



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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BLESSING

Before I went on a sabbatical from my prior congregation in 2008, I applied for a grant from the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program—and received it! It was a wonderful gift that allowed our family and me to do things we couldn’t have done otherwise, but writing the grant also helped me think carefully about and express clearly what I wanted to experience during my time away from the church.

As I worked on the grant application with others in the congregation, one of the themes that emerged was an exploration of the role of visual art and beauty in worship. Over time, I had learned that, for some people, what they see is their entrée into worship; they need a visual element—not necessarily a concrete illustration but something of beauty—to focus themselves on God. During my sabbatical, I wanted to learn more about this way of coming to worship because my own way is quite different.

Over the course of the sabbatical, I read a number of books about art and worship, and I attended a conference that was a mixture of spiritual retreat, arts festival, and creative workshop. I also came across an Irish author named John O’Donohue who had written a book titled, simply, *Beauty*. O’Donohue had been a Catholic priest and, after leaving the priesthood, had continued to write from a perspective of Celtic Christianity. Along the way, I found another book of his entitled, *To Bless the Space Between Us*, (1) which has become a book of the heart for me.

“A blessing,” O’Donohue writes, “evokes a privileged intimacy. It touches that tender membrane where the human heart cries out to its divine ground.... A blessing is not a sentiment or a question; it is a gracious invocation where the human heart pleads with the divine heart. There is nothing more intimate in a life than the secret underterritory where it anchors....



Pastor Anita Kehr

“In the parched deserts of postmodernity a blessing can be like the discovery of a fresh well. It would be lovely if we could rediscover our power to bless one another. I believe each of us can bless. When a blessing is invoked, it changes the atmosphere. Some of the plenitude flows into our hearts from the invisible neighborhood of loving kindness. In the light and reverence of blessing, a person or situation becomes illuminated in a completely new way. In a dead wall a new window opens, in dense darkness a path starts to glimmer, and into a broken heart healing falls like morning dew. It is ironic that so often we continue to live like paupers though our inheritance of spirit is so vast. The quiet eternal that dwells in our souls is silent

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MEN'S GROUP PHOTOS



PETRA MEAL FUNDRAISER PHOTOS



CAREGIVING CORNER

Do you have interest in occasionally volunteering a little time to help someone with a small job around their home? The “Small Jobs” caring ministry of the Caregiving and Membership Commission has compiled a list of volunteers who have indicated their willingness to occasionally volunteer their time and the type of job that they are interested in helping with. Would you consider adding your name to the list? The categories identified so far are minor plumbing, electrical, minor auto repair, outdoor maintenance, light carpentry, IT, transportation to and from medical appointments, and

transporting and accompanying someone to special church events (funerals). Contact a Caregiving and Membership commission member to add your name to one or more of these categories.

Also, are you currently aware of someone who would benefit from a “small job” volunteer coming to help them out with something? You could certainly encourage that person to call the church office or contact a member of Caregiving and Membership Commission. Or you could go a step further and ask their permission to

look into this for them. And then you could make the initial contact to the church office or CMC member on their behalf. Many folks find it hard to ask for help. Sometimes this may take the encouragement, or action, of another person who cares and can see the need.

Let’s continue to love and care for one another in this way!

CHURCH BOARD REPORT

The board met on May 10, 2018. Andrea Regier opened with devotions and prayer. The devotions were based on Psalm 97.

The board reviewed and approved each of the HUT recommendations. Ownership was assigned for carrying out each of the recommendations. The work of the Hope through Understanding Team is complete. The board is appreciative for the work that HUT completed.

The board approved revisions to the Caring Fund Guidelines, The Policy for the Care and Accountability for Sexual Abusers, and The Policy for the Care of Survivors of Sexual Abuse.

Each of the pastors presented reports. Kay passed around her diploma.

During the Commission/Committee reports, the Caregiving and Membership Commission reported that they have heard the testi-

monies of the eight baptismal candidates.

Ryan Koehn
Chairman, Church Board

UPDATE FROM ROD AND ANDREA PAULS

Jared* is someone I met several months ago while I was working an evangelistic booth (known as a Proxe Station) on the UNM campus. Our topic that day was "Choices." Specifically I was asking students what choices they thought were most important during their college years and how those choices impacted them throughout their lives. I asked them to talk with me about what they thought were good choices and bad choices. I ended the presentation by offering to share how Jesus wants to help us make the best choices in our lives. Jared is not a student, but happened to be on campus and he was intrigued by my table display. We ended up talking for more than an hour. He came back the next week and talked with me some more. We began meeting on regular basis (weekly for the most part) to continue our conversation about his spiritual views and questions about the Christian faith. Over the course of several months I've seen his desire to really engage with Scripture and with the Christian world view increase dramatically. Jared was raised in a church background, but walked away from faith during his teen-aged years. He's intelligent, compassionate and very interested in understanding the truth. I've been impressed and encouraged by how eagerly he looks forward to our times of conversation, often texting me to ask whether or not we are getting

together. I think the Hound of Heaven is pursuing Jared and my prayer is that at some point very soon he will say "yes" to Jesus and become a follower of One who is *the Truth*.

Jared is one example of many students I've had the privilege of interacting with over the course of the past year. Aaron* is also an atheist/agnostic who stopped by my Proxe table numerous times to talk about spiritual beliefs. He is a deep thinker who often makes



my head spin with the way that he describes his thoughts. Still... he seems interested in the Christian message. He told me not too long ago that he really enjoys talking with me, that he feels that I listen to him more intently than other people he meets on campus. We discovered, much to our delight, that he works at the same meat market that Andrea and I frequent. Even though I don't always see him on campus, I now know where I can run into him.

Margaret* stopped by the Proxe table one day and talked with me

for just a few minutes. It turns out that she is a graduate student, working on her Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences. I invited her to our weekly Graduate Christian Fellowship Bible study and she started to come. She told me at one point that she had not been to church in a while and that the Bible study was helping her get closer to God.

The Graduate Christian Fellowship at UNM is making a solid impact on campus, even though our numbers are not always very large. It has been exciting to see students becoming more interested in pursuing spiritual nourishment. One student is close to completing his doctorate degree. For years he never really wanted to study Scripture. This year he has started attending on a weekly basis and seems to have come alive spiritually. Another student who came to us from a rather rigid kind of church background discovered that meeting with students from other streams of Christianity was helpful to his own spiritual growth.

All of these stories, and many others, would not be possible without the financial and prayer support that First Mennonite church gives to our ministry. Even though you live in a differ-

(Continued on page 5)

ent state and are not physically present on the UNM campus, you are there through your partnership with me. The impact you are making is tremendous. Thank you so much!

Our family is doing well and is looking forward to a summer full of some fun activities. The end of June will see us gathering with Pauls family relatives for our triennial reunion. July will give us an opportunity to welcome a new member of the family as our niece (one of Mattea's Arizona cousins) gets married. At the end of July we have the Regional Staff Conference for Rocky Mountain IV staff in Denver, CO.

And we may take a little family vacation trip in August before school gets started again. In between all of those adventures we plan to be at home in Albuquerque— working, resting, making progress on house projects and enjoying time together as a family. Mattea will be a fourth-grader this coming year and so we look forward to visiting as many national parks as we can. (Fourth-graders can get their whole carload in for free.)

If you would like become part of our financial support team, you may do that through your giving to First Mennonite. Simply make your check payable to the church

and indicate that you want it to go for the support of Rod, Andrea and Mattea Pauls. Our fiscal year ends June 30 and this year my ministry expenses are exceeding my gift income by just a little bit. If the Lord leads you to give something to our support in June it could help us to end the year without any financial shortfall. Again, thank you so much for all that you do to partner with us in this work!

* indicates a name change for privacy

and subtle; in the activity of blessing it emerges to embrace and nurture us. Let us begin to learn how to bless one another. Whenever you give a blessing, a blessing returns to enfold you.”

O'Donohue's blessings are poetic but they're not poems. They are also not schmaltzy (if you know what I mean). Some of them are quite challenging and call to different ways of understanding self and situation, especially in times of change and challenge.

That is the kind of time that we have been in as a congregation: a time of change and challenge. These times offer us opportunities for growth even as they are sometimes difficult to navigate. And so, I offer to us all a blessing from John O'Donohue, this

one for coming to a sense of balance especially when it's needed. May we together hear God's joy.



For Equilibrium

Like the joy of the sea coming home to shore,
May the relief of laughter rinse through your soul.

As the wind loves to call things to dance,
May your gravity be lightened by grace.

Like the dignity of moonlight restoring the earth,
May your thoughts incline with reverence and respect.

As water takes whatever shape it is in,
So free may you be about who you become.

As silence smiles on the other side of what's said,
May your sense of irony bring perspective.

As time remains free of all that it frames,
May your mind stay clear of all its names.

May your prayer of listening deepen enough
To hear in the depths the laughter of God.

(1) John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*, New York: Doubleday, 2008.

JUNE 2018

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat



1
Church reserved for wedding

2
Sanctuary reserved 10AM-6PM

—————Homeless—————

3
Casa Betania Service 4PM
FH reserved 9-10:30 AM
FH reserved 11AM-3PM

4
Prayer Room 6:30 PM reserved
Ladies Exercise-FH 7PM
Rm. 225 reserved 6:15 PM
Prayer Meeting 6:30 PM

5
Prayer Room reserved 7PM

6

7
Ladies Exercise-FH 7PM
Rm 224-225 reserved 5:30PM
Nurture 7PM

8
VBS Cookout 5:45-6:45PM

9
VBS 8:30AM-3:00PM

Shelter—————Week—————

10
Casa Betania Service 4PM
FH reserved 9-10:30AM
FH/Kitchen reserved 3-9PM
Warkentin RM reserved 3PM

11
Rm. 225 reserved 6:15 PM
Prayer Meeting 6:30 PM

12

13

14
Ladies Exercise-FH 7PM
Rm 224-225 reserved 5:30PM
Church Board 7PM

15
Church reserved for wedding

16
Church reserved for wedding

17
Casa Betania Service 4PM
FH reserved 9-10:30AM
FH/Kitchen reserved 5-9PM

18
Rm. 225 reserved 6:15 PM
Prayer Meeting 6:30 PM
Property 7PM

19

20

21
Ladies Exercise-FH 7PM
Rm 224-225 reserved 5:30PM
NAMI 7PM

22

23

24
Casa Betania Service 4PM
FH reserved 9-10:30AM

25
Rm. 225 reserved 6:15 PM
Prayer Meeting 6:30 PM

26

27

28
Ladies Exercise-FH 7PM
Rm 224-225 reserved 5:30PM

29
Church reserved

30
Church reserved

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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

Judy Schrag—6/1

Savannah Simmons—6/1

Ron Sybesma—6/2

Joyce Pankratz—6/2

Riley Kingsley—6/3

Melody Bontrager—6/5

Darlene Bontrager—6/9

Camryn Entz—6/9

Lee Penner—6/9

Betty Bartel—6/10

Kaitlin Abrahams—6/11

Connie Weber—6/14

Irene P. Schmidt—6/15

Angela Black—6/16

Gus Dorado—6/16

Zachary Kennell—6/16

Wade Nye—6/16

Carolyn Miller—6/18

Remember to pray for each other!

Don Schmidt—6/18

Bill Black—6/21

Linda Gaertner—6/22

Laura Myers—6/23

Terry Pryce—6/23

Shawn Bontrager—6/24

Christa Hiebert—6/24

Justin Dietzel—6/26

Bentley Hiebert—6/26

Sophia Miller—6/28

Xavier Garcia—6/29

Nathan Murphy—6/29



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Jim & Mary Enz—6/1

Rod & Andrea Pauls—6/1

Vernon & Velma Frey—6/2

Lee & Deb Penner—6/4

Jim & Alice Huxman—6/5

Randall & Carol Goering—6/6

Ryan & Rachel Koehn—6/6

Ron & Deb Ratzlaff—6/6

Dwight & Janet Regier—6/7

Clint & Pat Litsey—6/8

Peter & Jennie Wintermote—6/9

Jim & Judy Schrag—6/11

Willis & Anna Marie Harder—6/12

Clarence & Amanda Rempel—6/14

John & Janice Good—6/16

Sam & Barbara Claassen—6/17

Brian & Barbara Walker—6/20

Kent & Lynette Erb—6/21

Harry & Joan Ensz—6/22

Eric & Judy Murphy—6/23

Matthew & Erin Graber—6/24

Melvin & Nancy Pauls—6/24

Bob & Mary Lou Schmidt—6/29

Mike & Cindy Combs—6/30



Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School will take place on June 8 and 9. On Friday, June 8, 5:45-6:45 PM, we will kick off VBS with a cookout here at FMC in the parking lot by the playground and swimming at the Newton

public pool, 7:00-9:00 PM. On Saturday, June 9, VBS will run from 8:30 AM-3:00 PM. Preschoolers will have a shortened day ending at 11:30 AM. The theme will be "Together in Christ." Children will have an opportunity to take a closer look at our church logo, using scripture, stories, songs, and activities to discover what it

means to be rooted deeply, to reach widely, and to love well. Adults may pre-register children by writing their name on the sign-up sheet in the Court Area. The VBS Committee is seeking volunteers to help with all or part of Saturday. A sign-up sheet is also available for that in the Court Area. If you have a question, contact Deb Ratzlaff, Bryan Kehr, or Gail Pryce.

FMC Connections

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

June 2018



Thank you so much! Your gift is a blessing to our ministry and our residents!!

A very special thank you to all the children in the Sunday School classes for the money you raised to help us buy a new bunk bed for our shelter. We sometimes have families with 3-4 children and the room can be very crowded. The bunk bed will definitely help give a little more space for the children and their family to stay in.

~New Hope Shelter

