

# Menno-Life



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*FIRST Night post-dinner 2014, Everett Collier talks about participating in the Fuller Center Bike Adventure*

*Note: At last fall's reorganization retreat, commissions were encouraged to consider what we should continue, what we should end, and what new endeavors we should consider. This has been reaffirmed this year through the discernment process at FMC. In the normal life-cycle of congregational endeavors, this seems the natural time to end FIRST Night on a note of appreciation and celebration, and to wait for God to call us into another good and new endeavor. Please see the article from Nurture below.*

*-- George O'Reilly*

## **FIRST Night ends on a note of appreciation** **Now is opportunity for new activities**

In the life of the church many activities have come and gone, all worthwhile and enriching. Begun in 2004, FIRST Night was a meaningful part of FMC. It was a time for people of all ages to find fellowship around a meal and share each other's life experiences. For those who may not know, there was a contest to name this event. FIRST Night, an acronym for **F**ellowshipping **I**ntergenerationally **R**ejoicing with **S**ong **T**ogether, suggested by a group of women from the Freudige SS class, was chosen. Originally there were two seasons per church year, with seven weekly meals per season. There was a program of faith journeys from individuals before the meal, and another topical program after.

The current committee chose to institute some changes and reevaluate before we made the decision to end the event. We moved the night from Wednesdays to Tuesdays. Meals were monthly for five times per year. Nonetheless attendance has fallen from an average 180 in 2011 to 90 this year. From the outset it was always a challenge to find enough volunteers, perhaps for a variety of reasons. Many people serve in many roles at FMC. One wonders if we have become stretched a bit too thin.

Over the years dozens of people gave their time and effort to ensure the success of FIRST Night. There was always a core committee, a group taking reservations, cooking teams, hosts, program providers, table setters and clean-up crews, and the church staff. We are deeply appreciative.

And so we are moving on. Nurture Commission is looking forward to new activities. We welcome input from the congregation.

-- *FIRST Night committee and Nurture Commission*

## **Dates to remember**

June 4 – Pentecost, Communion during Sunday morning worship

June 14 – Pastor's visit with MMH residents, 2:30 p.m.

June 16-17 – Black Swamp Benefit, Fulton Co. Fairgrounds, Wauseon

June 18 – Peace Sunday, Kyle Miller preaching, dedication of peace pole

June 22 – Pastor's visit with MC residents, 2:30 p.m.

June 22-24 – CDC annual meeting, Bluffton University

June 23 – Menno-Life deadline

June 25 – Mission Sunday, Bruce and Nancy Frey Yoder preaching (FMC mission partners)

## **FMC to dedicate peace pole in memory of Pastor Steve Yoder**

**A peace pole has been ordered** from *Peace Pole Makers*, Maple City, MI. It is a six-sided pole constructed of cedar and painted white. Each side of the pole has the phrase "May Peace Prevail on Earth" printed in one of six languages: English, Spanish, French, Japanese, Swahili, and Pennsylvania Dutch, which was the language that Pastor Steve Yoder grew up speaking. The pole will be placed about halfway between the Jackson Street entrance and the corner of the church at Jackson and Church Streets. There will be a small walk-way of pavers from the sidewalk to the peace pole, with landscaping around the base of the pole. The pole will have a small brass plate saying that it is dedicated in memory of Pastor Steve Yoder. Dedication will take place Sunday, June 18. *The Peace Pole Committee includes John Rich, Carolyn Rich, Ruth Early, Chad Paul, and Janet Yoder.*

### **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](mailto:fmc@bluffton.edu). Also, if you change your e-mail address, please notify the church office so that we may update our records.

### **FMC sends 180 hygiene kits to MCC**

The collection of MCC hygiene kits is completed for this year. We collected kits and supplies for approximately 180 kits. Mennonite Women is also sending an additional \$300 directly to MCC to purchase hygiene kits and supplies. Thank you all for your generosity.

Another large supply of kit bags will be needed for school kits starting in July. We will keep cut material and string bagged and ready to sew for those who like to use those. Also, feel free to make bags on your own (instruction cards are on the bulletin board) or donate any extra material. Thanks.

-- *Jean Miller and Sue Schaaf*

## Summer worship focus: Bridges among us

Just over one year ago, as a congregation, we affirmed the following statement: *“In response to God’s unconditional love for all people, we joyfully and unconditionally welcome you to join us on our journey of faith in Jesus Christ. We are committed to breaking down dividing walls and building community where all are loved and accepted. We believe in active inclusion and invite each one to participate in the life and ministry of our congregation.”* Recognizing that all of our commitments require deliberate attention, in worship this summer (06-11-17 through 09-10-17) we will explore the theme, “Bridges among us.” Our worship will direct our focus on many ways we might live into the welcome to which we have been called. Some of the ways include exploring bridges among us such as across barriers of race, privilege, faith tradition, culture, health, ability, and gender.

## Summer options for adult Sunday school

### **\*Adult Bible Study - Menno Media (assembly room)**

Beginning June 4 and continuing through the summer, this class will explore God’s urgent call in biblical texts from Exodus, Judges, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Acts, using the Adult Bible Study quarterly as a starting point for discussion.

### **\*Coffee Fellowship (fellowship hall)**

Coffee and space for informal gatherings will be available in the fellowship hall every Sunday

### **\*Special Topics (location to be identified)**

Special opportunities for reporting, reflection, and discussion will be offered throughout the summer. Don’t miss these sessions offered in June:

June 18 – Peace Sunday panel discussion

June 25 – CDC update and reflections

## 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](mailto:rhondaandwalt@yahoo.com), to volunteer or for more information.

## **Nurture recognizes two FMC members for years of service**

Nurture Commission thanks two committee chairs who together have given more than 40 years of service to First Mennonite. Jane Weaver and Lori Nester of the casket lining and funeral committees have decided it is time to step down as chairpersons. For many years they have quietly served the members of grieving families during a difficult time. Our deepest appreciation and thanks to them as they enter this new phase of their lives. At the May meeting, Nurture presented each with one of Ron Headings' metal sculpture trees in recognition of their service.

***Thank you again, Jane and Lori!***

## **New guest books help 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*

## **CDC annual meeting June 22-24**

First Mennonite, Grace Mennonite, Lima Mennonite, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, Emmaus Road Fellowship, and Shalom Community will serve as host congregations for the Central District Conference annual meeting June 22-24 at Bluffton University. The weekend will open with a golf outing and RAWTools event. Individuals wishing to volunteer in various capacities including set up/clean up for snack times, ushers in worship, assisting guests with mobility concerns, helping with children's activities, or providing housing should contact Lori Nester. Additional information including the schedule and speakers may be found at <http://www.mcusacdc.org/annual-meeting/>.

## **Senior statements**

*Congratulations to Isaac Andreas, Antony Kingsley, Douglas Nester, Levi Schumacher, Tad Steiner, and Zander Woods-Yee, who graduated from Bluffton High School on May 27. Several of them shared their senior statements during worship on Youth Sunday and we share parts of them here. You may listen to them at [http://fmcbluffton.org/sermon\\_post/youth-sunday-2/](http://fmcbluffton.org/sermon_post/youth-sunday-2/).*

## **Isaac Andreas**

Hello my name is Isaac Andreas, son of Jonathan Andreas and Jan Wiebe, and for the purpose of discussion, also son of the church because I am responding to the question "How has the church been a mother to me?" Well, a mother cares and supports and loves her child, and I do feel this from the church. There are a lot of examples of people individually and collectively making the church more motherly to everyone. I can see the care of the church when people ask about what I'm

doing these days or what my future plans are even if they don't know me well and the conversation could be awkward. I feel the support of the church every time someone sponsors or deems it important to donate money to our youth group. Now, this may all sound like the selfish ways I benefit from the church, and I do benefit greatly. Sometimes I wonder if I'm doing enough in return. But I don't think that I can ever truly get even with all that the church has given me. This is how I know that the church loves me. Like a mother, the church will often put her child before herself, and yet not expect any quick reward. Over time, some of this debt to a mother does get repaid, but it can take a lifetime. It is this kind of compassion that really shows the motherly nature of the church. So, thank you for being a mother to me and I will try to repay the debt in the future as well as the present. Speaking of the future...

...My future plans are also part of this statement. Without question I am going to Guatemala this fall. This is part of my gap year. I'll be going with my family BUT I'll be a student and live with a host family most of the time. For those of you that don't know the schedule of this time, there are three hours of Spanish study every day followed by afternoon classes. We will also travel every weekend and at the end have a week of individual travel. Then for the second part of my gap year, I have not planned yet. I do have an abundance of ideas, and people keep suggesting more, which I love, but makes it more difficult for me to narrow it down. I'm hoping to have some time to figure this out in Guatemala. If I can't pin this down quickly however, I can always go straight to college after one semester. And EMU is where this will most likely be. Thank you.

### **Antony Kingsley**

This church has helped me in so many ways. I loved coming as a kid with my grandparents and always getting told how much I'm growing and even coming nowadays getting told how everyone remembers when I was so short. The people at this church are always so friendly and -- no matter what -- they are always supportive to whatever you want to do. I loved coming to the brunches they would host, also all the opportunities that the youth group gave me to go on different trips. I would say my most favorite memory would have to be going to New York to help rebuild houses from the hurricane. Going to the city on the last day was amazing. I'm going to miss seeing all the friendly faces in this church. I plan on going to Bowling Green State University next year to study criminal justice and also taking a music course.

### **Douglas Nester**

Hello, my name is Douglas Nester..I have lived in Bluffton for all almost 18 years of my life, and in turn have been attending First Mennonite for that whole time as well. Assuming that I did the math right, I have been present at roughly 920 services here, whether or not I paid total attention in all of them. As one would expect, this building and congregation has become one of the most significant and influential communities in my life. This church has almost acted as a second mother to me in many ways.

Some of my first memories were made in this building, whether it was reading my books under the pews during the service, or disgruntledly standing up during hymns, or rushing back to the kitchen after communions to see if I could have some grape juice that wasn't used. At these points in my life, I merely saw church as a nuisance that forced me to get up early on Sundays and sit through hour long services, most of which I really did not understand. Much like a mother, I did not really appreciate church for everything that it provided for me, and would continue to provide. This church provides to me a place of refuge to come to during any hour, night or day, to be by myself and think. In the long run, it would give me a great group of friends that I have known for most of my life, a summer camp that I can look forward to going to every year, and a system of beliefs that have shaped every aspect of the way I live my life...My relationship with God became closer than it ever had been before, and Sunday school became a more hands-on activity. Before this, the few Bible stories I *had* heard were just interesting works of fiction that spurred my imagination. Now I was a firm believer, beginning to understand the deeper meanings of these stories.

And just like almost every son in a mother-son relationship, I went through a rebellious phase during my preteen and early teenage years. I began to question whether or not any of our Christian beliefs

were really valid...This continued until the spring of my freshman year, when I was pressed with whether or not I should join catechism and then be baptized. At that point I was still very conflicted with what I believed in, but I said yes nevertheless. A lot of this was because of peer pressure, all of my friends were doing it so I figured it would be a good idea. As it turns out, catechism made a huge impact on my faith. The class provided a safe environment for everyone to share about their personal experiences and beliefs. It didn't take long for me to realize that I wasn't the only one with doubts, with cracks in my Christianity. Pastor Steve, who was our teacher, even revealed to us that even he often struggled with doubts...I also learned how to deal with those doubts while still having faith in a God looking over me. I decided that I still believed in the teachings of our Mennonite ideology, even if there were times when I couldn't handle the larger picture. I agreed to be baptized because I wanted to officially enter this church community and to further evolve my faith. Since then, I have gone through times when I didn't feel like I needed God, when I was doing well in life and I wanted to credit *myself* for the successes that I achieved. But even through these times, God was still there. Like a mother, God didn't care how I was feeling toward her, she was still watching over me. So when I inevitably fell to my low points and realized how much I needed God, she forgave my flaws and was wholly there for me. God is eternally forgiving. No matter how many times I ignore her presence, God will always be there when I need her. And in this way, God is a mother. This fall, I will be attending Eastern Mennonite University to pursue a major in Engineering, and a minor in Environmental Sustainability...Though I will be moving almost 10 hours away, First Mennonite will forever remain in my heart as my first church that taught me how to live.

## Youth Sunday Celebrations



The annual youth worship service hosted by the SHYF and JHYF took place on May 14, which was Mother's Day. With that in mind, the seniors were prompted with the question, "How has the church been a mother to you?" The three young men who gave their senior statements spoke about how their faith journey and development was impacted by the church and said they did not realize until they were older how much the church had cared for them throughout their childhoods.

The youth also displayed their gifts during the worship service by providing music, reading a story during children's time, and speaking. We have talented young people in our youth groups!

The youth groups also held a cupcake sale and hosted the final day of the SHYF silent auction. We had fun creating a variety of cupcakes and coming up with services to put up for auction.

Thanks to everyone who supported us by donating goods, services, or bids. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

-- Shannon Thiebeau