

Menno-Life



First Mennonite Church • Bluffton, Ohio • Vol. 65, No. 11 • November 2018

Learning circles have begun!

Have you ever tried to describe something that you have never yourself actually experienced? It's...difficult! We've been on the way now with our walking book, *We Make the Road by Walking*, for two months.

Learning circles based on the book have begun, and we can now describe them from experience, not just using our imaginations! In an effort to do this, I asked several people involved in a learning circle to reflect on some questions:

- How are you using the walking book in your group?
- What has surprised you in the process?
- How has your practice of meeting and using the book stretched or challenged you?
- How has it built or nurtured community?
- What else would you like to say or what questions do you have?

Four Sunday school classes are currently using the walking book as the basis for their study and conversation: Faith and Life, Freudige, Faithful Living, and Senior High Youth. In addition, three new groups have formed, all of which meet on Sunday evenings, one every week, and two others on the first and third Sundays of the month. Finally, another group has been meeting every Wednesday, to plan worship. All these configurations are learning circles!

Hearing scripture read aloud is an important element for nearly all of the circles. Conversation and broad participation and sharing ideas is another element noted by all. Several respondents said that they have learned and grown as they've heard others share their lives, their thoughts and perspectives. Circles are building community! Circles are generating new conversations and shedding fresh light on subjects of faith. And circles are one of the ways we are integrating the material in the book into our lives both as individuals and as a community of faith.

(continued on page 2)



Where is this window?

Where in the world is this stained glass window? We'll give you a hint: It's somewhere in First Mennonite Church. The first person to identify the location will win a free bag of fair trade coffee from the Senior High Youth! If you know the answer, contact Carrie Mast at mastc@bluffton.edu or 419-358-5766.

Mennonite Women project events Nov. 12-13

Mennonite Women will have a project night at 7 p.m. November 12, with comforter knotting on the agenda. The meeting, "An Offering to God," will include devotions by Ruth Naylor and refreshments by Barb Stettler and Linda Miller. **Knotting will continue from 9 a.m.-noon on Tuesday, Nov. 13,** followed by a salad and dessert potluck. The executive committee will provide soup, bread and beverages.

Learning circles (continued from page 1)

Different circles are focusing on different chapters each week. Worship planning circle focus is two weeks in advance. Some study the chapter for that day. One studies the chapter in preparation for the following week. Another focuses on discussion of the sermon in worship earlier that day. All this has the effect of moving what we're discussing into the realm of behavior and practical life application.

Several people reflected on how helpful they've found the six questions at the end of each chapter. You may have noticed a pattern:

1. The first question is always exactly the same. "What one thought or idea from today's lesson especially intrigued, provoked, disturbed, challenged, encouraged, warmed, warned, helped, or surprised you?"
2. This question always invites sharing a story about some life experience connected to the lesson.
3. The third question always begins, "How do you respond...?" or "What do you think...?" inviting reflection on a particular idea in that lesson.
4. Question number four is always phrased as a question for children.
5. This question always begins with the word, "Activate." It's a challenge to respond or put into action some aspect described in the lesson.
6. The final question always begins with the word, "Meditate" and calls for further reflection, usually in the context of silence.

Finally, these circles are open. Try one! Try several! Join one! Start a new one! See the bright orange half sheet describing each circle's location and meeting time in the literature rack or talk to one of the pastors for more information.

-- Pastor Wanda

Hymn sing and pie night November 18

Church College Relations and Bluffton University Campus Ministries are partnering to host a Hymn Sing and Pie Night at First Mennonite Church on Sunday, Nov. 18 at 8:30 p.m. in the sanctuary, followed by pie and ice cream in the fellowship hall.

College students and the congregation are invited to participate. A sign-up sheet will be available for you to indicate your willingness to donate a pie and/or participate in the evening event. [Watch for bulletin announcements.](#)

Important dates to remember

November 1 – Community Meal, 6 p.m., Bluffton Senior Center

November 11 – Intergenerational storytelling event, 4 p.m., FH (watch for more details)

November 12 – Mennonite Women project night, comforter knotting, 7 p.m., FH

November 13 – Mennonite Women comforter knotting, 9 a.m.-noon, FH

November 15 – Community Meal, 6 p.m., Bluffton Senior Center

November 16 – Transgender Day of Remembrance, 7 p.m., Lion and Lamb; 7:30 p.m., sanctuary

November 18 – Pie night and hymn sing, 8:30 p.m., FH

November 22 – Thanksgiving, FMC office closed

November 22 – FMC Thanksgiving dinner, noon

Transgender Day of Remembrance event Nov. 16

Bluffton University student group, Brave Space, is organizing an event to honor National Transgender Day of Remembrance, on Friday, Nov. 16. Participants will gather at the Lion and Lamb at 7 p.m. and walk to First Mennonite Church for a service of remembering at 7:30 p.m.

Transgender Day of Remembrance is observed annually on November 20 as a day to memorialize those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia and to draw attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community. TDoR was founded in 1999 by Gwendolyn Ann Smith, a transgender woman, to memorialize the murder of transgender woman Rita Hester in Allston, Massachusetts. Since its inception, it has evolved from the web-based project started by Smith into an international day of action.

Thriving shop: Et Cetera Board raising funds for new store building

On those occasions when there are crowds outside the shop just waiting to get inside, Et Cetera Shop store manager Chrissy Lugibihl wishes that there was more floor space for the thriving business. With that in mind, the Et Cetera Shop board began saving money a few years ago for a new location while still supporting The Mennonite Central Committee. Until recently, there was no available space.

When the old Peerless Glove Factory on Main Street of Bluffton became available, the board was able to purchase it. However, the building needs much rehabilitation to move it from a 100-year-old manufacturing facility to a retail thrift store, but with help of many benefactors the work will take place. Building repairs and refinishing are projected to cost \$800,000.



To minimize debt, the board hopes to raise more than \$200,000 in pledge gifts. To this end, board members have already pledged more than \$60,000 and more than \$40,000 has already been paid. The board hopes to raise the remaining \$140,000 in pledges soon so work can begin.

Et Cetera Shop volunteers have contributed by donating many hours of their time to helping the shop generate income for others. The volunteers deserve much gratitude for their time and the board hopes to make their job easier and more rewarding with

some real space.

The board invites those wishing to contribute to this mission to consider a generous pledge as members hope to borrow as little as possible, repay the debt as quickly as possible, and to find more ways to utilize the building for the benefit of all.

Please donate directly to the Et Cetera Shop, 111 S. Main St., Bluffton, OH 45817, phone 419.358.2622, or contact your securities broker to donate securities. Your investment in people will continue to grow and grow and be greatly appreciated. -- *Bill Suter, Et Cetera board member*



Architect's drawing
of renovated building

Hooleys reflect on first month in India, life at Woodstock

We have now been in India for over a month and much has happened, but we are actually feeling pretty well settled. During the first 10 days we celebrated Mary Ina's 45-year Woodstock class reunion with 31 classmates and their spouses.

Robert joined us for that time and really enjoyed connecting with classmates as well as India itself. We spent some time at a lovely resort along the Ganges River as well as walking the beloved hills of our childhood.

Don, Mary Ina and Sunita then moved into school housing for their two months of volunteering time. It is a lovely duplex cottage set on the side of the hill, overlooking the valley, surrounded by pine and rhododendron trees and often visited by families of monkeys.

Don has been helping out in the high school, subbing almost daily as well as tutoring students in math. I have found a spot helping the elementary librarian, checking shelves for correct shelving, processing withdrawn books and reading to classes. Sunita helps some in the library but has yet to find her niche.



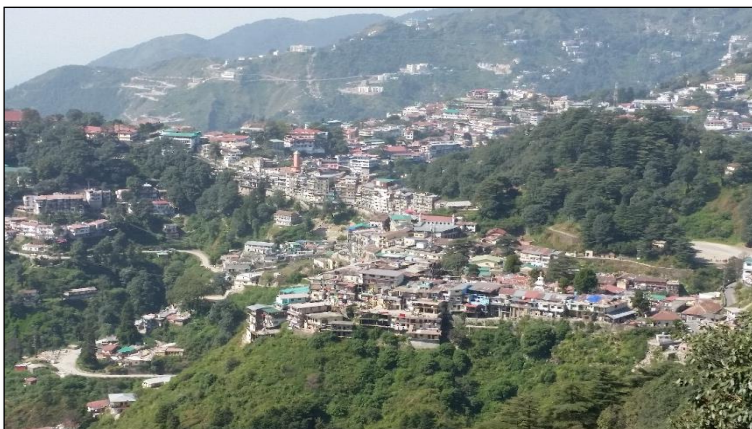
Woodstock entry



Celebrating Sunita's birthday

In the second week of October, the whole school goes out for activity week, some for the full week, the younger grades for daily field trips. Mary Ina joined 21 tenth graders on a strenuous 7-day hike from one river valley, up over a pass and down to another river valley on the other side of the mountain.

They camped along the way, even experiencing snow one morning at the highest campsite. Don and Sunita helped three days with day trips for the younger grades, one of which included a visit to a shoemaker where each child was measured for a pair of sandals.



Mussoorie town

During quarter break at school, three of us took a trip into the mountains to the source of the Yamuna River, one of the sacred rivers in India. Sunita enjoyed the experience of riding a very gentle horse up the trail and back for a roundtrip total of nine miles. We enjoyed the beauty of snow-capped mountains, rushing streams and rivers, numerous waterfalls and visits with people we met as we wandered through villages.