



Zeke Coffman (right) greets Pastor Theda Good during Children's Time. Pastor Wanda Stopher and Hans Houshower are also pictured.

(This is part one of two articles in which our pastors reflect on their distinct titles/roles. This month Pastor Theda reflects on her role as Pastor of Connections. Next month, Pastor Wanda will reflect on her role as Pastor of Spiritual Formation.)

Pastor of Connections

Focusing on relationships and making connections with people

What does it mean to me to be Pastor of Connections?

I think of the word, connections, as another way to talk about relationships. How are we connected to each other at FMC? What are the networks that exist and what needs to be created? The one who works at connections is a link, an agent, an ally, or a mentor. These are the things that come to mind when I think of my title, Pastor of Connections.

I was drawn to this position specifically because the focus on relationships and making connections with people in many different areas of church and community life.

First on my list of responsibilities is, Pastoral Care. For me this is making caring connections. I am the one who responds first to those who are sick, hospitalized, or dealing with end of life needs. Senior Concerns is a group I will partner with to tend to the pastoral care needs among us.

Making community connections is another responsibility. I see this as tending to ways we connect and build relationships within our congregation, within the Bluffton community, the University, and local ecumenical and community organizations. As it relates to FMC, I look forward to finding ways we can move into Ministry Teams to do the work of church life. I look forward to tending to our connections with CDC, MC USA, MCC, Camp Friedenswald, as well as any other organization identified by this congregation in which we want to give our attention in our relationship networks.

Weekly we worship together on Sunday mornings. We gather to connect with God as well as each other. While it's not necessarily an ideal place to get to know someone, Sunday mornings provide opportunities for quick check-ins, and it's here where our deeper connections begin. Participating in the rituals of the church help us find meaning in our life transitions such as baby dedications, baptisms, weddings, and memorial services.

Lastly, I will assist Pastor Wanda as we give leadership to Gift Discernment and Leadership Development. We will use the five priorities that were identified by you as a congregation during the 2017 year of discernment. These priorities are following Jesus; nurturing faith; connecting; worshiping; and gifts expression. Copies of the final document outlining each of these priorities may be found on the literature rack in the fellowship hall.

I feel truly blessed that God has called us together, to partner in our walk with our Creator, becoming better people, a better community, and helping to make the world a better place. I believe in our vision statement, that *"God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."*

-- Pastor Theda Good

Dates to remember

March 7 – Deadline to order Easter flowers through FMC

March 7 – Evening Song and Prayer, 8 p.m., FH

March 11 – SHYF pancake fundraiser, 8:30 a.m., FH

March 14 – Pastor meeting with MMH residents, 2:30 p.m.

March 22 – Pastor meeting with MC residents, 2:30 p.m.

March 23 – Menno-Life deadline

March 25 – Palm Sunday

March 26 – Our Daily Bread, leave FMC at 9:45 a.m.

March 29 – Maundy Thursday, Evening Song and Prayer, 8 p.m., FH

March 30 – Good Friday, Procession of the Cross, 11:30 a.m.; Community worship, noon, St. Mary's Catholic Church

April 1 – Easter Sunday potluck brunch, 9:15 a.m., FH; No Sunday school

April 1 – Easter Sunday worship, 10:30 a.m.

Two Evening Song and Prayer services in March

We will continue our Evening Song and Prayer service on March 7 and 29 in the fellowship hall. We will gather on Wednesday, March 7 at 8 p.m. for a Lenten Evening Song and Prayer. This particular evening we will have a focus on healing. We will pause, pray, sing, and offer a few rituals to enter into this service of healing and hope. Oil, candles, and water will be available for this service. You are welcome to participate as little or much as you desire.

We will observe Maundy Thursday with an evening song and prayer service at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 29 in the fellowship hall. More details will be available soon.



Looking back

FMC entered a float in Bluffton's 1961 centennial parade. The Amstutz family (Mary, Fred, Dan, Jim Steve and Pete) was the "modern" family (at left) and the Pannabecker family (Wanda, Dick, Phil, John, James, Tom and Mary) was the "early life" family. It's definitely time for FMC to enter another parade!

Easter flower orders due to church office by March 7

If you wish to purchase flowers in memory or honor of your loved ones, complete the form below. **The deadline for ordering flowers through FMC is Wednesday, March 7.** Flowers will be ordered from K & J Greenhouses, Inc.

Number of plants wanted:

Easter Lilies (Single Stem)	\$7.75
Hydrangeas (3-5 blooms)	\$9.30
8" Dahlias (assorted colors only)	\$4.70
Pericallus to Daisy	\$5.00

_____ Total plants ordered Amount enclosed \$ _____

(Make checks payable to First Mennonite Church, designated for Easter flowers. Flowers may be picked up after church on Easter morning.)

Your Name _____ Phone _____

Given in memory of in honor of:

By _____

(Please write names the way you wish them to be listed in the bulletin.)

Mennonite Women to focus on “affirmation”

“Affirm” is the theme for Mennonite Women on Monday, March 12 at 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall. When Jesus went to the home of the Roman Centurion to heal a servant, Jesus crossed a barrier to relate to someone different from him. Jesus affirmed the Centurion’s faith before the crowd that followed him. Anna Liechty Sawatzky writes in the devotional, “Affirmation is a powerful tool in mission and is especially potent in situations of oppression where affirmation has been hard to come by. When we cross dimensions of difference with affirmation, we change the pattern of behavior to Jesus’ way.”

This month MW will learn how women are being helped with addictions, trafficking and similar problems, by agencies in Lima. Guests will be Lydia Brenneman, Lima Mennonite Church, and Kelly Baeza, house mother of Andrew’s house, a home for women overcoming opioid addictions. Andrew’s House has a “wish list” to which all may contribute; it includes cleaning supplies, toiletries, feminine hygiene products, adult coloring books/colored pencils, gift cards to groceries, retail stores, gas stations and restaurants. See the MW pillar for a complete list. A box will be provided for contributions.

In preparation, ask yourself how you might be able to point out the good in people or in a situation in order to build up people’s faith. Laurel Neufeld Weaver will lead devotions and Kay Huber and Betsi Werling will provide refreshments. If you haven’t been able to attend the monthly meetings, check the MW pillar in the fellowship hall, where each month’s minutes are posted.

FMC youth have annual game day with Maple Crest residents

Ben Hartzler (left) and Marco Eiden play Wii bowling with Maple Crest residents during the youth game day at MC on February 25.



The JHYF and SHYF spent the afternoon engaging in their annual activity of playing games with Maple Crest residents on February 25. Fourteen FMC youth enjoyed playing Wii Bowling, Shake Loose a Memory, and Corn Hole with the residents.

The youth love building intergenerational relationships and this event is something everyone anticipates each year.

Pancake breakfast March 11: SHYF will host a pancake breakfast fundraiser on March 11 from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall to raise money for their summer service trip and the 2019 MCUSA Youth Convention. They’ll offer seasonal flavors and gluten free options. Hope to see everyone there!
-- Shannon Thiebeau, youth ministry director