

Menno-Life



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Comforter knotting requires much stitching and laughter. The April 16-17 event drew men, women and children. This time, many of the comforters being knotted were part of Wanda Stopher's 60x60 project of completing 60 comforters for MCC by her 60th birthday. Wanda's parents, Sharon and Marvin Lantz, Archbold, helped with knotting on Monday afternoon and evening. Above left, Linda Miller, Mary Anne Moser and Carolyn Rich share a laugh during Tuesday's knotting. At right, Sharon Lantz prepares to begin knotting.

Climate change happening more abruptly than anticipated Earth Day is story of struggling for justice and fairness

The following was shared with the congregation by Sara Brenner on Earth Day, April 22.

Thirty-two years ago, I was doing graduate work in Environmental Studies at Ohio State. I tended to be a tree-hugger type. A nature nut, awestruck with the beauty and wonder of nature, my head in the clouds.

Reading and coursework on environmental impacts and policy were something I just struggled through. I think I had a hard time facing how big of a mess we were already in at that time.

Gradually, since then I have been better able to face the effects that humanity has had on the biosphere.

On this Earth Day, I wish the news were better. I wish that by sheer human effort and technological advancement, we could find ourselves in the kind of world we were longing for, when this day of environmental awareness and action was first established in 1970. But it feels as though, for every step forward, it's been two steps back.

From what I can see, we are now in a climate-change emergency. It seems to be happening more abruptly than anticipated. The alarming rate at which the polar ice is melting is not getting the media coverage it deserves. Unseasonable and extreme weather conditions are happening worldwide.

Some may disagree with me, but I think that loving and grieving are among our most important activities today. I suspect that, even though Earth Day came about as a result of political action, that it started out as love: love of this amazing planet, love of life in its seemingly endless variety, and love for one another, our fellow human beings.

In a way, the story of Earth Day is a very old story: the story of struggling for justice, fairness and for what is right. It is ingrained in many of us to strive for a better world.

But if the work we are doing does not allow space for acknowledging what we have lost, and are at risk of losing, and we postpone the grief that is knocking at our door, we can't be complete, whole beings.

We have evolved with our senses attuned to the light, sights, sounds, smells and feel of this planet. Every day and at any time we are free to feed our senses on this incredible world.

Let us pray for wisdom in living out our purpose on Earth, whatever it may be. Let us lean into the mystery of ourselves as both destroyers and nurturers of life; of humanity as part of nature, not masters of it. Let our hearts break if they need to; they may need to.

~ Sara Brenner

Dates to remember

May 3 – Community meal hosted by First Mennonite Church and Mission, Peace and Service, Bluffton Senior Center, 6 p.m.

May 6 – Bluffton University commencement, 2 p.m., Sommer Center

May 9 – Pastor visit with MMH residents, 2:30 p.m.

May 13 – Youth Sunday

May 13 – Youth cupcake sale, before and after worship, fellowship hall

May 14 – Mennonite Women, 7 p.m., FH

May 18 – Menno-Life deadline

May 20 – Congregational potluck and ministry review reporting, FH, 11:30 a.m.

May 24 – Pastor visit with MC residents, 2:30 p.m.

May 26 – BHS commencement, 7 p.m., BHS gymnasium

May 28 – Church office closed

Mission, Peace and Service hosts May 3 community meal

The community meal at the Senior Citizen Center on Thursday, May 3, will be hosted by First Mennonite Church and the Mission Peace and Service Commission. All are welcome to attend. If anyone is willing to help with serving the meal or baking cookies, please contact Lynda Nyce at lyndanyce@gmail.com.

FMC college seniors make plans for post-graduation

First Mennonite has four college graduates this year, including Julian Harnish (Goshen), Abigail Heslep, (Kent State University) and David Nester and Jonatan Moser (both Eastern Mennonite.)

We also have three high school graduates, including Anna Biesecker-Mast, Christopher Harnish and Laura Strahan, all from Bluffton High School.

Congratulations to each of these grads as they move forward with their lives!

Julian Harnish, son of Monica and Steve Harnish

At Goshen College, I have been active in music ensembles participating in orchestra, jazz band and several choirs, and have helped lead the hymn club. My majors are in math and music with a minor in computer science.

Next year I will be working with the Shalom Project in Lancaster, PA. The project is similar to MVS and PULSE; I will live in a small intentional community of 6-8 and be partnered with a local organization. I am satisfied with what I have learned over the past four years and excited to start putting skills to good use as I enter my next phase of life.



Abigail Heslep, daughter of Annette and Nathan Heslep

This May, I will graduate from Kent State University, receiving my B.A. after studying public communication and finance. During my time at Kent State, I have enjoyed working with a few of our campus organizations, such as the Kent State University Women's Center and the on-campus radio station.

I was lucky enough to have had the opportunity to spend a semester abroad and spent five months studying in Florence, Italy. This summer, I completed an internship at Spaces Gallery (a nonprofit organization and art space) in Cleveland, and I hope to use my degree to continue working for other Cleveland-area nonprofit organizations.

Jonatan Moser, son of Chris and Carmen Moser

At Eastern Mennonite University, I was a community adviser for a year and a half, co-led Take Back the Night week my junior and senior year, have been in Cycling Club, Social Work is People club, intramurals and I like to hike on the weekends.

I completed a cross cultural study in Guatemala and Colombia for a semester and have been in Washington D.C. my final semester doing my social work practicum at Catholic Charities Refugee Service Center. My majors are social work and history, with minors in Spanish and political studies.



Plans for next year and beyond: I will be biking across the country with David Nester and another friend from EMU. Then hopefully do Mennonite Volunteer Service for a year before finding more permanent work in a bigger city.



David Nester, son of Darryl and Lori Nester

I am writing this with less than two weeks until the commencement ceremony after an extremely quick four years here at Eastern Mennonite University. I majored in mathematics and computer science. I also played on the men's soccer team, ultimate Frisbee club, bike club, and computer science club. I received my diploma in December and have spent this semester to enjoy the last bit of college life without having the classroom responsibilities.

I have been hiking and biking around the Shenandoah Valley, working on personal interest projects, planning a bike trip, and hanging out with college friends before we all scatter to our next destinations. I would like to thank FMC for the many forms of support that you have given me and continue to give me.

In the week after our commencement ceremony, I will be flying to San Francisco to begin a cross country bike tour along with Jonatan Moser (another FMC member) and Aaron Dunmore, Claysburg, PA. We will pass through Sacramento,

Carson City, Denver, Omaha, Madison, Chicago, Goshen, Bluffton, Pittsburgh, and Washington DC. You can follow our progress on Facebook: 2018: A Bike Odyssey (<https://fb.me/2018bikeodyssey>) or if you don't have Facebook: <https://davidnester.github.io/biketrip/>.

At the end of July, I will be moving to Madison, WI, to start working as a software developer at Epic Systems (healthcare software company.)

Summer Music

Pianists, organists, song leaders, musicians of all ages and types: There are again opportunities for offering your musical gifts during the worship services this summer.

Opportunities include:

- Lead the singing for our opening songs
- Play piano or organ
- Provide special music during the service, vocally or instrumentally, as a soloist or in an ensemble

Please contact our Director of Music, Mark Suderman by phone (419.230.5368) or by email (sudermanme@bluffton.edu). If you have some specific dates in mind when you could offer your musical gifts, please let Mark know. Thank you!

Sanctuary flooring project planning complete, work to begin mid-July

Planning for the sanctuary flooring project is almost complete. Contractors have all been contacted and the timing is basically set from the middle of July to near the end of August. We have confirmed that we can hold worship over in the middle school cafetorium, but we will be able to continue holding Sunday school in our building.

The group working on this includes Dave Moser, Trustee chair, Art Shelly, Stewardship liaison, Mike Edmiston, design work, and Mark Suderman, connected to Worship commission. Mary Amstutz is a consultant for us and has been instrumental in continuing to see that plans move forward. Alison King, Leah Schroeder and Mark Suderman chose the carpet.

I am grateful for all the work these individuals have already accomplished. In addition:

1. Jerry Tripp will be in charge of the pews: taking out pews, putting on new book racks, etc.
2. Lima Pipe Organ Company will remove the organ console and certain pipes.
3. Trustees will change lighting/bulbs in the sanctuary.
4. Next will be painting the sanctuary.
5. Dave Hoffer will rebuild the new steps and rails starting on Wednesday, July 25.
6. Heritage Flooring will begin installing wood floors on Monday, August 6.
7. Diller's Flooring will install new carpet and rubber steps beginning Monday, August 20.
8. Once the flooring work is complete, we will replace the pews and organ.
9. Photographer throughout the process – Kerry Bush

Please feel free to connect with one of us if you have questions about the process.

~ Mark Suderman



Youth Sunday and cupcake sales May 13

JHYF and SHYF have been busy planning the annual youth worship service that will take place on Sunday, May 13. We invite you to participate in a worship that will be focused on service and the ways we can help and serve our neighbors.

We also invite you to purchase cupcakes made by the youth in our annual cupcake sale, to be held before and after worship that day. Vegan and gluten free options will be available.

(Picture at left from 2017 cupcake sale includes Douglas Nester, Jake Suter, Patrick Estell, Jacob Mast.)

~ Shannon Thiebeau

Mennonite Women end year with focus on “Live”

Mennonite Women will meet Monday, May 14, at 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall for the final program of the 2017-18 year. It will be a time of celebration and fellowship on the theme of “Live!” As MW completes its devotional study, *“Live Your Call: Embracing God’s Mission,”* participants may ask themselves “How has our Mennonite Women’s group here at First Mennonite carried out God’s mission and how do we see ourselves continuing that into the future?”

Alice Ruth Ramseyer will lead devotions; Paula Luginbill and Elizabeth Kelly will provide refreshments.

Congregational potluck, ministry review May 20

Mark your calendars for a congregational potluck to be held after worship on Sunday, May 20. The potluck is an opportunity to hear a report on the findings of the Pastoral/Congregational Review process held in April. Follow-up plans will also be explained at the event.

~ Staff Relations Committee

Janie and Neal Blough report on work with Paris Mennonite Centre

Dear All,

As spring breaks forth around us, we would like to share both our greetings and share some news of different activities that have filled the first several months of 2018...

In late February/early March we were invited to Montreal by the Quebec School of Evangelical Theology, a seminary co-sponsored by Mennonite Brethren and Christian Missionary Alliance congregations in Quebec for a special teaching assignment. In the space of those two weeks, Neal taught a course on Anabaptist-Mennonite history and theology to mostly non-Mennonite students of various national and cultural origins. As in most urban areas, global Christianity is a very present reality. Janie was invited to give a lecture on "lament in worship" and two workshops on worship in local congregations. One seminar was given in English and the second in French. The latter took place in the Saint Eustache Mennonite Brethren church with almost 50 worship leaders and musicians from eight different congregations.

This invitation was directly related to the Paris Mennonite Centre's involvement in the Mennonite Francophone Network, and one of the Centre's major objectives, that is, developing relationships and cooperation among French-speaking churches in Europe, Africa and Canada (Quebec). More recently, both of us spent time teaching at Al Mowafaqa, a seminary in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. Morocco is a former French colony, with small numbers of Protestant and Catholic parishes, whose members, priests, and pastors are mostly immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa.



This seminary is jointly sponsored by the faculty of theology of the Catholic University of Paris, and the Protestant Faculty of Theology of the University of Strasbourg. Classes are taught conjointly by Catholic and Protestant professors from Africa and Europe. Students also learn Moroccan Arabic and take classes on Islam taught by Muslims. The goal is to work for Christian unity in a largely Muslim context, while at the same time to foster good relationships between the two religions.

Neal taught a class on the "splintering" of European Christianity in the 16th century, with the goal of helping students to understand the differences that underlie

their respective churches. Neal's class was held the week of April 9-14. Janie arrived on the weekend of that same week so that we could spend several days together. The following week she taught a class on liturgy and worship in collaboration with Didier Mupaya, a Catholic priest and professor from Kinshasa, DRC. Much could be said about the experience in Morocco, but we both came away enthusiastic about the vision and the mission of the Institute...

Given our present world context, we can only pray that Christians can be salt and light as well as peacemakers wherever they may be found on this planet. We write this letter as the general council of Mennonite World Conference is holding meetings in Kenya and the Global Christian Forum in Bogota. Our faith is both local and global. We are deeply grateful that you are making it possible for us to be a part of this amazing adventure and calling...

With best greetings and appreciation for your friendship,
Janie & Neal

(Full version of letter posted on "Here and Now" pillar in the fellowship hall.)