



FIRST
MENNONITE
CHURCH,
NEWTON

Our Mission is to glorify God:

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 7

July/August 2017

THANK YOU FOR TIME TO FINISH

“Christianity and the Arts with Mary Oyer. Well, that sounds interesting,” I remember saying to myself in the fall of 1994. Little did I know that an “interesting” class would begin a 22-year journey of taking seminary courses through Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

During these years, I took most courses in the Newton area but a few have been “hybrid” courses (half online, half on campus). Taking courses more consistently began in fall 2008 with taking at least one course a year. In 2010 I was admitted to the Masters of Divinity degree program but soon made a change to pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Christian Formation with an emphasis in Worship.

One year ago I was notified that if I could arrange to be a fulltime student for a semester, I could possibly complete the degree. When I recovered from the shock, I began working towards that end. Pastor Anita graciously petitioned the Church and Staff Relations

Committee for a policy change that would allow me, as a part-time employee, to request a sabbatical. It was approved. Following came approval from the Church Board for a sabbatical study leave and since last fall I have been in contact with the seminary to make arrangements for the courses and hours and anything else I might need to complete the degree.

As I have done before, I will be taking a hybrid course beginning August 7—“Canon and Community” taught by Loren Johns—and will be in Elkhart for one week, August 21-26. Then sabbatical is September 1 through December 31. I will continue with the “Canon and Community” course and will also take “Christian Rituals in Worship” taught by Rebecca Slough, “Preaching module” taught by Allan Rudy-Froese, and an independent study, “Christian Formation in the Congregation,” with Andy Brubacher Kaethler.

Last, and certainly not least, will be written and oral exams. The written exams con-



Pastor Kay Schroeder

sist of two 8-hour days of writing. The oral exams are with two seminary professors and they take place approximately 2 weeks following the written exams. I covet your prayers especially during those days and will let you know when those are! Sometime during the fall, I will go back to Elkhart for some days on campus.

My main focus for the fall and my sabbatical will be these studies. With this focus and a different schedule, I look forward to all God will show me and teach me through the studies as well as through having days with a different pace. I will worship in surrounding churches on Sundays and have

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BOOK REVIEW BY RUTH ANNE (DICK) ABRAHAM

Medieval Wisdom for Modern Christians: Finding Authentic Faith in a Forgotten Age with C. S. Lewis

Chris R. Armstrong

Brazos Press, Grand Rapids (2016)
Available at the WDC Resource Library

Chris Armstrong wrote this book primarily for the American evangelical Protestant audience, but it is relevant for all of Western Christianity today. Much of the Christian tradition, developed from the time of Christ through the Middle Ages, was lost during the Reformation. Armstrong hopes to reclaim these traditions.

He begins with a critique of the “American church today,” a “church in need of new life.” He examines four modern approaches which attempted unsuccessfully to address this need for new life.

First, modern apologetics, i.e. doctrine based on rational argument, has failed “as the questions of the unchurched have turned away from doctrine, and the agonies of the church have centered on spirituality and practice rather than belief.” Second, “the beguiling concerts and spectacles of the church-growth technicians have fallen short of their promise, revealing the dimly shallow spirituality behind the curtain.” Third, “charismatic experientialism,” i.e. emphasis on the immediateness of spiritual experience, “has faltered in the quest to build lasting, faithful, disciplined churches as worshipers have bounced from one high to the

next.” Fourth, the “emerging” church movement “never found a positive program for reform to accompany its often strident critique of current church culture.”

Armstrong continues his critique of American evangelicalism as he traces a particularly influential approach to religion which appeared in the 1800’s. The teaching of a “shorter way to holiness” was adopted by virtually all American Protestant denominations. Armstrong suggests that the essence of this teaching is found in what he calls “immediatism.” This view of the working of the Spirit tends to be “obsessed with novelty” and dismissive of the past. Immediatism demands “immediate action” to achieve a desired good, often without due consideration of whether the *means* of achieving that end is also good. The temperance movement and Prohibition grew from such a demand. When applied to interpreting the Bible, this view “allowed its devotees to bypass all mediating traditions and interpretations and go directly to the supposedly commonsense meaning of Scripture.” When applied to salvation, this immediatism instructs the Christian to “access God directly” without consulting any “human-made traditions.” The Christian must “go straight to the Throne.”

This embrace of immediate experience and rejection of tradition has led to spiritual poverty, Armstrong suggests. Modern man is unmoored from the past and from the present. Armstrong poses the question: “Could it be that God is driving us out of these

failed experiments and into the wilderness, traveling as pilgrims toward a more solid faith and a more faithful church?”

Armstrong employs the writing of C. S. Lewis to clarify the poverty of the modern church and to provide insights into possible remedies. C. S. Lewis viewed his own time, the mid-twentieth century, as suffering from “cultural darkness and amnesia.” He bemoaned the European cultural drift “far from its mooring in the Great Tradition of Christianized Greek thought,” the tradition which Lewis called “mere Christianity.” Materialism, utilitarianism and subjectivism were supplanting the wisdom from the past, with dire results. As a medievalist scholar and writer, Lewis, a “modern medieval man,” provides access to the spiritual wisdom of the pre-Reformation Christian tradition.

Armstrong groups medieval contributions to the Christian tradition in several chapters. Many of these contributions we take for granted today, without knowing their origin. The chapter “Getting Rooted” focuses on the medieval belief that tradition is a source of truth. Lewis highly valued the “Great Tradition of Christianized Greek thought.” This tradition developed on the basis of “careful, communal deliberation on Scripture.”

“Getting Thoughtful” presents the medieval passion for theological knowledge. Today we tend to disparage “scholastic” thinking and argument as ridiculous. In reality, medieval thinkers attempted to understand God’s physical world,

(Continued on page 3)

including its mystery. They held “reason and faith in a delicate balance,” where reason and argument were used “not to erase mystery but to carefully couch and protect it.”

“Getting Moral” emphasizes the power of storytelling to convey moral values. C. S. Lewis conveyed moral values through his storytelling. In medieval times Dante’s **Divine Comedy** used imagination to give “concrete embodiment” to “objective, transcendently grounded moral reality.”

“Getting Merciful” focuses on the medieval creation of the hospital. This important social institution developed during and after the crusades. The medieval hospital attended to the patient both physically and spiritually. Armstrong is particularly drawn to the medieval approach to dying, in which “the whole community” cares for the “whole person.” When the medieval person imitated Christ in ministry to the sick and dying, he was participating in Christ’s suffering.

“Getting Earthy” focuses on the medieval and classical view of nature as a divine book open to Christians and non-Christians alike. This view precluded a narrow view of salvation. Armstrong emphasizes the importance of “sacramentalism” in the Middle Ages. This view of nature served as a bridge to connect the spiritual world with the material.

“Sacramentalism is the concept that the outward and visible can convey the inward and spiritual.” The Reformation seems to have lost this bridge.

“Getting Passionate” presents the

development of the “religion of the heart.” Armstrong summarizes the Western mystical tradition with emphasis on late medieval English devotional writers. He does not introduce the Germanic mystical tradition which produced our Mennonite forebear, Hans Denck.

“Getting Human” has the subtitle, “How the Incarnation Lifts Up Our Humanness.” Armstrong laments the shallowness of the modern worldview, where the material world is depleted of “spiritual and moral significance.” “Philosophical materialism ... has sapped our physical world of life and mystery, including the life of God and the mystery of redemption.” In contrast, medieval man “saw God reflected and actively at work in every aspect of the created world.” Medieval man saw God becoming flesh—the Incarnation of Christ—as a supreme example of this connection between the physical and spiritual world.

The reviewer received this book through the Western District Conference traveling library, and it certainly provides insights into the spiritual inadequacies within our own Mennonite churches. We seem to be drawn increasingly into and focused on current trends and controversies of the broader culture. We have emphasized the wedge issues of homosexuality and abortion to the detriment of Christian fellowship. We have taken sides in the political world and given it God’s stamp of approval. We have suppressed our historical Mennonite traditions in the name of inclusiveness, thus becoming indistinguishable from any other progressive church. Reading this book is an opportunity to reflect

on the present state of our approach to Christianity. Discussion of the traditional Mennonite value of separation from the world would seem to be a good starting place for reclaiming historical Mennonite tradition.

**The reviewer grew up in First Mennonite Church and now lives in Austin, Texas and attends Austin Mennonite Church. Her husband, Jacob Abraham, comes from a Syrian Christian background in Kerala, India. Her daughter would like to maintain her connection with ethnic forebears – Russian Mennonite, Quaker/Methodist and Syrian Christian Indian – including their spiritual heritages.*

CHURCH BOARD REPORT

The board met on June 8, 2017. June Thomsen opened with devotions and prayer.

The theme of the board's June meeting was on the Faith-Focused and Mission-Minded parts of our mission statement. Each pastor and Commission/Committee representative reported on their Faith-Focused and Mission-Minded goals. Good progress is being made on the goals that were established in January.

The Kansas MDS unit has identified a client in need of a new home in Eureka, KS, following the 2016 spring tornado. MDS has secured funding for this project and is ready to move forward with plans for construction. In an effort to involve as many people as possible, a parking lot build is being planned to take place somewhere in the Newton area because that is where the largest pool of volunteers is. MDS is requesting to use First Mennonite's West parking lot for a week in the June/July timeframe. No money or volunteer commitment is being asked for, just the physical space. Having a house go up in the parking lot does create some energy both around town and in our congregation.

The Property Committee has approved and has brought the request to the board. The board approved MDS to use First Mennonite's west parking lot.

The board approved Dave Wiebe, Wendy Schrag, and Linda Shelly to serve as delegates at the Mennonite Church USA Orlando conference this year.

The board also approved Anita Kehr, Ib Thomsen, and June Thomsen to serve as delegates at the Western District Conference this year.

The Property Committee and the Financial Stewardship Committee recommended the south doors be replaced due to maintenance needs. The board approved spending \$10,768 to replace the doors.


Dave Wiebe provided an update on the GRACE assessment. It will consist of a 2- to 5-page written executive summary and written recommendations, which will be presented to the congregation. The board began discussing options for how to process the GRACE report, which is being completed in July. Charissa Dvorak from GRACE will come to New-

ton to present information to the congregation and will respond to every question that people may have. Dave is working with Charissa on possible dates for the presentation, which will likely be in the last full week of July. Watch the bulletin for information about the reporting schedule as soon as it is confirmed.

The Board read the FMC vision prayer as a closing.

Ryan Koehn
Chairman, Church Board

JULY 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	3	4 Church Office closed	5 Youth Group 6:30 PM	6	7	8
<hr/> Mennonite Church USA Convention Orlando, FL <hr/>						
9 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	10	11	12 Youth Group 6:30 PM	13 Kitchen reserved Church Board 7 PM	14 Kitchen reserved	15
16 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	17 Property 7 PM	18 Caregiving 7 PM	19 Worship Commission 11:30 AM	20	21	22
<hr/> Youth Group Missions Trip: DOOR Chicago <hr/>						
23 Casa Betania Service 4 PM Outreach 7:45 AM	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	31					

HAPPY BIRTHDAY—JULY

Remember to pray for each other!

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

Clay Nye—7/14	Dr. Tim Wiens—7/14
Myrna Grochowsky—7/15	Randall Goering—7/16
Wendy Funk Schrag—7/16	Cora Voran—7/16
Ron Bachman—7/17	Evelyn Smith—7/17
Michael Garcia—7/18	Evelyn Pankratz—7/18
Nancy Entz—7/21	Willis Harder—7/25
Cindy Epp—7/26	Jackson Hiebert—7/29
Larry Entz—7/30	Pat Litsey—7/31

Paul Voran—7/2
Paige Weaver—7/2
Nancy Pauls—7/3
Ray Franz—7/7
Kaven Denno—7/8
Rebecca Epp—7/8
Stephanie Brown—7/9
Donnie Kingsley—7/9
Janet Regier—7/10
Steven Voth—7/11
Delora Decker—7/12
Paul Buller—7/13



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY—JULY

Chuck & Bev Regier—7/2
Brody & Haleigh Machmer—7/2
Ken & Neva Frey—7/6
Ryan & Angela Nye—7/11
John & Jan Sommer—7/12
Randy & Lynnette Doty—7/14
Marvin & Carol Gerbrand—7/14
Nathan & Marissa Murphy—7/26
Ken & Amy Regier—7/30



(Continued from the front page)

about 2 weeks of rest and rejuvenation after December 15.

Deep, deep thanks to Pastor Anita, Pastor Joel, the Worship Commission, and the Caregiving and Membership Commission for all they will do this fall. Thank you to others who are also giving extra effort and time in worship and caregiving this fall.

Blessings to each one of you, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to finish this degree that was begun 22 years ago!



Discovering Opportunity for Outreach and Reflection

YOUTH SUMMER MISSION TRIP— July 16-21, 2017

Twenty-one youth and six sponsors will spend a week participating in the DOOR program in Chicago, IL. Youth will daily serve in a variety of locations including shelters, retirement communities, day cares, and more.

The theme for 2017 DOOR Chicago is “Beautifully Complicated!” In addition to service opportunities, the youth will learn and explore the complexities of the inner-city and cultural diversities. More info in court area at FMC.

Youth will share about DOOR and lead worship on July 23.

AUGUST 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 Nurture 7 PM	4 —WDC Annual Assembly—	5
6 Casa Betania Service 4 PM —Arlington, TX	7	8	9	10 Church Board 7 PM	11	12
13 Casa Betania Service 4 PM	14	15 Caregiving 7 PM	16	17	18	19
20 Casa Betania Service 4 PM Baptism at Camp Mennoscah	21 Property 7 PM	22	23	24	25	26
27 Casa Betania Service 4 PM Children's Day Celebration	28	29	30	31		
						

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

UPDATE FROM ROD PAULS

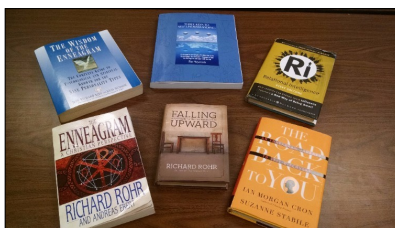


So...How Is Your Sabbatical Coming Along?

This question comes up quite a bit these days. If you take the picture above as a synopsis of what the first three months have been like then the answer is..."Pretty good!"

We've enjoyed having more time together as a family (more meals together at our dining room table, more freedom to work on things as they need to be worked on rather than trying to meet a deadline, more play time and (obviously) more time to hit the road for some fun trips. We just returned from a two week vacation which included Disneyland (a first for both Mattea and me); a beach house at Oxnard, CA; building quite a number of sand castles; visiting four national parks (including Sequoia where the world's two largest trees reside); and getting to hang out with family members on both sides of the family. After three months I feel as though I am finally decompressed and free from things that I normally stress about. Andrea has commented on several occasions that she really enjoys this freedom from work stress that I experience on sabbatical. Even though she continues to work at her counseling job 2-3 days each week, we are able to spend time together to work on house projects or do fun things with Mattea. On the house project front, we've been able to complete some backyard landscaping (including the deconstruction and

rebuild of a play set given to us by some friends). On a more personal front I've been able to go on some really nice bike rides and I've even lost almost ten pounds. So, yes...sabbatical is coming along nicely. Thanks for asking!



What Have You Been Doing on Sabbatical...to Grow and Develop?

This question doesn't come up quite so often, but it's a good one to ask. As I wrote you back in March, I'm working on a number of different growth areas, both personally and professionally. In the photo above you can see some of the books that I've been reading (I'm not through all of them yet). It's been exciting to read and learn more about the Enneagram, a personality type sorter that traces its history back to some of the Desert Fathers. *Ennea* is Greek for "nine," and *gramma* is Greek for "sign" or "figure." The Enneagram assigns numbers to each of nine different personality types (1-9). Each personality type (number) has certain characteristics associated with it. What the Enneagram shows most clearly is the motivation that drives each personality type. No one type is better than any other, of course, and each type carries both strengths and weaknesses. Often times the Enneagram is useful in revealing the things that get in the way of relating well with others and with God. The Enneagram also

helps to reveal the pathway to becoming the person that God intends a person to be. If you have questions about the Enneagram, or if you have been learning about it yourself, let me know. I would love to talk about it with you.

I've also read Richard Rohr's book *Falling Upward—a Spirituality for Two Halves of Life*. While I disagree with some of what Rohr has to say theologically, I believe that he is onto something when he says that there are "two halves" or two parts to our lives. The first half of life is about building a container—establishing who we are and realizing what it is that makes us significant. The second half of life is about finding the contents that will fill the container and will be delivered to others. According to Rohr a person usually begins to transition to the second half of life in their fifties (although some do it earlier and some never do). Since I am in my fifties, this is a good time to wrestle with this and to think about the contents that should "fill" my "container." As a person who has been in campus ministry for 32 years I have done a lot of "establishing." I believe that I have discovered what my gifts are and what it is that I have to offer others in this work and in life. Now I want to discover how I can become someone who helps others who are still on their first half of life journey. Again, if you have questions about any of this, feel free to ask.

I've also enjoyed regular conversations with an IV mentor, a spiritual director and my supervisor. God is using this time to help me grow in some significant ways.

CAREGIVING CORNER

The Love Languages: Acts of Service

We have considered 3 of the 5 Love Languages authored by Dr. Gary Chapman (quality time, words of affirmation, physical touch) in regards to how we “care” for each other in the context of congregational life. This month we consider another language, “Acts of Service.”

For people who have acts of service as their primary love language, actions like cooking a meal, setting a table, washing dishes, vacuuming, taking out the garbage, mowing the grass, washing the car, etc. are all seen

as expressions of love and care.

In congregational life we speak this language best by offering, and receiving, help from each other in tangible ways. Offering very real help when someone is going through difficult times—even before they can think to ask or realize they need help—is a powerful language of love. “Let me know if I can do something for you” is a lot less meaningful than “I would like to come and mow your yard on Wednesday. Let me know if that works with your schedule.”

It is also okay, however, to ask for a little help! The “small

needs” ministry of the Caregiving and Membership Commission is available. If you, **or someone you know**, are in need of a little help with fixing, assembling, moving, replacing, maintaining, etc. around the home, give the church office a call or contact one of the Caregiving and Membership Commission members. Let us know what it is that you need help with, and we’ll send someone your way who has volunteered to help with that particular type of task.

Let’s continue to care deeply for each other by offering these acts of service!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY—AUGUST

Emma Menninga—8/1
 Penny Dorado—8/2
 Albert Wiens—8/2
 Fern Koehn—8/5
 Ted Krehbiel—8/5
 Kathleen Neff—8/5
 Joey Menninga—8/6
 Rod Wedel—8/6
 Mike Combs—8/7
 Hannah Gaertner—8/7
 Janet Bair—8/11
 Joanna Epp—8/12
 Rachel Bachman—8/14
 Keith Knopp—8/14
 Bertha Steinle—8/15
 Kent Erb—8/16
 Phil Gaertner—8/16
 Anne Groves—8/16
 Ryan Weaver—8/18
 Rob Thieszen—8/19
 Carol Goering—8/20

Derek Entz—8/22
 Ethel Wedel—8/22
 Kathy Wiens—8/23
 Louise Janzen—8/24
 Bethanie Wedel—8/24
 Tonessa Driskill—8/25
 LaWanda Wiens—8/25
 Pat Denno—8/26
 Dwight Claassen—8/27
 Brent Voran—8/27
 Isaac Entz—8/28
 Alyssa Becker—8/29
 Rick Ortman—8/30
 Edith Harms—8/31
 Henry Nickel—8/31



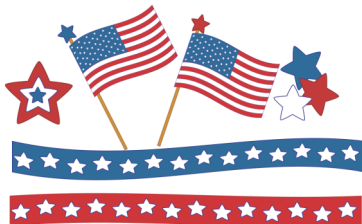
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY—AUGUST

Dwight & Connie Claassen—8/7
 Rich & Pat Denno—8/7
 Alan & Joan Entz—8/8
 Rod & Marsha Schmidt—8/11
 Greg & Melody Bontrager—8/12
 Tim & Michelle Regier—8/13
 Woody & Nora Miller—8/15
 Steven & Wynette Voth—8/15
 Bryan & Anita Kehr—8/16
 Brent & Cora Voran—8/17
 Dana & Kathleen Neff—8/18
 Eric & Lori Shelly—8/18
 Henry & Marilyn Nickel—8/21
 Dennis & Diane Flickner—8/23
 Greg & Laura Myers—8/24
 Justin and Angela Black—8/26
 Ronald & Shirley Dietzel—8/29

FMC Connections

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

July/August 2017



Fireworks Extravaganza

Tuesday, July 4

KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE
BLUESTEM COMMUNITIES
3005 Ivy Dr. in North Newton

8 to 9 p.m.—Family Celebration Time
9 p.m.—Opportunity Quilt Drawing
At Dusk—Fireworks Extravaganza Show

Kid's games, hot dogs, beverages & snacks
Bake & craft sale • Homemade ice cream • Opportunity Quilt ticket sales to benefit the Health Care Benevolent Fund

It's a family celebration

Fireworks Extravaganza is Kidron Bethel Maintenance Department's annual gift to residents, families and the community and Friends of Kidron fundraising event for the Kidron Health Care Benevolent Fund.

Bring your lawn chairs!

Flashlights recommended for ease in navigating to and from parking areas.

Health Care Benevolent Fund Benefit

