

Menno-Life



First Mennonite Church • Bluffton, Ohio • Vol. 68, No. 4 • July 2021

Transition is the process of living into change

I've spoken before about William Bridges who has spent much of his lifetime writing and lecturing about change. Bridges says there's a difference between change and transition. He says, people say they don't like change, but "it isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions."¹

Bridges says that change is situational: you move, change jobs, lose a loved one. But transition is the process of living into that change...adapting...adjusting. He describes it as a three-phase process that always begins with...an "Ending." The way things were, is no more! The **first** phase involves letting go of old ways of being, letting go of identity, letting go of things that previously brought comfort or joy. Bridges calls the **second** phase, the "Neutral Zone!" It's the in-between time, when the old is definitely gone, but what will

be is just not yet quite clear. It's like you've left the harbor and you're on the open sea. It can be a turbulent time and disorienting, because you know what you've lost and what you left, but you can't yet see where you'll land. Finally, the **third** phase is "New Beginning." Whatever the new beginning turns out to be, it is in no small part, a product of how we have navigated the ending and the neutral zone that came before. No wonder people-and congregations, weary quickly of transition!² It's hard work! And it typically lasts much longer than we'd like.

The neutral zone is where we are currently in our life together. The neutral zone is sometimes awkward. It can be boring. It's nearly always an anxious time. All that said, I believe God works in the Neutral Zone in ways that may not be obvious or easily identified. In addition, I've found the neutral zone to be a perfect time to tend to relationships. Tending relationships includes saying good-bye, thank you, I love you, and I'm sorry. Tending relationships is a way of letting go!

Tending relationships is important in interpersonal relationships but I think it also applies to my relationship with the church. So I want to say, First Mennonite Church, I love you. We have



¹ Bridges, William. "Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change," p. 3.

² Bridges, William. "Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change." pp 4-5.

been through a lot together over the last nearly six years. Adversity, loss and challenge have knit us together! I love being part of this worshipping community! And I love being part of this people committed to God's reign of peace and justice.

Thank you! Thank you for the opportunity to learn to know you as a people and as individuals! Thank you for your willingness to try new things, and actively engage with one another in things like Open Space meetings, and participatory change. Thank you for being a place where I could learn and grow. Thank you for all the ways you use your gifts in the church and in the world! You inspire me!

As I said in my resignation letter, in some ways this seems like a terrible time for another transition at First Mennonite Church. However, it is also helpful to remember that the mission of God is ongoing. The world is in the midst of transition, always moving toward the fullness of God's reign. When we join God's mission in the world we give ourselves to the transition of transformation.

Finally, be assured that this in-between time, this neutral zone won't go on indefinitely. It will end, and will be followed by new beginnings. I am confident that God is at work even now in the midst of transition, in ways that will make the way ahead clear as the path opens up before you. May the living Christ be your constant companion and your guide.

~ Pastor Wanda

Bringing the Peace at MennoCon21

First Mennonite Church youth and adults joined with over six hundred other Mennonites to "Bring the Peace" in Cincinnati during MennoCon21 on July 6-10. Nearly five hundred people joined the convention online to bring the total number of attendees to just over a thousand. The biannual convention of Mennonite Church USA focused on sharing the peace of Jesus Christ through worship, Bible study, seminars, service, and relationship building.

In five worship services throughout the week, conference participants sang together in a variety of musical styles. They listened to sermons that offered a vision of peace rooted in the creation, expressed in our daily lives, and defining our hope for the future. A persistent claim woven through the music and preaching was that Jesus Christ is the source of the peace that we share.

Each morning from Wednesday through Friday Dr. Safwat Marzouk, who has taught Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, led Bible studies from the Old Testament. Drawing from Psalm 74, Isaiah 59, the story of Joseph and his brothers, and the brave actions of the Hebrew midwives, Safwat showed how the Bible helps us to address contemporary challenges to peace, including our struggles with the pandemic, with racism, with power and privilege, and with xenophobia.

Throughout each day the conference offered seminars to both adults and youth that dealt with practical issues of peacemaking. Adult seminars included such topics as the Bible and Christian nationalism, violence in the Bible, anti-Semitism, peace between Muslims and Christians, financial decisions, becoming a welcoming congregation, anti-racism, gun violence, climate change, and economic justice. Youth seminars included topics such as designing your life, living simply, being a peaceful yet competitive athlete, theater performance as peacemaking, wealth

and Christianity, faith and vocation, and mass incarceration. First Mennonite Church members led several of these seminars: Lawrence Matthews on college affordability, Jackie Wyse-Rhodes on happiness in the Bible's wisdom literature, and Gerald Mast on Bible reading practices and living simply.

On Thursday, First Mennonite Church youth spent the afternoon doing a service project with the humanitarian relief organization – Matthew 25 Ministries – based in Cincinnati. The youth removed bar codes from over three thousand socks and other men's clothing accessories donated by a men's clothing company.

During the final worship service on Saturday morning, Mennonite Church USA executive director Glen Guyton challenged the church to rely on Jesus alone for the peace that the world needs. He urged Mennonites to be open to the changes that God is bringing to the church and introduced the theme of the next convention—to be held in two years in Kansas City: "Be Transformed."

At the two-hour business session—held virtually on Saturday afternoon—delegates approved changes to the by-laws that removed The Mennonite, Inc. (the magazine now merged with Mennonite World Review to form Anabaptist World) as a denominational entity. Church leaders also announced that delegates will vote on whether or not to retire the membership guidelines at a special session to be held in Kansas City on May 27-30, 2022. The guidelines have been a source of conflict in the denomination since its beginning.

First Mennonite Church members who attended the convention include the following adults: Beth Boehr, Jeff Boehr, Chris Gott, Doug Luginbill, Carrie Mast, Gerald Mast, Lawrence Matthews, Louise Matthews, Walt Paquin, Laurel Neufeld Weaver, Paul Neufeld Weaver, and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes. Youth attendees included the following: Theo Andreas, Kendra Gott, Ben Hartzler, Ellie Nickel, Ethan Nickel, and John-Paul Yoder.

~ Gerald Mast

Music ensemble rehearsals to begin in September

Music ensemble rehearsals to begin: Note the dates, times, locations, and ages for the church's music ensembles. Please consider offering your musical gifts to this important part of worship for our congregation and encourage others to join. We gladly welcome new additions to the ensembles and greatly enjoy the return of former members.

- Chancel Choir (**adults of all ages**) begins on Wednesday, September 22, at 7 p.m. (Mark Suderman, director) – sanctuary. *All vaccinated singers are welcome to participate.*
- Adult (**adults of all ages**) and Youth (**Grades 7-12**) Bells - both begin on Wednesday, September 8, at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. respectively (Ray Raeburn, director) – assembly room. *Since no singing is involved, ringers will be contacted prior to the first rehearsal to finalize safety protocols.*
- Cherub Choir (**4 yr. olds-2nd grade**) begins on Wednesday, September 22, at 6 p.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children's choir room. *Those without vaccinations will need to wear masks.*

- Jubilate (**3rd-6th grade**) begins on Wednesday, September 22, at 6:30 p.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children’s choir room. *Those without vaccinations will need to wear masks.*
- Youth Choir (**7th grade and up**) will meet on Sunday, September 9 at 8:30a.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children’s choir room. *Those without vaccinations will need to wear masks.*
 - *Parents with new choir members are welcome to stay as needed.*

More 2021 graduates: Congratulations to these college graduates

Christopher Harnish

1. I'm Christopher Harnish. My parents are Steve and Monica Harnish, and my brothers are Julian and Lucas Harnish.



2. I am planning to use my Spanish degree in Goshen for a year, perhaps interpreting at one of the local health care providing institutes. Then, I hope to travel abroad for a year of service in a Spanish speaking country.

3. I have enjoyed training on the Cross Country and Track teams at Goshen. I also enjoy playing some guitar every once in a while.

Tad Steiner

1. Tad Steiner is the son of TR and Judy Steiner and brother to Emily Steiner.

2. Tad graduated in May from Ohio Northern University with a molecular biology degree, with a minor in chemistry. He plans to find work in his field and save up for grad school.

3. His interests encompass many areas: music, science, ecology, literature, history and philosophy. He especially loves the natural world and hopes to do some sort of research in the future.



BRING ^{the} PEACE!

MennoCon21 in Cincinnati, Ohio Most of us got there in an 8' tall transit van that only fit in 1 parking garage that we found after Chris Gott and Carrie Mast walked for hours around downtown guesstimating if the van would fit using Chris' arm reach as a benchmark! John-Paul Yoder and Theo Andreas biked all the way down in 2 days! "Bring the Peace" was this year's theme.

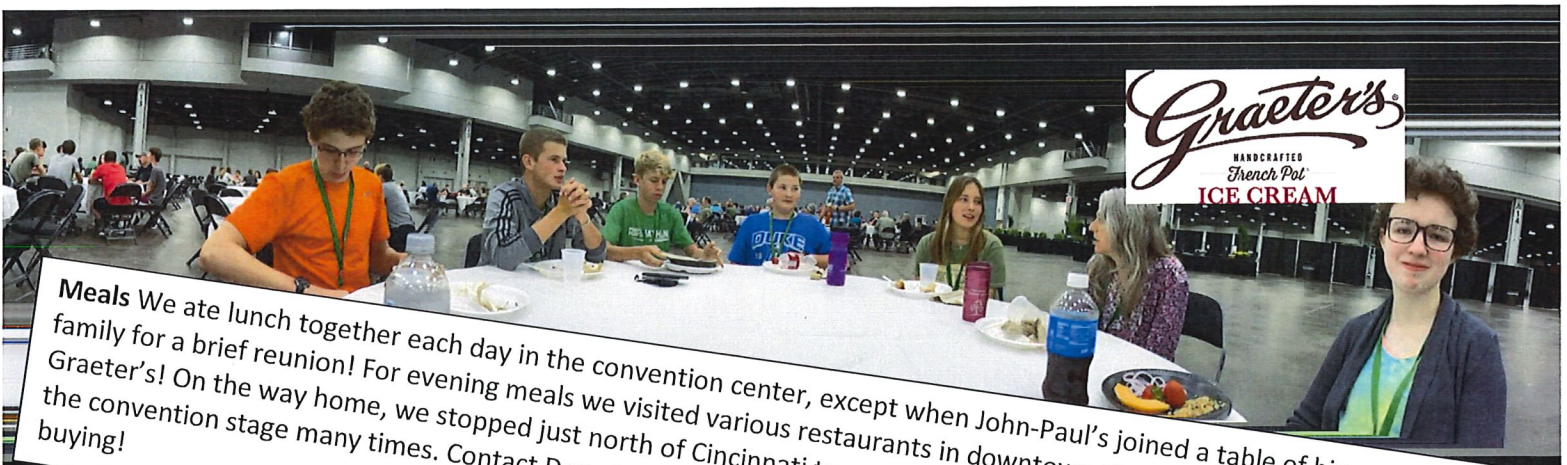


Worship in Duke Energy Convention Center We sat together in the midst of 500+ MCUSA friends for morning Bible Study with former AMBS professor Safwat Marzouk and for evening worship which included a rockin' Anabaptist band!

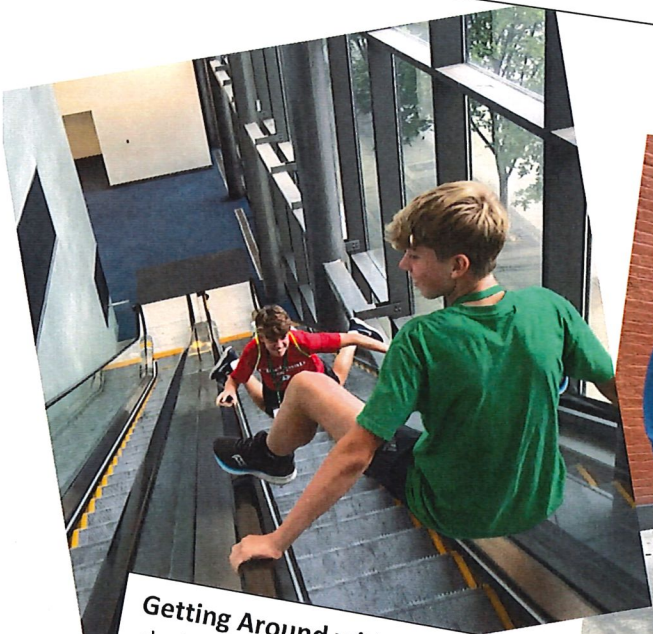


Youth Group Chats We found space in the convention center for youth group chats following worship to discuss what we heard during Bible study, worship, and seminars we attended. We considered our implicit bias in relating to People of Color during the discussion above.

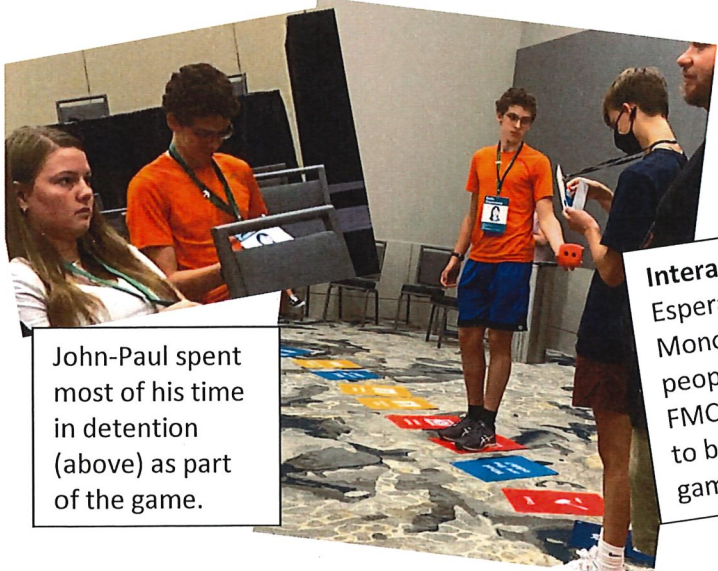




Meals We ate lunch together each day in the convention center, except when John-Paul's joined a table of his extended family for a brief reunion! For evening meals we visited various restaurants in downtown Cincinnati, including dessert at Graeter's! On the way home, we stopped just north of Cincinnati to sample Skyline Chili, an experience recommended from the convention stage many times. Contact Doug Luginbill if you're interested in sampling some Skyline! Rumor has it, he's buying!



Getting Around with Friends Escalator shenanigans spanned youth groups and ages as some sponsors accepted challenges to run up the down escalator. Check in with Chris Gott for stories and video evidence! Above left, Theo Andreas is "hanging out" with Eli Simones, 1 of the Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship youth who joined our group for much of the week. Wyatt Simones also hung out with us. On the right, both are pictured with our group as we waited for the Cincinnati Bell Connector aka Cincinnati Streetcar, a free ride to much of the city.



John-Paul spent most of his time in detention (above) as part of the game.

Interactive Seminars John-Paul Yoder took on the role of Soila Esperanza, an undocumented woman, in "You Got Booked", a Monopoly-style game that showed the realities of life in the US for people who are undocumented and/or people of color. Many of the FMC youth group attended another session of this seminar. All seemed to be deeply impacted by the facts and stats shared throughout the game.

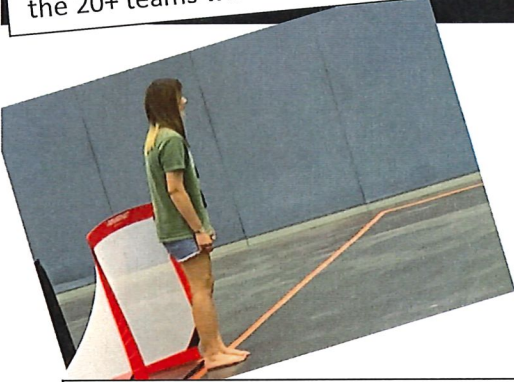
Service Project & Outing



Matthew 25 Ministries, Findlay Market, & the Cincinnati Streetcar We owe much gratitude to Heidi Sommer Simones from Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship and daughter of Keith & Shirley Sommer of Pandora and Grace Mennonite for her time and energy planning and coordinating our service project at Matthew 25 Ministries, followed by the excursion to Findlay Market for supper, and a ride back to the convention center on the Cincinnati Bell Connector aka Cincinnati Streetcar, a free ride to much of the city. Jean Swartley, also a member of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, joined us to offer an informal tour of the city. Murals decorate many buildings like the painting of a building on a building above.



Youth Trivia Ellie Nickel, Kendra Gott, & a new friend from Goshen participated in the Youth Trivia game with Chris Gott and Carrie Mast. We didn't win, but we placed in the top half of the 20+ teams who entered!



Soccer Whether in the convention center rec room or at the new FC Cincinnati Stadium, soccer found its way into this convention, too!



One more shot for the road! Our group on the steps outside of the convention center discussing supper plans or waiting for someone, 2 more activities we engaged in often during our week together!



Puzzlemaker is a puzzle generation tool for teachers, students and parents. Create and print customized word search, criss-cross, math puzzles, and more-using your own word lists.

MennoCon21

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| EconomicJustice | Escalators | Exhibits |
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| Immigration | PeacemakerImprov | PrisonReform |
| Recreation | ServiceProject | SkylineChili |
| Soccer | Stories | Streetcar |
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