

Menno-Life



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Janet Yoder and John Rich remove the packaging to reveal the Peace Pole. Standing at left are Howard and Louise Yoder, brother and sister-in-law of Steve Yoder.



Peace Pole Dedication

On 06-18-17 in worship we had the pleasure of dedicating a peace pole that has been in our dreams and hearts for some time! Soon after I arrived here in October 2015, Pastor Steve and I received an email from Louise Matthews. It read, in part:

"I would like to propose that an international peace pole be displayed in the lawn of FMC. A peace pole in the lawn would be a visible reminder of the Mennonite Church's vision and action for peace and a response to Central District Conference's recent encouragement for congregations to respond more actively in areas of peace and justice. It would also make a connection with Bluffton's children who enter FMC for Weekday Christian Education who also visit The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center for programs about peace and justice, nonviolence and celebrating the world as a global community...Thanks~Louise Matthews"

As a congregation, we ended 2015 with a surplus of funds. When this happens, it is our practice to keep 10 percent of next year's budget as a reserve and distribute anything over 10 percent. In that process, and in response to Louise's proposal, Mission Peace and Service set aside \$150 as seed money toward a FMC peace pole.



When Pastor Steve died one year ago in June, additional money was given toward the peace pole in his memory. And the balance needed to purchase the pole came from undesignated memorial moneys given to FMC. So it was fitting and beautiful to be able to dedicate this peace pole near the one-year anniversary of Pastor Steve's death. It was a celebration of the journey and work toward peace that is an intersection of a number of things.

It is an internationally recognized symbol of the hopes and prayers for peace of the peoples of the world. It brings together our own work and longing for the peaceable kingdom as a historic peace church. And it highlights the heart for peace of one man who dedicated himself to preach peace in his relationships, with his words, with his activism and with his actions.

"May peace prevail." The same message is printed in six languages on our peace pole. Of course many more could have been chosen and would also hold symbolic significance for us. These were chosen as representative of just a few of the places

our people at FMC have lived and served in the world, and of the many places that we continue to desire to extend peace and good will. The languages are: English, Spanish, Japanese, Swahili, Arabic, Pennsylvania Dutch -- the language Pastor Steve grew up speaking.

The service may be viewed on our church website at fmcbuffton.org.

Special thank you to the group that finally made the peace pole a reality! John Rich, Carolyn Rich, Ruth Early, Chad Paul, and Janet Yoder.

-- Wanda Stopher



Top left, Lois Jean Andreas gets an up-close look at the words "May Peace Prevail" imprinted in English, Spanish, Japanese, Swahili, Arabic and Pennsylvania Dutch. At left, the entire congregation moved outside following worship for the dedication of the peace pole.

Why Sing Old Songs?

(This is part I of a two-part article. Part II considers the question, “Why Sing New Songs?” Part II will be published in the August Menno-Life.)

Psalm 89:1 “I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.”

When I was a girl, my family lived in Nebraska for two years. Upon moving there, I was amazed that in both the Baptist church we attended in town, and in the Mennonite church about 100 miles away, they sang some of the same songs I had learned in Ohio. Many of the songs they sang, I already knew! Yes, they sang some of them somewhat differently...sometimes with a bit different rhythm or at a different tempo than I was used to, sometimes with a slightly different melody, sometimes with slightly different words or with verses I didn’t know. Each of those gathered groups had their own way to sing songs that I knew.

Singing familiar songs creates a sense of identity and helps us know that we are part of a particular community of people. The old songs bind us together with others who join the song. ‘Oldies but goodies’ create a sense of rootedness in a particular congregation. Singing familiar songs helps us to experience belonging to the body of Christ here and now.

Familiar songs can also help us identify with other Christians across town or around the world. When we sing songs that others also sing, it helps us remember that we are not alone in our congregational life of faith. Instead we are part of a network of churches, Anabaptist/Mennonites, with whom we share history and a faith tradition, and also other Christians with whom we share basic tenets of faith. Songs we share in common remind us that for all of our different ways, there is much we share in common as Christians. Old songs help us connect with Christians across space, distance and even time.

Many of the Psalms recount in detail, the saving acts of God. I imagine that as the Israelites sang these songs, they created a kind of corporate memory of the Israelite people, so that even after those who walked across the Red Sea on dry land were buried, their descendants remembered the event as part of their own history. In this same way, old songs actually help us embrace the faith of our mothers and fathers. Old songs of God’s faithfulness connect us to Christians across time.

Old, familiar songs remind us of God’s faithfulness in the past. They comfort us because they conjure up memories of specific encounters with God. The same song may connect individuals to very different yet profound experiences. On the other hand, a particular song may have a significant corporate meaning for a congregation. Some songs persist over time, because they speak deeply to us and reflect important aspects of our experiences of God in the past. They are part of our testimony to ‘God with us’ in the past.

-- Wanda Stopher

Dates to remember

July 4-8 – MCUSA biennial convention, Orlando, FL

July 16 – Youth report on MCUSA convention during Sunday school hour; will provide “Thank you” breakfast to all

July 16-20 – Vacation Bible School, English Lutheran Church

July 23 – Mission Sunday, Mennonite Mission Network workers Nancy Frey and Bruce Yoder speaking in Sunday school and worship

Through July 30 -- “From Swords to Plowshares,” multi-media art exhibit on theme of transformation from violence to peace, Sauder Visual Arts Center, Bluffton University (Th-S, 2-5 p.m.)

Reminder about e-mail updates from FMC

If you wish to receive periodic e-mail updates from FMC regarding health concerns, births, deaths, emergencies, etc., and are NOT already receiving them, please notify the church office at

fmc@bluffton.edu. Also, if you change your e-mail address, please notify the church office so that we may update our records.



Save your receipts!

Did you know that you can help out the SHYF by turning in your receipts from Community Markets? Just place them in the horizontal slot at the top right of the mailboxes. Periodically, Julie Mackey tallies them up and submits them. In turn, we receive a check for a percentage of the total. All proceeds go to support SHYF activities.

Update from Cassidy Bush, Service Adventure in Anchorage, Alaska

"I work at the Children's Lunchbox three days a week, and Parachutes Teen Club two days a week. The Children's Lunchbox provides anywhere from 70-250 meals for kids who attend after-school programs, and Parachutes Teen Club provides a safe space for at-risk youth in the Anchorage area. Both placements have given me great opportunities to serve in different ways. Parachutes offers relationship building with kids who need good adult influences in their lives, and the Lunchbox lets

me feed kids who I know aren't getting good meals (if any at all) at home. These placements have enabled me not only to serve the Lord in a meaningful way, but also to work with some amazing people.



"I have had some incredible experiences over the last year. I volunteered as a dog handler for the Iditarod, saw the northern lights, went to Chena hot springs, and volunteered at an ice festival. I have grown closer to God, and met and gotten to know some completely wonderful people at Prince of Peace Mennonite Church."

Trustees establish new facility use policy

The Trustee Commission has established a new policy regarding loaning church equipment. In order to ensure that all equipment remains available for church-related activities both onsite and offsite, equipment will no longer be loaned for personal use. The trustees and staff appreciate your cooperation with this new policy. Please see the church office for copies of the revised forms for FMC facility use or to reserve the facility. If you have questions or concerns, please contact one of the trustees: *Everett Collier, Larry Diller, Rodney Dyck, John Mackey, Wendell Miller, Dave Moser, Chad Paul, Tom Schaaf, and Bob Suter.*

Community VBS July 16-20

Community vacation Bible school will be held at English Lutheran Church July 16-20, from 6-8 pm. Registration will be on July 16 beginning at 5:30 pm. Children ages preschool- grade 5 are invited to "Operation Arctic," where kids warm up to God's word as they explore the coolest book on the planet. It promises to be a flurry of fun and excitement!

Adult and youth volunteers are needed for VBS. Whether you can help for one evening or all five nights, great volunteers make a great VBS! Check your calendar for July 16-20, 6-8 pm, and consider filling one of the following roles:

- Crafts & science station helpers – lots of hands will be needed to guide students through craft projects and science experiments that help reinforce the daily Bible lesson. First Mennonite is responsible for this station, with Victoria Woods-Yee coordinating.
- Walkers – 2 walkers are needed each evening to help students move through the learning stations.
- Cookie bakers – 2 dozen cookies are needed for the closing reception on Thursday, July 20.

Contact Rhonda Winstead, 419-890-7012 or rhondaandwalt@yahoo.com, to volunteer or for more information.

SPECIAL REQUEST: Please begin saving milk jugs to be used to build an igloo at VBS. Drop off location for the milk jugs is yet to be determined.

New guest books help us welcome guests

"Connecting" is one of the five priorities determined during our Congregational Discernment process. How do we connect with visitors to First Mennonite? We extend our hospitality to our guests by placing Guest Books at the three main entrances into the sanctuary. We ask that our visitors sign one of the guest books and include a mailing address or e-mail address. This enables me to follow up with a note. FMC regular attenders are asked to welcome guests and encourage them to sign a guest book. To simplify this process – and to focus more on welcoming guests – we have removed the Friendship Pads from pews in the sanctuary. This is an experiment; at the end of the summer, we will evaluate the process and will welcome your suggestions on how to make it more effective.

– Pastor Wanda Stopher

SHYF June and July update

During June, the SHYF prepared for attending the MCUSA 2017 Youth Convention in Orlando, FL. We are leaving July 3 and returning July 8. We are excited to experience worship, attend seminars, reconnect with old friends, make new friends, participate in a service project, and bond as a group.

Youth attending from First Mennonite are Isaac Andreas, Seth Andreas, Danielle Novak, Anna Biesecker-Mast, Jacob Biesecker-Mast, Douglas Nester, Christopher Harnish, Sophia Gott, Ana Neufeld Weaver, Grace Paquin, Patrick Estell and Walt Paquin, Rhonda Winstead, Tig Intagliata, and Shannon Thiebeau as sponsors.

We ask that you keep us in your prayers during this time for safety, learning, and fellowship. We look forward to reporting our experiences to you during the Sunday school hour on July 16.

Sunday, July 2: Convention send-off, 10:30 a.m. Anyone attending convention is invited to receive a prayer/blessing during Sunday's worship service.

Sunday, July 2: Convention meeting, 6 p.m. Church parking lot. *Parents should attend* Please bring your packed luggage. Drivers for the trip to Columbus will bring vehicles and we will pack them for the drive. This will be followed by a quick information update and devotion so that hopefully we can be done by 7:30 p.m. or earlier to allow you to get to bed early.

Sunday, July 3-8: We will meet in the church parking lot no later than 7:15 a.m. to head to the airport, and return Saturday night to the church parking lot. We will have your youth contact you when we are close to Bluffton.

Sunday, July 16: Convention reporting during Sunday school, FH.

-- *Shannon Thiebeau*

From other Mennonite organizations

Nancy Frey and Bruce Yoder, our mission partners in Burkina Faso

Nancy wrote: "Last fall, we wrote about a ministry the Ouagadougou Mennonite Church was considering with disadvantaged children in the town of Sapouy, located 100 kilometers to the south. As a congregation with young adults, a number of whom have significant experience working with children, this opportunity seemed like one that we should take seriously. Additionally, as Pastor Bananzaro noted, the student hostel ministry [gave birth to the congregation.] Ministry among disadvantaged children in Sapouy may well hold the same possibility for a new congregation there."

"In March, we were able to spend a few days with the children and get to know the situation a bit better. Five young adults from the Ouaga congregation, along with Jeremiah and me, spent a weekend in Sapouy and led a vacation Bible school. The young adults did all the planning and organization; Jeremiah and I did some teaching and provided moral support. They had planned for 30 children, but we had between 80 and 100 for the different activities. The program included Bible stories, games, a film, and sessions about the importance of planting trees and water conservation. With this experience, the Ouaga congregation now will decide if and how it might proceed. Pray for clarity and wisdom as those young people who were involved and the church leadership discern how to move forward."

AMBS scholarships for VSers

Did you know that Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary offers tuition discounts and scholarships (\$1,500 per academic year) to current and former voluntary service workers? Enrollment must occur within five years of completion of the VS assignment. Apply now, or tap a shoulder!

www.ambs.edu/admissions/voluntary-service-scholarships