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Hymn sing: Celebrating our past and looking to our (musical) future

(This is an excerpt from Mark Suderman's Interlude during January 12 hymn sing.)

In 1992 First Mennonite Church received a new hymnal – *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. This new hymnal followed the 1969 *The Mennonite Hymnal*, which followed the 1940 *The Mennonite Hymnary*. As you can tell by these dates, we do make changes in hymnals about every 25 years. I should also note the years our supplements came out: *Sing the Journey* (2005) and *Sing the Story* (2007).

This fall, 2020, we will receive our copies of the newest Mennonite hymnal: *Voices Together*. We have ordered pew editions, large print editions, worship leader editions, and accompaniment editions. Why do we need a new hymnal? The compilers of this new hymnal state that, “*Voices Together* is a new worship and song collection for the Mennonite church designed to deepen our lives of faith. Representing a variety of musical styles and patterns of worship, *Voices Together* will contain both new songs and old favorites, as well as comprehensive indexes by topic, tune, Scripture and first line.” Part of the purpose of making a new hymnal is to reflect and amplify shifts happening in the church, in the lives of people, and in society. About half the material in *Voices Together* will be drawn from the existing hymnal and supplements. It will also contain some new items never seen before in a Mennonite hymnbook, including 12 works of visual art by 12 Anabaptist artists.

So, a new hymnbook. To be honest, I have some worries. I have favorite hymns that I hope are in the new hymnal but might not be. I have become familiar and comfortable with this hymnal and its wonderful supplements of *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*. Can I get used to something different? But I also realize that many of the hymns that I now love were not in the previous hymnal. Perhaps, and most likely, there are new hymns that will become part of my list of favorites. Plus, how can I continue to grow in my faith and relate to changes in our world if I don't look for what is new? We often discover that these new hymns deeply speak to us. We take more time paying attention to the words of new hymns, rather than just assuming we know what it says. And sometimes the new music really draws us to a different reality and emotion. Beyond these types of questions and thoughts, there are the practical ones, like: Do we just put the new hymnals in and discard the others? Currently there is no plan for how we might combine our current hymnals with the new hymnal. That will be decided after we see what is in the new hymnal and how worship at First Mennonite Church can best be enhanced with this new musical resource. I remind you that our singing does make a difference in this world. In all the contentious rhetoric, singing is one thing that we can do together. It makes a strong statement about who we are and who we wish to be.

I thought it would be fun to look up some facts about our current hymnals and how we have used them at FMC. First, a disclaimer: these facts are based on the past 10 or so years of singing and only reflect music sung mainly during Sunday morning worship services; and these facts were compiled by a less-than-perfect director of music.

- In HWB, we have sung 413 different hymns of 658
- In STJ, we have sung 66 different hymns of 118
- In STS, we have sung 67 different hymns of 124
- This means that we have sung over 60% of what is in our books.

From what research I could gather (it was difficult to find much), most congregations only know or sing somewhere between 50-200 hymns. The total for us is 546 unique hymns. I believe that says a lot for our diversity in music, for our willingness to try new music, and our ability to have enough resources and gifts to learn a lot of new music. For all these things, I am very grateful to you and to the music directors and leaders who have served before me. More facts:

- The top 3 hymns in HWB we sang the most in the last 10 years were (and remember that these were chosen by more people than just me) and not including hymns of dedication or sending:
 - #3 *Here in this place* – a new hymn to our Mennonite hymnody, coming from the Lutheran denomination
 - #2 *Holy Spirit, come with power* – a new text from an Anabaptist writer and music from the Sacred Harp
 - #1 *We are people of God's peace* – a new translation of Menno Simons written for the 1990 Mennonite World Conference.
 - So, the top three pieces we've sung in the last 10 years are pieces that weren't (at least in text) even in existence when the previous hymnal was published
- Top hymn in STS was *Nothing is lost on the breath of God* (text and music written in 1996)
- Top hymn in STJ was *God of the Bible* (text 1996 & music 2001)

In the fall when this new book arrives, we will have the opportunity to sing a mixture of familiar and new hymns: music that will remind us of the past and our lives together, music that will enliven our current worship, help us think in new ways about theology, connect us more deeply with changing cultures, and broaden our Anabaptist heritage.

Lastly, a personal thank you to the many of you who offer so much to the musical life in our congregation. It is a blessing to me and to many others. We have a congregation of excellent singers that are willing and open to try new pieces and not always hymns that are easily accessible. We are very fortunate to have incredible instrumentalists with many varied musical gifts in our congregation that help lead us in a variety of ways.

We raised more than \$3,500 at our hymnal celebration event. That is almost half of what the total cost will be. There is still time for more monetary gifts toward this purchase. Our bill does not come due until May.

~ Mark Suderman

December 2019's direct giving breaks records

In December during the Sunday morning announcements, we shared our financial position: spending plan giving was lagging behind expenses by about \$42,000, and we were dipping into our reserves to ensure positive cash flow. The congregation's generous response to this update was amazing.

Over the last decade, our giving during the month of December has been high, in the \$40,000-\$50,000 range, and in really good years, it reached \$55,000-\$56,000. Those giving levels were reached in 2015, 2013, and 2011. In 2019, we broke that record by over \$10,000 – your generosity in **direct giving to the spending plan exceeded \$67,000** during the month of December.

We broke another record in 2019. For the first time, our total direct giving to the spending plan broke the \$400,000 mark, again by a \$10,000 margin. **Direct giving came in right at \$410,000 for 2019.** In 2018, our direct giving to the spending plan was around \$380,000.

Finalized numbers will be presented in late February as we prepare to close out the books on 2019, but what we do know right now is that we narrowed that \$42,000 gap between spending plan giving and expenses at the beginning of December to a gap of around \$5,000 at the end of the year. Thank you for your incredible generosity.

~Stewardship Commission: Lynn Miller, Andrea Goings, Kendra Nickel, Heidrun Awad, Mark Novak, and Carrie Mast

FMC group plans learning trip to US/Mexico border

Migration is a human experience. From the earliest known records of ancient times we know that people have for centuries moved from territory to territory. The idea of land ownership has evolved and it's easy for us to think that what we experience now is how it has always been. This is not the case.

I believe the urge to migrate is linked to our curiosity to investigate. This is a first world approach to migration. We have a need to explore and know what is beyond, discover new worlds, push the boundaries of our scientific and technical limits. This yearning to know and understand and explore has provided benefits to our world for centuries.

For those in third world countries their urgency for migration is quite different. Economic and political unrest, safety and educational opportunities are all part of the urgency to find a better life for individuals and families in a third world context.

When humans first broke the earth's atmosphere, it was for the purpose to explore space and land on the moon. What they did not expect was how much their perspective of the earth would change. They had this startling and amazing view of earth, just hanging in the void.

Julia Calderone, in writing about the Apollo 8 mission in 1968, described the perspective of earth from space this way.

This state of mental clarity, called the "overview effect," occurs when you are flung so far away from Earth that you become totally overwhelmed and awed by the fragility and unity of life on our blue globe. It's the uncanny sense of understanding the "big picture," and of feeling connected yet bigger than the intricate processes bubbling on Earth.

From space one does not see country borders, nor state or providence borders, let alone county or property borders. Our borders, wherever they may be, are not how our world was created. Humanity imposes borders deciding who can cross borders, who can come in and who must stay out.

The subject of borders can seem overwhelming and I'm not here to say that borders are wrong or can't be helpful. I do think we need to examine our concept of borders and understand the bigger picture – to be *"awed by the fragility and unity of life on our blue globe."*

Ten individuals from First Mennonite will travel to the US/Mexico border in south Texas March 3-8. We hope that by going we will gain a better understanding of the complexities of border life from those who live there, those who work there, and those who would like to cross and are finding it difficult to do so. While learning, we also hope to be helpful to organizations who are working to provide shelter and feed the immigrants who are stranded in the borderland in both countries.

My hunch is that we will also gain a different perspective of where we came from in northwest Ohio. Much like those who go into space and look back to earth, how will our perspectives change? ~ Pastor Theda

The trip is organized and promoted by Mission, Peace and Service. Those who are going include Ana, Laurel and Paul Neufeld Weaver; Jan Wiebe and Theo Andreas; Lynda Nyce; Melissa Friesen; Monica Harnish; Fran Core; and Theda Good.

They're graduating!

Touching base with FMC's high school seniors

Do you know all of the high school seniors at First Mennonite? In case you've lost track, we have six seniors this year, including Ana Neufeld Weaver, Grace Paquin, Jacob Biesecker-Mast, Patrick Estell, Sophia Gott, and Danielle Novak. In the December issue, we heard from Ana and Grace. Read below to learn more about two more of our seniors! The final two – Patrick Estell and Jacob Biesecker-Mast – will be profiled in the April issue.

Senior: Sophia Gott

Parents: Liana and Chris Gott; grandparents: Linda and Lynn Miller

Plans after graduation: I will be attending either EMU or Arizona State University with a double major music and social work or major in music therapy.

1. Describe yourself in 5 words or less.
Creative, funny, confidently insecure.
2. What are 3 things you are grateful for in your life and why?
My friends more than anything, how happy I've grown to be, and all the amazing trips and experiences I've gotten to have throughout high school.
3. What have you learned in your life that you feel will be the most useful?
That it's ok to say no to things or take time for yourself.
4. What's a hobby that you don't currently do that you would love to learn? What's holding you back from starting?
I guess I wish I had more time for photography and baking. I've done both of these things before and I really like them, I just don't have a lot of time to do it. Either that or sewing, and I'm really just not patient enough. Really I just wish I had more time to make things.
5. Imagine you're the teacher tomorrow at school. What are 3 things you'd teach that you think would help make school more useful for one's future?
I would teach more social skills and psychology, because I think having a greater understanding for people would solve a lot of problems. I would also want to encourage my students to do things they enjoy doing.
6. If you could travel back in time to 3 years ago, what advice would you give yourself?
Wow so much. I think I would just say that it's all gonna be ok and to just wait, because senior year is gonna be awesome.
7. What is the achievement you're most proud of and why?
Becoming a happy functioning part of society after struggling with depression.
8. If you had no physical, financial or other obstacles, what skill would you like to have?
I wish I was better at singing and acting. I've always wanted to play a big role in a play or musical, but have never gotten to. I enjoy both but I think I have a lot of room to improve.
9. What (or who) has had the greatest impact on your life, good or bad, and why?
Band and my whole band family has been the biggest positive influence in my life. I met my best friend through band and those people are some of my closest friends. I have a lot of great memories with them, and I'm happiest when I'm at a football game with them or just hanging out.



10. If you could eat dinner with 3 people you don't know, who would it be and where would you go?
Ooh this is hard... probably Ellen DeGeneres, because she is just an absolutely wonderful human, Lin Manuel Miranda because he is an absolute musical genius, and maybe Donald Trump, because I think it would be interesting to interact with him with how different our views are, and I think with the other two there I think it would be an interesting dynamic. Either him or Jonathon Groff or Ben Platt because they're both Broadway legends. I honestly have no clue where we would eat. Maybe not in public place in case an argument broke out.
11. Where in the world would you most like to live? Why?
I can't really think of a specific place I'd like to live, just anywhere where I am happy and have friends and a good job. Somewhere that's environmentally conscious and not too far from family.

Senior: Danielle Novak

Parents/family members: Mark (father) and Jeanne (mother), Landon (brother)

Plans after graduation: attend college with a major in linguistics

- 1. Describe yourself in 5 words or less.**
Creative, low key, introspective, happy
- 2. What are 3 things are you grateful for in your life and why?**
I am grateful for my family and friends because they are endlessly supportive and inspire me to be a better person. I am also grateful to my church community for being a key part of my faith journey.
- 3. What have you learned in life that you feel will be the most useful?**
I have learned that is important to take care of others and take time to care for yourself too.
- 4. What's a hobby that you don't currently do that you'd love to learn? What's holding you back from starting?**
I would like to improve my creative writing skills. I often wrote poetry and short stories as a child, but I have not had much time to continue doing this the last few years.
- 5. Imagine you're the teacher tomorrow at school. What are 3 things you'd teach that you think would help make school more useful for one's future?**
I would teach my students time management skills, study skills, and how to write a professional email.
- 6. If you could travel back in time 3 years, what advice would you give yourself?**
I would tell myself to take advantage of my last few years of childhood to spend as much time as possible with friends and family.
- 7. What is the achievement you're most proud of and why?**
I am most proud to have played soccer for 14 years, because even though it was sometimes a struggle, I maintained a positive attitude (more or less) and did not give up.
- 8. If you had no physical, financial or other obstacles, what skill would you like to have?**
I would like to hone my writing skills and become an author (but I need a paying job, so...).
- 9. If you could eat dinner with 3 people you don't know, who would it be and where would you go?**
I would like to eat dinner with Malala Yousafzai, Leonardo da Vinci, and Charlotte Brontë and would go somewhere quiet and beautiful, perhaps a beach at sunset.



10. Where in the world would you most like to live? Why?

I would like to live on the moors of England. They are the setting of some of my favorite novels (*Jane Eyre*, *The Secret Garden*) and seem rather romantic, with plenty of rainy days to lounge indoors and read a good book.

Getting to know Don Hostetler

By Joanne Niswander

Many children love animals, but few decide by age 15 that they will be a veterinarian and then go on to become one. Don Hostetler did just that and in the 44 years between graduation from Ohio State University in 1964 with a DVM degree until retirement in 2008, Don worked as a small animal doctor. That career took him to Africa more than once, Central and South America, Romania, as well as several locations in the U.S.

Don grew up near Youngstown with two brothers and a sister. His parents, Chauncey and Ellen Hostetler later moved to Bluffton to live at Mennonite Home and Maple Crest. His brother, George, also lives in Bluffton. While growing up, their family attended an "old Mennonite" church in eastern Ohio.



After graduating from Struthers High School, Don followed his older brother to Bluffton College, where he earned a degree in biology in 1959. In 1960, Don married fellow student Joyce Detwiler, and they moved to Columbus where Don enrolled in Ohio State's four-year veterinarian program. Living in student housing was part of Don and Joyce's learning experience during those years. While living there, Joyce taught school in Columbus in the "Cadet Program." In the years after WWII when there was a need for teachers, students with two years of elementary education were allowed to teach.

After receiving his veterinary credentials and no longer having student deferment, Don registered as a conscientious objector and began voluntary service with MCC. He accepted a three-year assignment in Tanzania near the grasslands area of Serengeti National Park, working at a livestock experimental station. During that time, Don and Joyce met Ron and Phyllis Friesen and Judy Hilty (now Kingsley) who were also serving with MCC in that area. Don and Joyce's daughter, Julie, was born in Tanzania.

After Don's service with MCC was finished, he, Joyce, and Julie returned to the States where Don looked for a veterinary job. It was now 1967, a time of racial unrest in some of our U.S. cities. The Detroit area, where they had decided to move, saw more than enough problems, but the Hostetlers remained there for more than 10 years. During that time, in 1973, Don and Joyce adopted an infant son, Mark.

In 1978, they moved to Findlay, where Don purchased an established veterinary practice. Joyce taught in the Hancock County schools and the family began attending First Mennonite. After 20 years, Don semi-retired from vet practice in 1998. This partial retirement lasted 10 years until he fully retired in 2008. In 2002, Don and Joyce built a home in Riverbend subdivision in Bluffton and Don commuted to Findlay to work.

During retirement, Don found more time for golf, ping pong, and BFR activities with friends. He and Joyce have enjoyed traveling -- taking some Road Scholar trips around the U.S., and visiting their daughter and family (two grandchildren) in Oregon and their son and family in Jerry City, Ohio. Don has also made at least eight international trips with the local VOSH organization to fit eyeglasses. Don is also involved with First Mennonite's Caring Connections, visiting senior church members such as the late Luther and Geneva Shetler. "I will miss those visits," he says.

Don and Joyce recently moved into a Maple Crest Villa. "We decided to move here while we were still able to enjoy it," he says.



Below, Claire Phillips masters the M&M game during JH Olympics.



Left, during SH Olympics, Carrie Mast moves M&Ms under the watchful eyes of Ellie Nickel, Grace Paquin, Danielle Novak, Ana Neufeld Weaver, Jacob Suter, and Sophia Gott.

No snow? Youth still have fun at winter retreats

Camp Friedenswald was cold but snowless during senior high retreat and warm and rainy during junior high retreat. Winter Olympics involved each team member moving M&Ms from a bowl with a spoon in her/his mouth into the (spoon) limbs of a tree-like structure. Another challenge required teams to play a tune with Boomwhackers -- hollow color-coded plastic tubes that are tuned to a musical pitch by length.



At left, playing *Joy to the World* with Boomwhackers are (from left) junior high youth Claire Phillips, Theo Andreas, Makayla Suter, Ben Hartzler, Kaleigh Coffman, John Paul Yoder, Ellie Hartzler, Ethan Blount, and Ethan Nickel.

Greetings from one of FMC's young adult members in graduate school

Dear FMC family,

Just wanted to send a note to say Merry Christmas and let you know that you are all in my thoughts and prayers this season.

I'm loving life in sunny Gainesville, Florida, where I am studying for my MBA and coaching UF's distance runners. I have a wonderful circle of friends and have plugged into fellow CDC church, Emmanuel Menno. I am starting to prepare to apply for full-time collegiate coaching positions and feeling hopeful for the future!

I always welcome updates from you all.

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Merry Christmas,
Hannah Chappell-Dick



Intergenerational SS: Using LEGOS to illustrate scenes from the nativity

During an intergenerational LEGO Sunday school class on December 22, Emma and Ken Shenk (above left) and Fred Steiner (behind the camera) constructed the town of Bethlehem. Of special note is the tall tower in one corner. According to Mick Hardy, Bruce Steingass continued construction long after the Sunday school hour was over. Simon Phillips and Xavier Diller (above right) worked on the stable where Jesus was born. They topped off their creation with a personal space rocket for Jesus. The LEGO baby Jesus could be removed from the manger and nestled into the top of the rocket.

Junior high youth (not pictured) created the palace of Herod complete with Herod perched on his throne. Additional decorative bushes and adornments appeared around the palace.

Many other children, youth, and adults explored the LEGO SS by asking the builders questions about the projects in process, listening to builders' explanations of their finished projects, and creating smaller additional Advent and Nativity LEGO creations.