

Menno-Life



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Each month, one or more of our pastors meets with FMC members at both Maple Crest and Mennonite Memorial Home. During a recent visit to MMH, Lois Jean Andreas (left) and Glennys Henry participated in the discussion. (Louise Matthews photo)



Moving to the other side

“Moving over to the other side of the desk” is a term used by new teachers as they experience the transition from being a student to becoming a teacher. New teachers often are sympathetic to student needs having just graduated from those ranks. I’m not sure if we have a term for pastors who switch roles from being a caregiver to receiving care. I am used to going to the hospital to visit congregational members who need medical attention. Spending time with parishioners in those settings has been a meaningful part of my ministry. Recently I spent 12 days at the Cleveland Clinic Hospital. No, I was not visiting members of our congregation at the hospital. I was now on the other side of the situation and I was the patient. I had to receive care rather than do my normal caregiving as a pastor.

So what did I learn from this experience? First it was good to receive pastoral care from someone I knew. Lavon Welty and his wife Carol came to visit the first weekend and spent some quality time with us. Lavon and I did have some church business to discuss but having him there and knowing he had gone out of his way to make this trip to the hospital meant a lot to me.

It took me a few days to be open to a chaplain coming to spend time with me. When she did come she was helpful in understanding how I felt as a patient when normally I sat in the chair she was sitting in. I received support from two volunteers who have had heart transplants. Their words were encouraging to me as I continue to wait. Their stories gave me hope as I heard how their lives have been changed through this experience.

I also learned that being in the hospital has a rhythm all its own. Being a patient means constantly being interrupted by someone needing to check my vital signs. The lab tech always came early in the morning to draw blood. Doctors came around as a team in the forenoon to visit and update me on my status. My nurses were very good to both Janet and me. We had some good conversations and I never felt they were in a hurry to get on to other patients. It was the little things they did that made me appreciate their attention to details and how they showed compassion.

Since I have returned to Bluffton I have been amazed at the number of people who have said they were praying for me. People from First Mennonite Church and also from the community have said encouraging words that make me feel loved and cared for. So I continue to receive care now even as I give care to others. Perhaps that is the biggest lesson to learn in all this. Even when we are a caregiver we need to be open to the care that others want to share with us. It may not be a medical condition but knowing that people want to offer their support to each other in a variety of life situations is what makes us a living body of faith. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" wrote the Apostle Paul. I can vouch from my experience that this is what I have felt and experienced in these weeks of September. Thanks be to God.

-- Steven Yoder, associate pastor

Among our neighbors and friends

Happy birthday to:

Mary Yoder, 92, October 4

Joan Bauman, 83, October 8

Elizabeth Shelly, 82, October 10

Doris Hamman, 92, October 27

Happy anniversary to:

Corrinne and Richard Boehr, 64, October 28

Deaths

We offer our condolences to Harvey Bauman and his family, as they mourn the loss of Polly, who died September 2 at Mennonite Memorial Home. A memorial service was held at FMC on September 12.

We express our sympathy to Hans and Linda Houshower, in the loss of Hans' mother, Margaret Houshower. Margaret died September 23 at the Mennonite Memorial Home. A family and friends celebration of Margaret's life is planned for a future date.

Gratitude

Thanks to all for the opportunity to serve FMC. It has been a challenging, but satisfying experience. Special thanks for the beautiful ceramic bowl created by Gregg Luginbuhl. It is a tangible reminder of my time as one of your interim pastors.

-- Gloria Hernandez Bucher

Installation of Wanda Stopher as lead pastor

Wanda Stopher will be installed as our new lead pastor during the October 4 worship service. Lois Johns Kaufmann, Central District Conference minister, will be our guest preacher. The celebration will continue after church with a potluck meal in Fellowship Hall. Please plan to bring food to share and table service for your family. Wanda and Bret have moved to 182 Sunset Drive, Bluffton.

Photo opportunity for new members and current members/families

Following the worship service on Sunday, Oct. 11, Fred Steiner will be taking photographs in the parlor. These photos are to be used on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall. We encourage new members and individuals/couples/families who would like to have a replacement photo to take advantage of this opportunity. Watch for additional photo opportunities to be made available.

Volunteer opportunities at FMC

We have a terrible/wonderful problem in the nursery. Due to the addition of several new little faces to the congregation, we are in desperate need of more helpers. Volunteering even once a quarter during Sunday school or church would be helpful. We need to provide childcare if we want our young families to be involved in the church. Please contact Jen Benroth if you are willing to help at jesommer2000@yahoo.com.

To continue with our practice of having a greeter at each door on Sunday mornings, and a host in the fellowship hall, we'll need more individuals to volunteer in those positions. We understand that there are many concerns about passing germs through handshaking, especially during the flu season. The simple solution is to replace the handshaking with a "Hello" or "Welcome," accompanied by a smile. Hesitant to commit to a full month at a time? Fine -- we'd love to have you for even one Sunday. Parents and grandparents, we encourage you to take a turn with a child or grandchild. The same applies to mentors/mentees. Contact Mary P. Steiner at 419-358-5766 or fmc@bluffton.edu to sign up.

FMC member reports on participation in Ministry Inquiry Program

Halle Steingass is a member of First Mennonite Church and a fourth-year student at Goshen College. She spent part of the summer of 2015 in Goshen's Ministry Inquiry Program, serving at Zion Mennonite, Hubbard, Ore. To listen to Zion's July 12 service, during which Halle delivered the sermon, follow this link: <http://zionmennoniteoregon.org/preacher/halle-steingass/>.

What is (are) your major(s)? Was that your initial major or did you change along the way and if so, what influenced the change?

My major is social work, with a minor in music. Music had originally been my major, but after a summer internship, I realized that while I loved music, I wanted to combine it with serving people in a very tangible way. Since I am passionate about social work and music, I decided to study both.

Tell me about the MIP. Why did you choose to do this? Did you have a choice of location or was that randomly assigned?

MIP is a program that is offered for Goshen College students who are interested in "inquiring" about the ministry. There is an application and interview process to decide if you would be a good fit for the program. If you are accepted, you talk through places you might want to be placed and what kind of church environment. You also receive a stipend and scholarship, which makes it a great summer opportunity. I chose MIP for a number of reasons. After participating in CIP (Camping Inquiry Program) after my first year of college, I knew that this program would give me the freedom to explore the ministerial field. After taking a number of religion courses at Goshen, I began to be interested in discerning more about the ministry, especially focusing on theological studies. I knew that I wanted to be on the west coast, so I gave my preferences and the conference pastor helped my supervisor pick the right church for me.

So...once you knew where you were going to be this summer, how did you prepare? Did you have any conversations with the pastors or any of the congregation before your arrival?

I really did not have a lot of time to prepare. I had originally been placed in Eugene, Oregon, but that fell through. After finding a new placement, I had one Skype interview before heading to Europe for five weeks. Even though it is very uncharacteristic of me, I tried to step back and let life handle itself. It was a good practice, and gave me a wonderful precedent to start the summer.

What were your responsibilities? What was the most enjoyable part of your experience? The least enjoyable and/or the most challenging?

I was involved in a number of capacities. I did not have a “normal” work day, which was delightful. Most days I was in the office for the morning: either preparing for the coming Sunday, reading theology books, working on special music, having meetings, or talking with my pastor. In the afternoon I would either be volunteering at the Canby Center, visiting with older members of the congregation, working on other tasks that needed to be done. I also helped with the Senior High youth group, Bridging Cultures, dental van, etc. I don’t think I can pick one particularly enjoyable experience because this summer was full of them. However, some highlights were being able to serve in whatever way was needed, living with a wonderful host family, being immersed in a new place that has THE best scenery. I felt a great sense of joy being there because I felt like I had a purpose and that my work was very useful. My hardest experience was being the only woman my age, and not having someone to relate with.



Halle Steingass visiting with members of Zion Mennonite, where she served in Goshen’s Ministry Inquiry Program.

You delivered the sermon during one worship service. How did you prepare for that?

I had known that this position would require me to give a sermon, and I decided I would like to share my sermon when my parents came to visit. The week of my sermon I became very frustrated because I knew what I wanted to say, but could not put it into words. This presented the opportunity to rely on God, and have faith that it would eventually speak for itself. I finished my sermon 10 minutes before the service, and that’s what the message took for it to mature and finally fall into place. I thought that it was exhilarating, but I also really enjoy public speaking.

Did you make any Bluffton/Pandora connections while you were in Oregon?

There are many connections, and I wish that I had written them all down. The most specific connection is that Tig Intagliata knew the family who lived across the Filbert grove from me. They had lived in Bolivia and knew Tig very well. In fact, they had been in Bolivia recently and all of a sudden saw Tig walk past their window.

What do you think of Portland and the PNW in general? Did you do any traveling and if so, what and where?

I am completely sold on the PNW. Granted, I was there during their dry season, I fell in love with the scenery and people. There is such an abundance of life there, and the drastic change of topography creates another element of its own. I did travel a little while I was there. I visited different waterfalls: Silver Falls, Multnomah Falls, and Munson Creek Falls. I also went along the coast from Canon Beach to Newport.



Halle and her host family in Hubbard, Oregon.

When did you finish the MIP? Are you glad to be back at Goshen?

I finished my time in Oregon on August 14. I was not ready to be back to school because I do not want this to be my last year in college. I've had the most wonderful experience at Goshen College.

Who are the most influential people from your childhood?

The most influential people in my life were definitely my parents and peers, which I know is very broad. However, I think that my childhood was this ongoing experience that had many loving people who help to shape and mold me.

What do you remember from your childhood and later years at First Mennonite?

I have very fond memories from attending First Mennonite. My closest and dearest friends are from growing up in such a caring space. I will always remember First Mennonite as home, and a sanctuary for questions, exploration, fellowship, and growing older.

Now that you're about to begin your senior year at Goshen, what goals do you have for this year? Any particular courses that you'd like to take?

My goal is to not dwell in the fact that I am leaving. I have been very nostalgic, and tend to get stuck in being sad. This is immobilizing, and does not help me grow or savor the moments to come. I really do not need to take very many more classes to graduate. Therefore I plan on auditing Spanish and other religion courses. I want to keep learning, but without having the pressure of a grade since I have a 400-hour internship, which will consume a lot of my time.

After graduation? Is seminary in your plans? Grad school? VS?

If I had to choose, as of right now, I would fly back to Oregon and do this summer all over again. However, in reality I will probably do all of those options listed above.



Senior High/Junior High Fellowship *From Shannon Thiebeau, youth ministry director*

This September, JHYF and SHYF started the new school year off with a night of fun, food, and friends! In a combined kick-off event, we had fun playing some silly games, laughing, and enjoying each other's company. Participating in a game were **(photo at left, Elizabeth Nisly, Tad Steiner, David Hooley)**

Later in the month, JHYF had their first meeting where we started a series called "Hope in a Hopeless World." This series takes a look at some tough questions about heaven, sinning and forgiveness, going "green," and war. Next month, the SHYF will be learning about different world religions and how we can start to understand our differences.

Finally, we had another JHYF and SHYF combined event this past Sunday when we attended the Brazo en Brazo Fiesta Familiar at Lima Mennonite Church where we enjoyed music, food, and participated in a tree planting ceremony to celebrate the relationship between our different cultures and faiths to create a unified family of God.

The September 20 potluck for university students was enjoyed by both students and FMC congregants. Approximately 40 students attended the potluck that followed the worship service. Janeth Magiri, of Tanzania, delivered the sermon during the morning worship service. Magiri is a student in Bluffton University's Master of Business Administration program. (Lawrence Matthews photo)

