye—6/16	Bentley Hiebert—6/26	
	Carolyn Miller—6/18	Sophia Miller—6/28	
	Don Schmidt—6/18	Xavier Garcia—6/29	



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Jim & Mary Enz—6/1	Clint & Pat Litsey—6/8	Melvin & Nancy Pauls—6/24
Rod & Andrea Pauls—6/1	Jim & Judy Schrag—6/11	Bob & Mary Lou Schmidt—6/29
Vernon & Velma Frey—6/2	Willis & Anna Marie Harder—6/12	Mike & Cindy Combs—6/30
Lee & Deb Penner—6/4	Clarence & Amanda Rempel—6/14	
Jim & Alice Huxman—6/5	John & Janice Good—6/16	
Randall & Carol Goering—6/6	Brian & Barbara Walker—6/20	
Ryan & Rachel Koehn—6/6	Kent & Lynette Erb—6/21	
Ron & Deb Ratzlaff—6/6	Harry & Joan Ensz—6/22	
Dwight & Janet Regier—6/7	Eric & Judy Murphy—6/23	



Yearbook Update

Helen Entz
3056 Ivy Court Apt. 8
North Newton, KS 67117

(Continued from page 2)

support. Second, be an active participant as we receive the recommendations and discern the road map for our journey. Finally, you can provide financial support. If you are passionate about the importance of supporting survivors, consider making a donation designated to the "GRACE Assessment." We need an additional \$6,000 to fully fund the GRACE Assessment.

I have chosen to support the assessment because I believe it is very important.

I look forward to our journey together and the people we will impact as we learn to reach widely and love well!

Ryan Koehn, Church Board Chair

FMC Connections

First Mennonite Church
PO Box 291
429 East First Street
Newton, KS 67114

June 2017



(Continued from page 3)

There are so many ways that we extend loving touch to one another within the congregation, both physically and metaphorically. Our greetings during the worship service, handshakes and hugs before and after in the hallways, high-fives with children and youth, and pats on the back all express our affection and caring for one another. Metaphorically, we touch one another through notes of encouragement, prayer, kind words of affirmation, acts of service, and welcoming one another.

We do not have that wonderful option of being touched physically by Jesus, but we know his “touch” as we come to understand God’s love for us. We can follow Jesus’ example to

touch people on a sacred level when we validate the pain and trauma they have experienced. Truly touching each other’s lives has less to do with seeing the joy and more to do with seeing the pain. Because when others truly see, understand and care about our pain then we have truly been seen. This is the ultimate example of Jesus’ touch. Let’s extend that touch, both physically and metaphorically, to one another as brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, so that all know that they are truly loved.

**Thanks to Kathy Wiens for contributions to this article.*