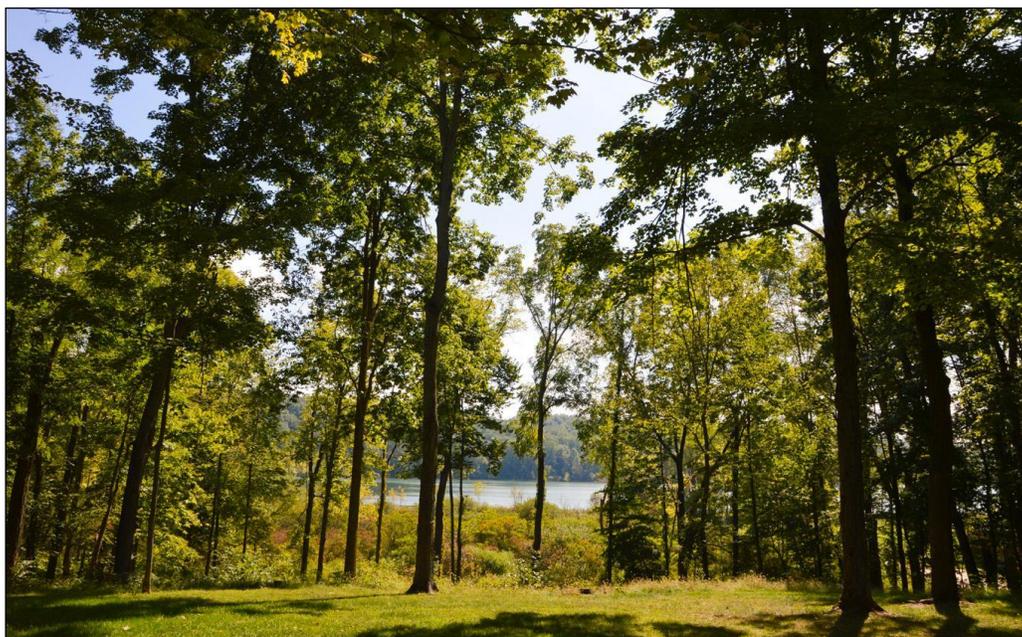


Menno-Life



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On a clear day...

You can glimpse a view of Shavehead Lake beyond the peaceful woods of Camp Friedenswald.

Benefits of walking: Traveling the journey of faith together

I was reminded recently of how important walking has been throughout my entire life. I walked to school, several blocks away when I was a child, and some of the decisions I made as I reflected and walked to and from school significantly shaped my life. To this day if I need to sort out something or discern a new direction in my life or if I need inspiration or I need to pray...I'll take a walk. So in addition to benefits to personal physical health and broader implications for the health of the planet, there are spiritual benefits to walking.

My spirit is awakened when I walk. As I walk I notice things like leaves and acorns, temperature, humidity, animals, and people. Similarly, as we've begun our year using the walking book, I'm noticing the environment and reflecting. I see walking and journeying language in so many of the songs we sing! I notice these images in the texts from scripture. These are only a few of my observations! I'm struck by the freshness of the scriptures we're encountering in worship. We are hearing longer portions of scripture read in worship. We're also hearing them paired differently than we do typically when we are following the Revised Common Lectionary. It may or may not have escaped your notice that we're also experiencing some slight changes in worship order. This is because those who lead worship have begun meeting together as a learning circle each week, to hear the texts, to reflect on the threads we see running through the texts, and to envision how the texts might inform or shape our experience of worship that week. Our worship really is growing out of our engagement with the scriptures in a new way.

I'm also noticing a greater degree of interaction around the theme of each worship service as various groups engage the chapter through devotions, or in learning circles, or in informal conversation. Somehow focusing our life together in this way seems to be creating new paths for us to live out or live into the challenges of the texts in worship. Another way to say it might be that focusing our life together in this way seems to be creating deeper awareness of practical applications in our life together. I believe this is resulting in deepened relationships with one another as we share and learn to know one another better.

Finally, I'm noticing the gift to us of the structure of using the book this year in our life together. The schedule for the year and the structure of the book provides information for all of us in planning and preparing. And yet, the premise of the book, that "we make the road by walking" creates a sense of joy and delight as we discover the way as we walk it together. What a joy to travel the journey of faith together!

-- *Pastor Wanda Stopher*



GTF introduces logo for A New Path Together

A New Path Together – Governance Task Force is happy to introduce our logo, created by Kerry Bush. It visually represents the spiritual journey we are on as a congregation (We Make the Path by Walking) as well as the essential work of assessing and revising our governance structure. These are two parts of a larger whole – who we are as a congregation today and into the future. Look for the logo on correspondence or materials that GTF produces for quick identification and reminder of the sacred journey we share.

GTF -- Gerald Mast, Greg Hartzler, Elizabeth Kelly, Wanda Stopher

Governance Task Force, Commissions Retreat and more

GTF Commissions Retreat, Saturday, Sept 8:

- ❖ Who: 45 people attended – evenly divided between Commission members, Deacons, and the idly interested or curious.
- ❖ What: We shared deep conversation punctuated by laughter, insight, and dreaming. Thanks to the kitchen crew, we enjoyed three pots of soup!
- ❖ How: Welcomed new leaders, sharing information about Governance Task Force learning. Invited everyone to envision different ways of organizing congregational work through discerning, exploring, discovering, sharing commitments, and naming next steps.

Back to the Future:

- Interest in gifts discernment was huge! Let's explore. Those interested or curious about gifts discernment should contact Greg Hartzler: gregphartler@gmail.com
- Commissions and other groups are already functioning in our "old" governance system while imagining who we are in a "new" system, living into the 5 Priorities and hopes for our common life.

Stay tuned as we will soon add a feature to the First Mennonite Church website at fmcbluffton.org, including the retreat agenda, a glossary of shared terms, additional documents and helpful resources.

GTF – Elizabeth Kelly, Greg Hartzler, Gerald Mast, Wanda Stopher

GTF Commission Retreat September 23 at Grace Mennonite



Among the 45 individuals participating in the Sept. 8 commission retreat were, at left, Rich Bucher, Peter DeMeo and Theda Good. Below, Kathy Dickson writes responses from Jeff Boehr, Chris Gott, Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, Jeff Gundy, Fran Core and Anita Lehman.



Important dates to remember

- October 14 – Membership class begins, 9 a.m.
- October 19 – Menno-Life deadline
- October 25 – Pastor at MC, 2:30 p.m.
- October 27 – Senior Celebration, Caring Connections, 2:30 p.m.
- October 29 – Our Daily Bread volunteers leave FMC at 9:45 a.m.

Membership class begins October 14

Are you new to First Mennonite Church? Do you want to know more about the church? Are you interested in exploring or refreshing your memory regarding what it means to be a member of this congregation? If so, you're invited to attend a membership class that will be held from 9-10 a.m. October 14, 21, 28, and November 4. Please contact Pastor Wanda or Pastor Theda if you have questions or to express interest.

FMC women attend Friedenswald retreat, hear stories of exploring ministry

Seven women from FMC attended Women's Retreat at Camp Friedenswald this year. The theme was **Hearing Your Voice, Finding Ours....** Three speakers shared their stories of finding their voices and paths to ministry during worship sessions. Febri Kristani, currently a seminary student at AMBS, from Thailand, our own Theda Good, and Izaete Nafziger, Pastor of Community Service and Outreach at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen (but originally from Brazil).

Cyneatha Milsaps, part of the retreat planning committee and new executive director of Mennonite Women USA led worship, with music leadership provided by the Work In Progress Ensemble from Mennonite Mission Network. Each speaker shared their own story of overcoming obstacles as they pursued education and direction in ministry. The three worship services each began with spirit-led songs and freedom to move in response. Selections about women in the Bible were read to introduce the inspiring personal life stories shared by the three speakers.

Women's retreat provides a place and time to get away from the hectic pace of everyday life. Friedenswald offers ample opportunities for hiking, pontoon and speedboat rides, kayaking, as well as free time for fellowship or time spent in solitude. We had a nice blend of women, some who have been attending retreat for many years, through women who had only been attending a few years- or for the first time. This is a good opportunity to reconnect with friends.

-- Pastor Theda Good



We commissioned Carrie Mast in her new role as interim children and youth ministry director during worship on September 23. We appreciate Carrie's creativity, energy, gifts of organization and administration, and love for the church. We look forward to what God will do among us, in and through her in the coming year.

FMC one of largest contributors of participants for service with MMN

Ken Regier, currently Mennonite Mission Network's interim recruiter, visited First Mennonite Church recently. According to Regier, "FMC is one of our largest contributors of participants for service programs," adding that FMC is #3 in the nation.

MMN has a global presence, giving volunteers many options for serving short and long term and offers a variety of service programs, including Service Adventure, Journey International, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Youth Venture, SOOP, Door, and The Shalom Project.

To learn more about these programs, see MMN's website at: <https://www.mennonitemission.net/>.