

# Menno-Life





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FMC youth helped clean up Cave Spring Park, Van Buren, Mo., as a servant project during Kansas City 2015. Anna Biesecker-Mast reported on this for *The Mennonite*; her story is elsewhere in this issue. Pictured from left, Isaac Andreas, Elizabeth Nisly, Cassidy Bush and Douglas Nester.

## Baseball and theology: Making a connection

 *Take me out to the ballgame,*   
*Take me out to the crowd.*  
*Buy me some peanuts and crackerjacks....*

On July 17 Janet and I, Rich and Gloria Hernandez Bucher and Gregg and Karen Luginbuhl travelled to Cincinnati to take in a Reds/Indians baseball game. It turned out to be one of those nights when it rained during most of the game. In the third inning we were encouraged to go to the concourse area as lightning was striking close by. So we waited in the concourse for over an hour waiting for the game to continue. When it did resume we kept hearing reports of more storms on their way. We left in the fifth inning, disappointed that we were not able to see the rest of the game. The game continued but it was raining lightly the rest of the game. In spite of all this it was good to watch my favorite sport played by professional athletes.

When I was in seminary, my mentoring pastor and I got into baseball discussions. David would make a case for the theological elements of the game. I had never thought of making these connections between baseball and theology. Here are just a few of them:

- Baseball is about coming home. The whole point of the game is to finish where you begin- home plate. If you make it home you are safe. "In our end is my beginning. Home is where one starts from...." T.S. Eliot

- The followers are nourished on rituals: the umpires shout “Play Ball!” the standard fare of crackerjacks and soda, brats and hot dogs brings pleasure and satisfaction to the palate of the hungry, and that most majestic sound- the crack of the bat.
- It has its cathedrals. Elaborate ballparks, hallowed grounds, the playing area called the diamond, and the national cathedral – the Hall Fame in Cooperstown, New York, complete with historical relics.
- Baseball abounds in hope. Each year in March fans believe in their team going all the way to the World Series. And by June or July the teams that are not faring well can hear the fans call out – “Just wait till next year.”
- The possibility of a game being played forever. It is hypothetically possible that a game could go on for an eternity. Extra innings provide opportunities for grace -- as long as the score is tied, the game goes on.
- Forgiveness and grace abound. In a game in 1986, Bob Brenly committed four errors in one inning setting a record. But he also drove in four runs later in the game and one was the winning run. All was forgiven and Bob was a hero after the game. He remained in good graces with the team and fans.

Summer time provides us many opportunities to take in relaxing activities. Some choose swimming, some go to car shows, some go to the movies, others like to relax on the patio. But for me, if I had my druthers – you’d find me....*at the ole ball game.*

-- Steven Yoder

## Among our neighbors and friends



**Happy Birthday to Luther and Geneva Shetler, who celebrated their 98<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> birthdays, respectively. Luther’s birthday was July 1 and Geneva’s was July 8. On December 22, 2015, they’ll celebrate their 75<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. The Shetlers have been members of FMC since 1951.**

### Happy birthday to:

Kenneth Parish, 83, August 1  
 Dorothy Houts, 93, August 12  
 Richard Boehr, 84, August 12  
 Robert Flick, 87, August 14

Dorothy Hoffman, 94, August 19  
 Neil Kehler, 83, August 19  
 Eleanor Baumgartner, 91, August 21  
 James Oberly, 94, August 27

### Happy anniversary to:

Joan and Sam Diller, 56, August 2  
 Romaine and Don Pannabecker, 55, August 2  
 Treva and Robert Stratton, 62, August 9

Dottie and Gene Long, 54, August 13  
 Jo and Stan Clemens, 53, August 19

## **Wanda Stopher named new lead pastor at FMC**

Following a strong positive vote of the congregation (187 yes, 6 no, 5 abstentions,) Wanda Stopher has accepted the call to be our new lead pastor. We are working on finalizing the covenant of understanding with Wanda. Her tentative start date is Oct. 1 and the tentative date for her installation service is Oct. 4. As we move forward, please continue to pray for Wanda and our church. If you have questions, please contact moderator Darryl Nester ([nesterd@bluffton.edu](mailto:nesterd@bluffton.edu), or 419-358-9650).

## **International breakfast potluck August 9**

The congregation is invited to share in an international breakfast potluck on Sunday, Aug. 9, at 9:15 a.m. to celebrate our international Sunday school theme and Mennonite World Conference. Please bring a main dish, fruits, breads or cheeses from other countries, as well as your own table service. The recipe book "Extending the Table" has many international recipes. Traditional American breakfast foods and gluten free foods are also welcome. Coffee, tea and juice will be provided. We encourage you to wear clothing from other countries for this event. -- *Christian Ed. Commission*

## **Tachibana to speak August 16 at FMC**

First Mennonite Church will host Shizuo Tachibana of Japan on Sunday, Aug. 16 at 7 p.m. in fellowship hall. Shizuo (the first member of the Hiroshima Mennonite Church) will speak about the effects of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in August of 1945. He will share stories of hibakusha (survivors of the A-bomb). He teaches in a private pre-school based on the Steiner method. Bob and Alice Ruth Ramseyer will host Shizuo during his stay in Bluffton. **All are welcome.**

## **Swiss Mennonite 175<sup>th</sup> celebration August 30**

This summer marks the 175th anniversary of the founding of the first Mennonite church in the Bluffton and Pandora communities. A celebration will be held Sunday, Aug. 30, from 3-8 p.m. at the site of the original church, which was located between Ebenezer and St. John churches on Putnam County Road 4. Charles Niswander, Pandora is the chair. The celebration will include a worship service, lectures, displays, hymns and a traditional Swiss meal under a big tent.

Jim Oberhaus will lead a hymn sing and Myron Augsburg will provide an afternoon lecture describing Anabaptism. Gerald Mast will present a lecture on "The Piety of the Swiss Mennonites," exploring the spirituality of the early Swiss settlers. Perry Bush will discuss how the Swiss congregation grew from the original congregation. There will be stations where children can try activities from different eras of church history. Carrie Philips will lecture on the Froschauer Bible, a translation of the Bible published in 1744 in a Swiss dialect. Musselman Library has the largest collection of these bibles in the world. Examples of this publication will be on display.

## **School kit drive underway**

According to the summer 2015 issue of "A Common Place," MCC provided 89,000 school kits to countries including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Syria. First Mennonite has a goal of completing 200 school kits by the end of September. Supplies are discounted now through September. You may fill a bag(s), donate money for supplies, donate fabric or make bags. Checks should be written to FMC with "MW school kits" on the memo line.

Cards with a list of supplies and instructions for making bags are on the bulletin cupboard in fellowship hall. Boxes for complete kits, supplies for kits, and a box for empty bags are on the pew in the fellowship hall. Bags must be made with sturdy fabric because kits are heavy.

Last year we sent 250 kits plus additional supplies – the most we've sent in one year, and was due in part to the "Make it Grow" campaign. Let's go for at least 200 kits! -- *Ginger Theis*

## **Additional funds needed to support FMC youth in voluntary service**

First Mennonite Church is committed to supporting our young adults who commit to spend at least 10 months to a voluntary service assignment. Our financial support is available to those who choose

an Anabaptist/Mennonite-based organization. This year we have three and potentially four voluntary service workers.

Jackson Bush will serve with the Pittsburgh PULSE program; Jennifer Steinmetz, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Seattle; David Hooley, MCC SALT program, Kenya, and Lily Schumacher, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Albuquerque, NM.

Funds available in the MVS Fund are not sufficient to cover their costs of participation (\$1,500 each.) Please consider contributing financially to this program. We have a wonderful “problem” with our youth showing interest in voluntary service. When donating, please make your check out to *First Mennonite Church* with *VS Fund* written on the memo line. Thank you for your support!

### **Thanks to summer Sunday school presenters**

On behalf of the Christian Education Commission, thanks to the following members of the congregation who presented to the preschool and elementary children during Sunday school this summer: Mary Ina Hooley, India; Karen and Tig Intigliata, Bolivia; Elysia and Perry Bush, Karen McCullough and Steve Yoder, Poland; Tim and Jo Pannabecker, New Zealand; Nancy Frey Yoder, Burkina Faso; Mustaq Ahmed, Bangladesh; Heidrun Awad, Middle East; Chris and Carmen Ordonez Moser, El Salvador and Kevin and Alison King, Honduras; Steve and Monica Harnish, China; and Bob and Alice Ruth Ramseyer and Ken and Natalie Shenk, Japan. We appreciate your time and dedication in sharing your experiences around the world.

### **Camp Friedenswald Report**

“Jesus our Teacher” was the theme for summer camp 2015 at Camp Friedenswald. This focal point was based on the voice from heaven on the mount of transfiguration where Peter, James and John heard the words- *This is my son, my chosen one, listen to him!*

Once again First Mennonite Church was heavily involved in the summer operations. Summer staff, campers, parents providing transportation, camp pastor and family camp included participants from First Mennonite Church. **Six summer staff** this year included Ashton Cluts (activities coordinator), Jonatan Moser (head boys’ counselor), Landon Cluts, David Nester, Jonathan Nisly and Julian Harnish. JP Schumacher served as **camp pastor** June 29-July 4.

FMC campers included Antony Kingsley, Douglas Nester, Isaac Andreas, Anna Biesecker-Mast, Levi Schumacher, Christopher Harnish, Kate Pannabecker, Milo Combs, Allison Diller, Ben Hartzler, Landon Novak, John Paul Yoder, Elam Suter, Ellie Nickel, Seth Pannabecker, Jacob Suter, Rebecca Estell, Ethan Nickel, Mia Pannabecker, Xavier Diller, Kaleigh Coffman, Ellie Hartzler, Mikayla Suter, Ethan Blount, Grace Paquin, Ana Neufeld-Weaver, Patrick Estell, Seth Andreas, Danielle Novak and Sophia Gott.

Campers from First Mennonite Church receive campership financial support to help families with camp expenses. This in money well invested for our children and youth. Camp Friedenswald has served as a wonderful ally for our congregation in helping shape the faith of our young people. We appreciate all the ways the camp provides a great setting for growing in faith and a growing appreciation of nature in “the peaceful woods.”

-- Steven Yoder

### **Biesecker-Mast’s article on SHYF project published in The Mennonite**

*Anna Biesecker-Mast worked as an intern for The Mennonite, Inc., during KC2015. This story was posted July 5 by The Mennonite and is reprinted with their permission.*

On June 30, Mennonite youth helped clean up Cave Spring Park, Van Buren, Mo., as a servant project during Kansas City 2015.

First, the youth groups met at the Kansas City Convention Center to talk with representatives from Mennonite Mission Network about how to be a respectful servant and how to work together as a group efficiently. They learned how to be polite during the experience, for example asking before taking pictures of non-volunteers for the purpose of being respectful.

After the meeting, the groups hopped onto buses and traveled to Cave Spring Park. When they got there they were divided into different groups which were assigned separate jobs to help around the park.

One group cleared up the trash around the area while another group cleared a mile long path around the park. Another group tried to exterminate the invasive species that were quickly populating the park such as honey suckle and wintercreeper. The last group was in charge of the weed whacking around walking areas.

“It was a really cool experience,” says Elizabeth Nisly from Bluffton, Ohio. “It was nice to help people.”

### **SHYF active at MC USA convention**

At 4 a.m. June 29, the SHYF began their journey to Kansas City. Youth who attended were Antony Kingsley, Christopher Harnish, Isaac Andreas, Douglas Nester, Joseph Shumacher, Anna Biesecker-Mast, Laura Strahan, Elizabeth Nisly and Cassidy Bush, as well as Amber Shelly, Laura and Greg Hartzler and their children, and Shannon Thiebeau as youth sponsors. We traveled via Amtrak from Toledo to Chicago to Kansas City. By the time we settled into the hotel, it was nearly midnight and we were exhausted but excited.

The next morning allowed for our youth to sleep in while the sponsors finished final details for convention. In the afternoon, we began our service project at Cave Spring Park, a nature facility in the city where many day camps and summer activities are held. The park staff was creating a mile-long trail through the woods. We were assigned various tasks, including picking up trash in the woods and clearing invasive plants. After four hours, we were exhausted but the gratitude and appreciation from the park staff made us realize that even minor tasks can make a huge impact.



**From left, Shannon Thiebeau, Amber Shelly, Laura Strahan, Anna Biesecker-Mast, Ellie Hartzler, Cassidy Bush, Joe Schumacher, Elizabeth Nisly, Antony Kingsley, Ben Hartzler, Christopher Harnish, Micah Hartzler, Douglas Nester, Anna Hartzler, Greg Hartzler, and Isaac Andreas. Missing from the photo? Laura Hartzler, the photographer.**

The rest of our week was filled with worship, seminars and learning experiences, and fellowshiping with old and new friends. The theme of convention this year was “On the Way” with Bible passage Luke 24:13-35, the story of the Walk to Emmaus. Many of the events were focused on the idea of finding God in the journey. For example, during worship we were treated to a version of Jimmy Fallon’s *The Tonight Show*, which was *The Menno-night Show*, hosted by Hesston College’s Michelle Hershberger. In addition to gags and segments done in the style of Jimmy Fallon (like silly games and the famous thank you notes), the worship service took a sobering but enlightening turn

when Hershberger interviewed three people about tragic experiences in their life and how they found that Jesus was there for them in the grieving process.

Seminars and learning experiences also focused on the Emmaus story, with a wide variety of topics for the youth to explore. There was a workshop for building a resume, one that discussed the history of how Jesus became to be known as white, and a seminar led by a former member of the Navy and his journey with the struggles of being in Navy and how it affected his relationships and identity as a Christian. Elizabeth Nisly and Anna Biesecker-Mast both noted that this seminar stood out to them because it showed a side of the military and faith that is not often talked about. A favorite learning experience was one titled "Mennonite Martial Arts." The leaders taught us how we can be assertive but not aggressive and how to use nonviolent resistance if we are faced with physical threats.

In addition to the seminars and worship, there was also time for fellowship in the recreation hall, attending hymn sings and watching performances. As a commentary of the issue of homosexuality in the Mennonite Church, Ted and Company performed a drama titled "Listening for Grace" to give us insight about how this issue affects many of us in very real ways. Isaac Andreas and Cassidy Bush said this drama made them think about LGBTQ concerns and to look at the issue from a different perspective.

The youth convention was a time of growth and refreshment for everyone. New friendships were created and we learned about our faith and identities as Mennonites. For some, this was our first MC USA convention and we weren't quite sure what to expect. The rest of us were eager to relive experiences of past conventions and reconnect with old friends. In the end, we had a great experience and can't wait for Orlando in 2017!

-- Shannon Thiebeau

### **Quilts, comforters and afghans needed for baby/child dedications**

The Nurture Commission reports that the supply of quilts, comforters, and afghans needed for baby and child dedications must be replenished. Anyone interested in knitting, crocheting, or quilting is welcome to contribute an item. Suggested sizes are 32-38 inches in width by 38-44 inches in length. Some common sizes seen in catalogs and kits are 32 by 38 inches and 34 by 40 inches.

A small supply of woven cotton and flannel for baby quilt backings are in the quilt room in a box labeled Fabrics for Baby Quilts. Quilts may be machine- or hand-quilted. For knotted comforters, using two "down-ups" with the needle before knotting the ends results in a more secure knot. Finished items should be placed in the quilt room in the box labeled Child Dedication Items. Direct questions to Sarah Basinger. Thank you in advance for any contributions!

-- Sarah Basinger

### **Music ensemble rehearsals**

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 would gladly welcome new additions to the ensembles and will greatly enjoy the return of former members.

- Chancel Choir (**adults of all ages**) begins on Wednesday, September 2 at 7:00 p.m. (Mark Suderman, director) – sanctuary
- Adult and Youth (**Grades 7-12**) Bells - both begin on Wednesday, September 2 at 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively (Ray Raeburn, director) – assembly room
- Cherub Choir (**ages 3-grade 1**) will begin on Wednesday, September 2 at 6:00-6:30 p.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children's choir room. Parents of 3 year olds are encouraged to come to the first few rehearsals.
- Jubilate (**Grades 2 - 5**) will begin on Wednesday, September 2 at 6:45-7:30 p.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children's choir room.
- Youth choir (**6th grade and up**) will meet on Sundays from 8:30-9:15 a.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – children's choir room.

-- Mark Suderman, director of music