

Menno-Life



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On Palm Sunday during the children's time, children and adults circled the sanctuary with palm branches and colorful scarves as part of the children's story. Above left, Brycson Rivera and Ashton Cluts, and at right, Evan Blount and Ellie Hartzler, wave palms and scarves.

Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation: Our lived experience as the Body of Christ

This is part two of two articles in which Theda and Wanda reflect on their roles as Pastor of Connections and Pastor of Spiritual Formation respectively.

I've got to admit it! When I think of my role here at First Mennonite Church in the context of this new title, Pastor of Spiritual Formation, I get very excited! In the church, what doesn't fall under "spiritual

formation?" Our giving shapes us. Whenever we sit down and meet together or work together on a project, we are quite practically being formed and reshaped in faith. Christian education and Sunday school form and inform our spiritual lives. Bible study shapes us in faith. Our relationships and interactions with each other significantly impact our growth as Jesus followers! Worship is a practice that forms us over time. And preaching is an act of corporate spiritual formation as well as an act of corporate pastoral care. Perhaps it's already clear; the problem for me is not going to be seeing the intersections between my work and my role as Pastor of Spiritual Formation! I see these intersections everywhere!

So if everything is spiritual formation, how helpful is the title? First, it's been quite helpful as Pastor Theda and I have given thought to how we will divide the responsibilities of representing pastoral staff on particular commissions and committees. Some things naturally fall under "connections" while others seem to be obviously "spiritual formation." In addition, the titles have been a refreshing way to understand invitations for our time and participation in the community. For me, thinking of functioning as Pastor of Spiritual Formation has already been a helpful focus in preparing for, reflecting on, and evaluating my work.

Spiritual formation, like formation in any discipline requires practices that over time shape us as Jesus followers. It's my experience that while some practices have sustained me over nearly a lifetime, there are others that I learn and observe only for specific seasons. I believe that part of my focus on spiritual formation, then, will be as a partner in discernment as individuals and as a faith community we observe tried and true practices and as we engage in practices that may be new to us.

Finally, spiritual formation is integrally connected to following Jesus. As we follow Jesus, know him better and love him more, we are becoming more like him. Spiritual formation then, is a lived experience of transformation. It's powered by the Spirit's presence and activity in our daily lives. It's a process or a journey of becoming more and more the people that God calls us to be. It's a learning, growing, practicing, course-correcting, starting again adventure! And this cannot be separated from our lives, every day, and on Sunday. Spiritual formation is our lived experience as the Body of Christ.

~Pastor Wanda

Dates to remember

April 8 – Comforter set up, 2 p.m.

April 8 – Ministerial review, AR, 4 p.m.

April 9 – MW comforter knotting, 7-9 p.m., FH

April 10 -- MW comforter knotting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., FH

April 11 – Pastor visit with MMH residents, 2:30 p.m.

April 15 – Ministerial review, 301, 9:15 a.m.

April 15 – Church/college relations Sunday, Randy Keeler preaching

April 15 – Church/college relations luncheon, noon, FH

April 20 – Menno-Life deadline

April 26 – Pastor visit with MC residents, 2:30 p.m.

April 29 – Mentoring breakfast, 8 a.m., FH

April 29 – Music Sunday

“Pastoral Prayer” becomes “Community Prayer”

As Mennonites we believe in the priesthood of all believers. Simply said, we believe that everyone has access to God and we all bear the responsibility to use our gifts in the context of the church and community. Here at First Mennonite Church we have identified “Gifts Expression” as one of our five priorities.

Gifts Expression: We have a deep desire to engage the gifts we hold in service to God and others, in congregational life and in the world. We deliberately seek to discover new gifts, inviting people to lifelong development and expression of the fruit of the Spirit, natural abilities, skills, and training that constitute the gifts of the Spirit.

During our time of transition, we have had the privilege of using the gifts of the deacons and others who have ministry experience to lead us in our “Pastoral Prayer.” We can argue that this indeed is a pastoral prayer with others using their pastoral gifts without the title of pastor. We would like to continue to offer this space for prayer to this gifted group of folks. In an effort to avoid confusion, we will be changing the name to “Community Prayers” to recognize that deacons and others are welcome to lead the prayer in addition to our pastors. We believe this is in line with our priorities of expressing the gifts of the congregation. Please note that we continue the practice of only publicly naming prayers of folks who have given us specific permission to name their concern.

~ Pastors Wanda and Theda

Ministry review process allows inclusion of many voices

It hardly seems possible that Pastor Wanda is approaching her third anniversary as pastor of FMC! As Staff Relations Committee, we have worked closely with her over these past few years to transition into her role and to support her in all the many changes and chances of life that we have experienced.

Part of our role is also to make sure that we as a congregation participate in mutual ministry reviews from time to time. Her three-year anniversary is the occasion of the first formal review. We are using a review format from Mennonite Church USA: Pastoral/Congregational Review, The Appreciative Way. http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PastoralCongregationalReview_AppreciativeInquiry.pdf

This review format allows us to engage more fully as a congregation in our reflection of Pastor Wanda’s work as well as our own during her tenure.

Staff Relations Committee members and helpers will be interviewing Sunday school classes for this purpose. Those not in Sunday schools will also have two opportunities – April 8 at 4 p.m. in assembly room or April 15 at 9:15 a.m. in Room 301 upstairs. Information will be summarized and presented to Pastor Wanda and then to the congregation in May. This date of review completion allows 90 days for mutual discernment of information and any needed adjustments. Based on the review, Staff Relations will present a recommendation to be voted on at the August Congregational Meeting.

Information about the review process has been placed in church mailboxes (GREEN sheet). In addition, there will be regular updates in the bulletin. It is important that *everyone* in the congregation participate, including frequent visitors. Please see the GREEN sheet for a copy of Pastor Wanda’s job description, the 5 Priorities – Summary (of FMC) and questions for reflection about our congregation and our pastor.

We are excited about this process and the inclusion of so many voices in this mutual reflection.

Members of Staff Relations are always open to questions – Rich Bucher, Annette Heslep, Elizabeth Kelly, and Ken Shenk.
~ Staff Relations Committee

Continuing to collect items for Andrew's Place

MW project night: Knotting comforters April 9 and 10

Men, women, and children are invited to join Mennonite Women in the fellowship hall for the April comforter knotting days Monday, April 9, at 7 p.m. and Tuesday, April 10, from 9 a.m.-noon. Most comforter tops are Wanda's for her "60 tops sewn by her 60th birthday – 60 x 60." No prior experience in knotting is required!

On Monday evening the devotional focus will be "Initiate," shared by Louise Matthews. Anna Liechty Sawatzky writes in the devotional, "In Matthew 4, Jesus is beginning his ministry. He has been baptized by John and has been tested by Satan. His first task is to find disciples who will share in his ministry. In studying his method, we learn something valuable for our own mission -- that sometimes we put out an offer and allow others to respond. Sometimes we initiate, and the invitation draws people."

Julie Mackey and Monica Harnish will provide refreshments Monday evening. Following comforter knotting on Tuesday, all are invited to stay for lunch. If you are able, bring a salad or dessert and table service. Sandwiches and beverages will be provided. We are continuing to collect supplies for Andrew's House in the *labeled box found on the fellowship hall pew*. Learn about Andrew's House from documents posted on the MW pillar. *A complete wish list is included there.*

SHYF breakfast fundraiser a success

Daylight savings time change no deterrent to pancake fans

On March 11, the SHYF hosted a pancake breakfast fundraiser. Despite the extra early morning with the beginning of daylight savings time, the youth arrived ready to make pancakes.

Diners who willingly got themselves out of bed earlier than usual were rewarded with strawberry and chocolate varieties of pancakes. With your help, the youth raised \$292 for their summer service trip with MDS and for the 2019 MCUSA Youth Convention.



Filling their plates with pancakes are (from left) Heidrun Awad, Alice Ruth Ramseyer and Mary Ina Hooley.

SHYF thanks you for your support!

Jeff Boehr creates workshop: Making meaning of last years of life

In their final year of study, AMBS Master of Arts in Christian Formation students complete a final project -- a ministry program for spiritual formation to be implemented in a specific setting. Jeff Boehr, a member of FMC, is creating a two-part workshop to help people who are approaching the last years of their life explore what it looks like to make meaning of this life stage together. It's designed to be offered in retirement homes or congregations. Jeff explains his project here.

"In the workshops we'll worship together and address topics such as formation, God's presence and being attentive to each other and to God, giving creative responses about what we've heard from each other and what we notice in ourselves. I hope this will be a process that people can continue to do together, forming practices to help them through the losses they'll face." I'm interested in exploring their experiences. Has the church helped them, or not? How are we still being formed as people when we're also experiencing loss?

Thinking about my own life stage and my parents' -- and my Clinical Pastoral Education internship at a hospital -- really brought this into focus for me. In the hospital I saw people working to make meaning in a time of change or loss. Moments of re-orientation can really throw us off if we're not intentionally thinking about what they might mean for us. Engaging what it means to live life with God and with each other in AMBS classes also inspired me to explore this topic.



Jeff and Beth Boehr

Following graduation, I could imagine doing chaplaincy work in a retirement setting. I'm also open to serving in a congregation or in the wider church.

Jeff and his wife, Beth, currently live in Elkhart, IN. He is the son of Dick and Corrinne Boehr. He and Beth have two sons, Jacob (Erica) and Micah (Ariel) and three grandchildren.

BHS students participate in National School Walkout



Several FMC youth were among the Bluffton High School students who participated in the National School Walkout on March 14 to raise awareness about issues of school safety and the impact of gun violence. Pictured from left, are Sophia Gott, Patrick Estell, Christopher Harnish and Ana Neufeld Weaver.

The nationwide event involved thousands of students and teachers and many of the marches lasted 17 minutes to represent each of the victims of the February 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, FL.

MyNeighbor card

Use of Everence products generates sharing fund

The Everence Sharing Fund provides shared/matching grants to help people in need as part of the Everence mission to help members integrate their finances with their faith.

Money to fund our grants is generated by the sale of Everence products and services. First Mennonite has 170 Everence members who participate in products and services from Everence Financial or Everence Federal Credit Union. Because of their participation, First Mennonite will receive up to \$2,500 in matching grants in 2018.

My card, My Cause, My Neighbor is one of Everence's products. Some features include:

- Change your Neighbor at any time
- No additional costs to you
- Monitor your credit card account and make payments through online banking or the mobile app



How does this work?

Each time you use your MyNeighbor card, you generate 1.50 percent of your transaction amount as a donation from Everence. You can designate which charitable cause, like our church, you want to receive your earned donation.

In 2017, MyNeighbor cardholders generated over **\$205,000** for 265 charitable organizations and congregations like ours.

Where do we start? Visit everence.com/MyNeighbor to learn more or apply.
Everence Federal Credit Union (800) 451-5719 MyNeighbor@everence.com

If you need some help or have questions, please contact **Rich Bucher at 419.358.0505 or richardwbucher@yahoo.com**. Rich is FMC's Everence Advocate.