

# First Threshings

## First Mennonite Church

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## As a Fire is Meant for Burning

As a green bud in the springtime  
is a sign of life renewed,  
so may we be signs of oneness  
'mid earth's peoples, many hued.  
As a rainbow lights the heavens  
When a storm is past and gone,  
may our lives reflect the radiance of  
God's new and glorious dawn.

Ruth Duck (b. 1947)

*Common Ground: A Songbook  
for all the Churches*  
(v. 3)

While sifting through our church's historical records for her doctoral research, Robin Ottoson came across the following article, written by our own Paul Jantzen, which was included in our March 1970 newsletter. It is the second article that has been reprinted this spring from archived newsletters.

*Pastor Susan*

### **“Go and make disciples...”**

Matthew 28:19a

I AM TIMID. And some of the things I think are difficult for me to express. But sometimes I wonder what our church, our congregation, is saying to the society around it. How much are we really bringing the Good News to bear on the people we meet? Do we really have the sense of mission so characteristic of the apostolic church and our Anabaptist forefathers? How much are we involved in reclaiming lives that have been crushed by complicated interactions of prejudice, economics, politics, war, greed, ignorance, and neglect?

A minister in Marion County asked his church council to make a statement opposing our country's military involvement in Vietnam to send to government officials. The council rejected his proposal. His council, he reported, could deal only with problems like the size of light bulb needed in the church storage closet, or whatever flavor of ice cream to order for the church supper. But significant issues it could not tackle.

I have sometimes been disturbed by social issues that I felt the church should be dealing with. But I have been timid. These problems didn't seem to fit in with light bulbs and ice cream. Somehow, by the time we have wrestled with our building and organizational problems, it is time to go home. And the real problems of people go on. And we are sometimes more ready to be part of the problems than part of the solutions.

At the 1968 session of the General Conference at Estes Park, Gordon Cosby pointed out that the present organizational structure of our churches is preparatory (worship, teaching, preaching) but that, when a congregation is obedient to Christ's command, its weight shifts from that of self-support to that of mission. Service to persons becomes its primary purpose rather than the subject of occasional projects. When a church exists for mission, the worship, teaching, and preaching become relevant – take on real meaning.

At the October 1969 Western District Conference, the young people told us that we need to shift our emphasis from buildings to mission, and from prayer alone to prayerful action – even if the action is unpopular. The delegates rejected or tabled their proposals.

What would happen if we were really committed to Jesus Christ and really opened ourselves to the Holy Spirit? Would we become more sensitive to the problems of people and to the evils around us and within us? Would we get the courage to respond to the needs of the people next door, and those in Wichita, Kansas City, Lansing, Jerusalem, Cairo, Hanoi and Saigon?

Christ is knocking at our church door with every cry of a starving Indian; with every shiver of a ragged Chicagoan; with every scream of a wounded Vietnamese; with the yearning of every imprisoned convict in his

search for self-respect; with each victim of a second-rate education in a segregated Mississippi school. With every disillusioned youth who turns to drugs; with many decisions in our state legislature or national congress; with each grimace of a welfare recipient as he absorbs contempt from us; with each church member who asks if the church is really relevant.

Do we hear Christ's knock? Do we have the commitment to listen for the knock? Are we so busy with the "work of the church" that we have no time for the problems of people? Am I too timid and concerned with self to really care?

*Paul Jantzen*

**There was no Ministries Council meeting in May. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 18 at 7:00 p.m.**

**All good gifts around us (and within us) are sent from Heaven above, so thank the Lord, oh, thank the Lord, for all his love!**

*We Plough the Fields and Scatter  
the Good Seed on the Ground (chorus)*

### **June Events**

- 3 7:00 p.m. Nurture Committee meeting
- 4 8:00 p.m. Stewardship Committee meeting
- 7 10:00 a.m. Sunday School picnic w/Trinity
- 12-13 Anabaptist Faith Formation @ Bethel College
- 18 7:00 p.m. Ministries Council meeting
- 21 4:00 p.m., Nadine Friesen's ordination service
- 24 8:00 p.m. Worship Committee meeting
- 30-July 4 MC USA convention, Kansas City, MO

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### **Upcoming Events**

August 2-6 Vacation Bible School at FMC

#### Fall Wednesday evening adult studies:

(1) September 9-mid-October, Danielle Bartel will lead discussions on personal stewardship using the *Freed-up Financial Living* video series, and (2) Pastor Susan will lead exploration/discussion sessions regarding communion in our congregation.

**BLESS THOU THE GIFTS**  
by Samuel Longfellow (1819-1892)

Bless Thou the gifts our hands have brought;  
Bless Thou the work our hearts have planned;  
Ours is the faith, the will, the thought;  
The rest, O God, is in Thy hand. Amen.

Mennonite Hymnal  
No. 634

### **Enjoying the latest news of some of our gifted youngsters!**

Brenda Maddox, with her husband Danny and son Todd, lives in Marion so it has been some years since she has worshipped with us regularly but she has been a member of our church since 1979. She is a cousin of Susan Schultz and works at Marion National Bank. I ran into her recently and asked about her children, Allison (who was baptized in our church in 2003 and goes by Allie), Todd and Drew, and, not having my trusty shorthand pad with me, I asked her to e-mail me their news.

Allie went to Highland Community College (in northeast Kansas) for her first two years and played basketball for them. She worked there as a student sports trainer working mostly with the football team and baseball team. While at Highland she thought she would be going into athletic training. After graduating from there in 2008 she transferred to K-State to continue her education but, after getting to K-State, she changed her plans to being a nurse. While attending classes, she worked almost fulltime at Pizza Hut, working her way up to assistant manager. After graduating in 2010 she became a Certified Nurse Assistant and worked both at Pizza Hut in Manhattan and as a CNA in Salina at the hospital. She later moved to Newton, close to East Harvey County Lake (where she's living still), and began working for a home health care facility there. I think it's been two years ago she went to work for Vision Surgery Consultants in Wichita; they do specialty surgeries - lasik, cataracts, glaucoma, etc. She works as a surgery assistant to the doctors and has just recently passed her Certified Ophthalmic Assistant test. I believe this allows her to assist more in the surgery rooms with the doctors. They have offices in Newton, Ark City, Valley Center and Salina that they travel to on an as-needed basis, I believe.

Todd is still living at home with us. He has a friend, Dusty, that comes every day to help him with daily living skills and he does chores around the house. He also takes Todd to different places in town. Todd loves to go to the library every day. They also go swimming and to the park – weather permitting. They have become very good friends. Dusty has been coming to our house going on five years.

Drew graduated in December 2014 with his Associate's in accounting from Kansas State University and has returned to KSU to get his Master's in accounting with an emphasis in auditing. He will graduate in December 2015 with that degree. Starting May 18 he will be taking a Certified Public Accountant class to get him ready for the CPA exams. That class will be done at the end of June. After that he will take the four exams in July and August. Hopefully, he will pass all four exams. Once he graduates in December he will start working in Kansas City for Deloitte Consulting – the #1 accounting firm in the nation. He did an internship last summer for the company and they hired him when his internship was completed. They asked that he have his CPA and Master's before he would start work in January 2016.

I have talked to Drew this week after starting his CPA class and he tells me it is very intense and very fast paced. He has approximately 200 homework problems to do each evening. I don't believe we will be seeing him much over the summer with that kind of schedule, especially since he also is trying to work part-time while doing this class. *Brenda Maddox*



*Excerpts from Deloitte's extensive website (in which they cite they are the world's largest consulting firm):*

Analytics is about asking—and answering—smarter questions to get to the core of tough business issues. But you have to know which questions you should be answering, not just the ones you could answer. Organizations of all sizes are seeking to master, monetize, and measure their use of data. Deloitte's business analytics specialists look inside this data to help create and refine strategies for delivering data-driven insights that yield informed and differentiating business decisions. Deloitte's business analytics services also provide customized data analytics tools that are ready for deployment to immediately improve an organization's analytics capabilities.

*From your friends at "First", God's blessings to you in this next chapter of your life, Drew! PB*



Grant Knoll has run his last track race as a high-schooler: at the recent State meet at Cessna Stadium in Wichita, he shaved one second off his previous best time (one second is a big deal) in the 1600 meter race and an impressive 19 seconds off his previous best time in the 3200 meter race; he placed 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively, receiving two medals. He also graduated from Hillsboro High with honors and, since he plans to teach history after he graduates from Emporia State, he was awarded a \$300 National Education Association scholarship toward his tuition at ESU.

Many congratulations, Grant – and we, at First, wish you God's blessings at college and beyond. We will miss seeing you around!



As was reported in the *Hillsboro Free Press*, the Hillsboro Middle School competed at the Central Kansas League Instrumental Music Festival in Sterling on April 28. Together with her fellow performers, Sarah Diener received I ratings in the Mixed Trio and in the Clarinet Quartet. Sarah will be a high school freshman next year.



Joe Knoll received the following commendation at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade (and “rumor has it” that Sarah Diener received something similar, but nothing has been sent for inclusion here, PB):

“Joe has been an exceptional member of the class of 2019 during his three years of middle school! He is competitive, but compassionate, he is friendly and respectful. He is thoughtful with his school work and with his relationships. He also has great “stylin’” hair! We have loved how he watches out for his classmates as he is always quick to help anyone who is struggling.”

Nice going, Joe: we look forward to hearing about your high school activities in due course.



### **Hillsboro Middle School celebrates National History Day**

For the Middle School's History Day celebration at the end of the school year, Sarah Diener (8<sup>th</sup> grade) chose for her presentation the subject of Operation Babylift which was ordered by President Gerald Ford

after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Through this evacuation, more than 3,000 Vietnamese orphans were airlifted to the U.S. and Canada.

Sarah detailed the harrowing experiences that some of the escaping South Vietnamese went through: some crossed borders on foot or in unstable boats: the luckier ones were taken aboard planes but the planes weren't built to carry passengers and one, a C-5A Galaxy, crashed into a marsh after suffering a mechanical failure and an explosion, and about 70 infants were killed. "This image," Sarah said, "was in direct contrast to government reports of South Vietnamese calmly waiting in line for exit visas."

Those orphans that were flown to military processing units in the U.S. were warmly received: the first group was greeted by President Ford and later groups by, among others, Hollywood celebrities.

A very different kind of celebrity involved with these orphans was Regina Aune who was a nurse on the C-5A Galaxy that crashed. Sarah found out that she was thrown the entire length of the upper deck yet she helped carry 80 babies to safety. Once the babies were secured, she collapsed and was later found to have worked with a broken foot, broken leg, fractured spine and many other injuries. She was the first person to receive the Cheney Award which recognizes airmen for acts of valor or self-sacrifice performed in connection with aircraft.

Sarah highlighted some people's memories, both of the C-5A crash and of their young childhood years in Saigon. David Fisk, who was adopted by a family in south Florida, remembers his birth parents, but not their names nor his own original legal name. He eventually made up a story of his early life composed of his own memories, some educated guesses, and some facts.

Sadly, some of the mothers of the so-called orphans intended taking the children back but, due to cultural misunderstandings, found that they had to give up their parental rights. The Red Cross and other leading aid agencies later admitted that provisions to care for the children were inadequate, and that the families should have been helped in their homeland.

So far – mostly because of a lack of records – only twelve of the 3,000-plus children have been reunited with their birth families.

Sarah said (in part), "I ended up choosing the subject of Operation Babylift for my National History Day topic because I have always loved young children. And I chose to create a website because I have never created one before and thought it would be interesting to try something new. (Also) I thought it would be the most convenient category to use."

Sarah's very informative presentation is located at <http://52646405.nhd.weebly.com/>.

**PB**

## **Women's and Girls' Night Out – May 28**

Fifteen women and two girls met Nadine Friesen at Showalter Villa's restaurant, Water's Edge, for supper. Nadine is chaplain to the residents of that retirement home, and she invited us to tour the facility with her and to see her office. (Not, she assured us, that she was promoting our moving in...yet anyway!)

We first spent a few minutes touring one of the apartments: its resident, Mrs. Diller, was very gracious to open her home to us, and is obviously very happy living there; it certainly is – what? middle-class luxurious, maybe – and she has an attractive view of the lake and grounds below. After that, we had a delicious Mexican buffet, then walked to Nadine's office and, next to it, Bethany Schrag's. Bethany is the youngest daughter of Jan and Deryll Amstutz and is director of the villa; she was also our principal entertainer so, following her, we moved on to one of the lounges. Bethany grew up attending First: most of us have heard her sing many times but we never tire of listening to her. She sang several songs, beautifully accompanied on the keyboard by Karen, a friend of hers.

Next, Nadine said we were going to play a game: she asked for a volunteer to speak for a minute – without saying "um" or "er" – on a subject she would give us. We sat as still as stones, some of us wishing there was a chair we could dive under. After a pause, Nadine said something to the effect that, if no one wanted to volunteer, she'd be happy to come up with volunteers for us. Some of us stopped breathing. "Pat," she said. "What would you do if you were given \$10,500 and you could spend it on anything you'd like?" Groaning inwardly, Pat launched out – but, maybe overcome by the thought of so much money being dropped in her lap, she didn't get further than a few sentences before an "er" popped out. So that was that. Next, Nadine chose Jan Amstutz and Jan went carefully through a trail of her previous week's activities, spinning them out to fill up her minute. She made it! Nadine's third "victim" was Sarah Diener but Sarah was really up for the challenge. She talked about how flamingoes are her favorite animal, and have been since she was little; she went into the various species' names – their colors – their preferred foods, and who knows what else. She hardly paused for breath and spoke fluidly without once mentioning an "er" or an "um". She was a champ.

Next, again led by Nadine, we had several good laughs as people recounted some of their funny church memories. Finally, after our recent string of rainy days and nights, the sight of the golden evening sun lured us outside and we rounded off our visit by

ambling along the banks of Showalter Lake.

Showalter's landscapers have done a highly commendable job of linking the home, Hesston College and Dyck Arboretum by a system of footpaths.

Many thanks to Deanne Duerksen and Judy Jantz for arranging the outing, and to Nadine and Bethany for making it so pleasant. As far as is known, though, none of us signed Showalter's waiting list... **PB**

**“A newspaper headline reads: ‘The death rate holds steady at 100%!’”**

With that sally – and the comment that, “The moment you're born you're destined to die”, and a few jokes – medical doctor and theologian Dr. Glen Miller smiled at the few dozen of us who were gathered in the sanctuary on Wednesday evening, May 13, to hear his presentation on *Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well*. This is also the title of his latest book and he was touring the area, promoting his work. Five of his books had come to the attention of Nadine Friesen at Showalter Villa and, knowing that his great-niece, and our congregation's Jess Klanderud, was living nearby, he contacted her. Jess said, “He was coming to Hesston and he just asked where we were going to church and if we would be interested in having him come. I really enjoyed having him visit.” Those of us who heard his informative presentation did too.

Dr. Miller, a Mennonite, has interviewed clergy and individuals from diverse religious and philosophical backgrounds about how they bring comfort and hope to dying patients and their families. He, himself, has had several major heart events and now has congestive heart failure. As a result of his last heart attack, his pulse and breathing stopped but he was brought back to life through a plethora of medical treatments: he is making good use of his “new life” but he felt terrible for some time afterwards and he has told his family, “Never again.” He wants to do everything he can to grow old – and die – as gracefully as possible. “Above all, I want to create memories for my family that will allow them to recall my passing – yes, with sadness – but without regret or remorse for the decisions made,” he said.

Dr. Miller continued by acknowledging that, as we age, we become aware that our bodies (and minds) are changing. We can respond by becoming depressed, disinterested, detached and/or disgruntled – feeling like a victim and complaining, “Even God isn't on my side.” Or we can accept the changes – remind ourselves that this is a natural process – think positively about how to adapt – and continue to be pleasant companions.

Dr. Miller cited his brother who, after his cancer diagnosis, remained curious; he continued to connect with people, to think creatively, to listen. His many friends would seek him out and he would tell them how they had enriched his life. He exuded a sense of gratitude and joy, acting as though his life was going on: visitors would leave him feeling better than when they arrived. He remained contented although there was certainly a lot of sadness because of his destroyed dreams – but, at the end of his life he could say, along with Paul, “I have fought the good fight – I have finished the race.”

Another person who courageously faced life, and death, was Rose, a Christian lady Dr. Miller knew in India. Rose had had a hard life: she had been forced into an arranged marriage which took her to an unfamiliar part of the country where she knew no one; she had eleven pregnancies in nine years; and her alcoholic husband beat her and then, finally, threw her out of their house in the middle of the night with nowhere to go. Rose always had a smile: she chose to be serene and so she was a pleasure to be around.

Dr. Miller said we need to remember our story: where we came from, what we have become, how that relates to how we live out the rest of our days. We should create memories and practice an attitude of gratitude.

We, also, should be realistic about dying. We refer to it in euphemisms: ‘gone to her eternal reward’, ‘passed away’, ‘deceased’, ‘croaked’, etc. We should use the word ‘died’ so we can get past some of the fear which that word holds for us. He said, “I wake up every morning realizing that this could be the day I die. How would life be different if we accepted that?” We should become aware of our mortality: knowing and accepting that our lives will end some day.

A good death takes planning and completing such specific tasks as writing a will, naming an executor and preparing advance directives. It's important that *all* the family members come to a mutual agreement about a dying one's end-of-life wishes: even though most doctors know the futility of administering medical procedures to a dying patient, any loved one's change of heart forces the doctor (who is trained to prolong life) to face a moral and ethical dilemma. So, the family needs to recognize that their loved one is dying and that their mission is to help ease his or her transition to the next life: they must make decisions in the interests of the one dying, not their own.

Dr. Miller suggests accessing the Kansas website TPOPP which provides advanced directives and other helpful information. Other resources are his book *Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well: A Doctor Explains*



*How to Make Death a Natural Part of Life*, his website, and his YouTube video.

He then said soberly, "The way a person dies lives in the memory of how people remember them."

And, perhaps an appropriate P.S. to his talk is to recognize that it's good to have conversations about our end-of-life wishes while we're feeling good, and everyone can be less emotional! **PB**

### **Encountering the Unknown**

Posted 11 May 2015 by Amelia Brandt

There are funny things here that I use to keep tabs on how long I've been here... While I'm here, I have to take a malaria prophylaxis every day. I was advised to bring down enough pills for my whole six-month contract, so I came down with about 175 pills. And as I watch my supply dwindle, it's like a visual representation of my time here. I also decided to leave my external hard drive at home, so every thirty days or so my MacBook will remind me how many days it's been since I last updated...another reminder of how long I've been away. At this point, it's been over four months and I have less than three left. My final day will be August 5 and I'll start orientation at Tulane on August 19. Just one more whirlwind transition with a cross-country move involved.

In reflecting on my experience so far, I find myself shocked at how transformative of an experience it's been. I think back on how I dealt with different situations in my first few weeks and how I deal with them now, and it's hard to believe I'm the same person. Things that would have brought me to tears when I first arrived now barely even register. My obsessive need to be the smartest person in the room and my somewhat unhealthy level of ambition have both mellowed a bit. I've found that it's not so important to have the highest level position, but rather to have a position that allows you to have somewhat of a work/life balance and that you find interesting. And that's what I have now and I'm happy with it.

In my last post I wrote about how monotonous life can be here. The situation is still the same, but I decided to take the reins and make some changes. I'm working on organizing a pub quiz night at one of the local bars, I arranged a GOAL potluck this weekend, and I'm planning a karaoke night this week. Sometimes you just have to decide that you're going to get out of your rut and drag other people out with you.

Sadly, there are some changes coming that I'm not looking forward to. My French roommate got a job with another NGO and she's leaving at the end of the month. She'll still be in country, but not in

Freetown. The dynamic that we have in our flat is one of my favourite things about my life here and it will be really hard to do without. It can be hard to trust people in an aid context because, aside from drinking, gossip is probably the number one pastime. But I do trust my flatmates, and it will be really hard to watch her go. Our Assistant Country Director, who is absolutely fabulous, is also leaving at the end of the month...and then our Financial Controller at the end of June. One by one, my social circle is deserting. I realize that I'm deserting, too, but it doesn't make it much easier.

I know that it will be alright and that the time will fly by, even as I start to miss the people who have gone. It's just strange to realize that somehow, without me really noticing, my time here has started slipping away. However, I'm hoping that we're finally starting to get to the beginning of the end of Ebola. In order to be declared Ebola-free, a country has to pass 42 days (twice the incubation period of the disease) without any new cases. Although cases have been reducing steadily, we continue to have small surges of 4 or 5 cases at a time that have been stalling our progress. As of today, Sierra Leone has had 5 days with zero new cases. This is a big milestone for us and we're really hoping this could be the start of our 42 days. My big hope is that I'll be able to be here to see the end of Ebola, but it's hard to say whether or not that will happen. Ojala... (Rough translation, "Let's hope so". *PB*)

Suffering God, who bears the wounds of the world with  
the strength of love,  
Stand with us, that we may willingly carry Christ's  
compassion into the pain of the world.  
In the name of the Wounded One. AMEN

*Sing the Journey*, no. 155

All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timeliness and space availability. (It is preferred that they not be submitted anonymously.) *First Threshings* is distributed the first Sunday of each month so materials should be submitted at least one week previously. Comments pro/con regarding any aspect of the newsletter are also welcome. Please address these to Pat Bartel, compiler/ editor: mailslot 107 or [meadowlark.bartel@gmail.com](mailto:meadowlark.bartel@gmail.com)