

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

Ash Street & Grand Avenue

Hillsboro, KS 67063

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Marvin Zehr, Sabbatical Pastor (pastor@fmchillsboro.com) (Aug 5-15)

Susan Jantzen, Pastor (pastor@fmchillsboro.com)

Hank Unruh, Youth Pastor (youthpastor@fmchillsboro.com)

Doug Miller, Ministries Council Moderator (dougm@tabor.edu)

Becky Gage, Secretary (secretary@fmchillsboro.com)

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:9-10

Praise God for this summer's bountiful wheat harvest! MCC will soon be seeking donations to help feed the world's hungry people.

Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.

Isaiah 54:2

Just as I took a good number of photo snapshots while on sabbatical, I also received a “snapshot” given back to me, three snapshots, actually. They were snapshots of our faith tradition, Mennonite.

During the week-long conference in Wisconsin, leaders from various denominations talked together about current church realities. In our group were Baptists, United Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans and members of the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ – perhaps some more groups that I cannot now recall. Our struggles are similar as our culture shifts and serious economic realities remain unresolved.

But also interesting to me that week were these three snapshots I received of our Mennonite denomination. The first one came from St. Louis. A woman pastor, Karen, was from Ferguson, the small suburb of St. Louis which felt the heat of deep community pain and separation following the shooting death by police of 18 year-old Michael Brown on August 9, 2014. In the many Ferguson gatherings of grief and hope, Karen met Sam Schrag, the pastor of St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship. Sam was thoughtful and kind to Pastor Karen. She deeply appreciated, she told me, his presence and his clear Christian message for a different and better kind of peace for people of color in St Louis. She did not get to know him well but, at the various prayer vigils during those difficult days, they showed their mutual support by waving to each other.

The second snapshot of Mennonites came when a pastor from Wisconsin (who, I believe, was also from the United Church of Christ) exclaimed in delight, “You are a Mennonite! In two weeks, our church youth group is going on a mission trip to work with Mennonites, helping people in Appalachia. I have done other service trips but we have found that the Mennonites go to great lengths to help our youth understand the background to the poverty we come to help. They teach us about community, and about relationships, not just painting the house or shoveling the mud (from flooding). We love the way Mennonites understand people in need and teach us to understand them, too. From now on, that is where we go for our mission trips!”

The third snapshot was different. This pastor (Presbyterian, and several years younger than I) came up to me and said, “So, you’re a Mennonite.” I could tell from his voice that, for him, being Mennonite was a mixed bag. As we talked, I heard his story. He was raised Mennonite in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. He married a Presbyterian, though, and that was the end of that. Following Presbyterian seminary he contacted his home congregation and offered to come and preach – his way of offering a continued relationship with his Mennonite roots. No, that will not be acceptable, came the reply. As we visited and I inquired, I learned he has taught his

own children about Anabaptist tenets of faith. I told him how sorry I was that he has had to live with his own Christian family closing the door to him and I extended an open invitation for him to preach at FMC Hillsboro!

Friends, while it doesn't seem this way in Hillsboro, we Mennonites stand out. In honor of our Lord and of our faith heritage, let us each continue to do our part to promote dignity for all races (first snapshot). Let us each keep learning the complex story behind those who are poor in our land (second snapshot). And, let us open our doors, not close them, to all whom Christ has gathered in his church (opposite of the third snapshot).

As followers of Jesus, let's leave up to Him to decide who is welcome.

Pastor Susan

There was no Ministries Council meeting in July
and no Ministries Council retreat is planned.
Next Ministries Council meeting is scheduled for
Thursday, August 18, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

REMINDER: Pastor Marv Zehr will be on call
August 5-15 while Pastor Susan is concluding
her sabbatical. He does not plan to come to
Hillsboro but if there are any emergencies that
cannot be handled in-house, he can be reached at
his home (316-283-8308) and he will check our
church's e-mail regularly
(pastor@fmchillsboro.com)

August Events

July 31- VBS at United Methodist Church

August 4

- 4 8:00 p.m. Stewardship Committee meeting
- 4-15 Pastor Susan is on sabbatical in Wyoming
- 17 7:00 p.m. Worship Committee meeting
- Bethel College fall semester begins
- 18 7:30 p.m. Ministries Council meeting
- 22 Tabor College fall semester evening classes begin. (Day classes begin August 23.)

September 17: Arts & Crafts Fair: *Be ready to support HiFY and sign up to work!*

My specialty is African American 20th century history but (at Tabor) I'm teaching courses that cover from ancient history to the present so that's quite a stretch."

(Concluding the interview with Jess Klanderud.)

All in all, Jess seems to have weathered her six school moves very well and my assessment is that this was largely because she's very intelligent and so was able to pick up her studies quickly. Not surprisingly, she's much too modest to articulate that in as many words.

"And then I went to Western Michigan University," she continued. "I applied to the music theater program which was a very good program for the area but I was first alternate. It was very competitive: I came from a small town in Michigan – we had a good band teacher but a lot of student teachers, and I hadn't had that much voice training; I was up against young women from big cities like Detroit who had had voice lessons their whole life. So, while I was on the wait list, I decided to take history education classes so I could be certain to teach high school when I graduated. I have known I wanted to be a teacher for a long time." She smiled broadly. "Mom says I used to con my cousins into playing school.

"I had won a Medallion scholarship to go" (to Western Michigan University) "so I had to finish in four years and, after I graduated, I decided I missed the northwest" (given her fond memories of living on Prince of Wales Island) "so I taught high school near Seattle for a few years: I had two aunts who lived in Bellingham – cousins and some friends. That's a good place but not a good place to be a young woman of dating age." She loved the teaching but she found the high school environment too regulating and, anyway, she missed the research and wanted to be able to write so she decided to go back to graduate school.

Jess applied to three schools and was accepted to a part-time teaching position (with a small scholarship) at the University of Washington, but she would have had to work fulltime to make ends meet. She was also accepted at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with a full teaching fellowship, so she chose to go there. "Carnegie-Mellon was a very good experience. I had friends in Seattle who had gone to school near Pittsburgh and they had friends that were still in the city. Also, one friend said, 'I know someone who's looking for a roommate.'" The pieces were coming together for her to move.

How Jess and Jason met is an amusing – and amazing – two-pronged story.

First prong: When Jess was in Washington state, her Aunt Sonia, who lived back east, called her to tell her about Jason who she knew because they attended the same church. She told Jess, "You have got to check this guy out." And Jess said, "What are you doing, trying to introduce me to a man in Pittsburgh when I'm in Seattle??"

So Jess ends up at Carnegie-Mellon.

Second prong: One of Jess's roommates, Diana, was a longtime friend of Jason's and was convinced that Jess should meet him. "I kept blowing her off," Jess said, "but she was persistent." One day Diana created a very flimsy reason for Jason to come to their apartment – to help move a table. Jess rarely went out in the evenings but that evening (not realizing Diana's ploy) she had gone out on a date which meant, of course, she didn't meet Jason. Next, Diana told Jess she *had* to go to this barbecue. Jess said, "I knew it was a set-up and everyone else at the barbecue knew it was a set-up but Jason didn't know. I had made a promise to myself and God that I would go just to see if he had an interest in me." They had several conversations at the barbecue but Jason didn't call her for a month so her whole family started bugging her to call him. Jess laughed when she said, "Even my grandfather said that women call men nowadays!" And her Aunt Sonia called to say, "Do you remember when I called you when you were in Seattle? It was this same guy, Jason!" Jess laughed again. "So she takes credit for introducing us." Finally, Jason called and they were immediately inseparable, talking on the phone and/or getting together every day for hours at a time. They were engaged about a year later and got married a year after that.

For her doctorate, Jess was originally planning on studying the post-slavery reconstruction era but she ended up studying the Civil Rights Movement. "What was the title of your dissertation?" I asked. "My dissertation was titled *Struggle for the Street: Civil Rights in Pittsburgh, from a Place to a Movement*. It's a study of formal and informal power on the streets during the civil rights movement in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is now being rewritten as a book. I'm working on finishing up my manuscript proposal for the publisher. If all goes well this summer – in other words," she smiled, "if I don't get too many interruptions – I'm hoping I'll have my manuscript ready to go in August. That would be lovely."

We talked about jobs she's had and she said, "While I was writing my dissertation I had a couple of adjunct jobs but Tabor is my first fulltime job. My specialty is African American 20th century history but (at Tabor) I'm teaching courses that cover from ancient history to the present so," she

smiled again, “that’s quite a stretch.” A stretch seems like quite an understatement: it must take her long hours to prepare for each class.

Tabor held its annual appreciation picnic on Monday, May 16th and Jess was honored for three recent accomplishments. She told me, “I was an invited lecturer at the Center for African American Studies and the Economy at Carnegie Mellon; I had a book review published in the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, and I was elected to the executive board of the Kansas Association of Historians. I took eight students to the KAH meeting this year and three presented.”

I asked her what she does for professional stimulation, and if she has a favorite author or speaker. She said, “I am a member of the African American Women’s History Association so we have a luncheon every year at the convention and we get a chance to meet others.” After a short pause she added, “My favorite author would be Darlene Clark Hine. She does a lot of African American history and is a very gracious person. You can just go up and say Hi! Two years ago she won the Presidential Medal for her work.”

Finally, I wondered how easy it has been for Jess to adapt to living in Hillsboro. She replied, “I’ve lived in a lot of small towns so it was easy. I like the idea that my children can ride their bikes just about anywhere.”

Many congratulations on your accomplishments, Jess: you are a great asset to Tabor – and, together with your family, to First Mennonite and to Hillsboro – and a very pleasant person to visit with. PB

Helping to build strong, literate and empowered children prepared to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, nation and world.

Judy and Keith Harder and their 15-year old grandson, Sam (son of Scott and Stephanie Harder in Wichita), spent July 18-22 in Kansas City volunteering at the Freedom School centered at Rainbow Mennonite Church where their daughter, Ruth, is minister.

The following is information gleaned from various websites related to the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) and Freedom Schools.

Freedom Schools operate under the CDF which was founded in 1973 to focus on the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. The five essential components of the program are: High Quality Academic Enrichment, Parent & Family Involvement, Social Action & Civic Engagement, Intergenerational Servant Leadership Development, and Nutrition and Health and Mental Health. They

offer after-school tutoring and six-week courses in summer.

The program seeks to help build strong, literate and empowered children prepared to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, nation and world. Together with their parents, they read books that reflect a wide variety of cultures and experiences that they can relate to and which reinforce the theme *I Can Make a Difference*. This part of the program is essential since reading skills often decline over the summer. What they read is integrated into activities, field trips, and games that relate to and reinforce each other: the children are taught conflict resolution, they learn critical thinking skills, they engage in community service and social action projects, and are encouraged to participate in art and athletic activities. Each “course” has a program finale in which every child is given the chance to shine.

To enhance their self-esteem, the children are known as scholars, and they are taught to encourage each other readily.

The Freedom Schools program partners with various local community organizations to connect the families’ needs to the resources in their communities. Since 1995, more than 137,000 preK-12 children have experienced a CDF Freedom School, and more than 16,000 college students and young adult staff have been trained by CDF whose motto is:

“I can—and must—make a difference in myself, my family, my community, my country and my world through hope, education and social action.”

Parents and caregivers are required to become actively involved in the daily CDF Freedom Schools activities – by reading aloud to them, by assisting in the classroom and on the playground, sitting with them during meals, and supporting their social action and community service projects. Family members also participate in weekly workshops where they learn about the educational and social development of children and gain the necessary skills to empower themselves and their families to succeed.



As outlined in the Rainbow Mennonite Church’s website, their CDF Freedom School is a six-week, full-day summer enrichment program for up to 100 children in grades K-8 focusing on literacy, leadership development and health. Slots fill up fast!

The program is taught by 11 college-age interns called servant leaders who have completed rigorous training at the CDF conference facility on the Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, Tennessee. The 2016 Rainbow Freedom School program director is an experienced teacher from the Kansas City, Kansas, public schools who has two co-site coordinators who have been servant leader interns for the past three years, and

two youth from the Rosedale Development Association's summer youth enrichment program have been hired as kitchen helpers.

48% of third-grade students in the KCK Public Schools met the state reading standards compared to 80% statewide; scholars who attended the Rainbow Freedom School from 2013-2015 maintained or increased their reading levels. In addition, since 44% of elementary school children in the Rosedale District are overweight or obese, compared to 33% nationwide, Rainbow daily provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack for scholars, utilizing produce from the Rainbow Community Garden.



This, then, is the milieu the three Harders stepped into for a week in mid-July. Judy was in charge of Acting Club for 18 scholars each afternoon; Sam's main job was to work in the kitchen from 7-10 each morning but he also helped Judy and, according to her, "Keith provided wonderful support assistance whenever and wherever needed".

Judy reminisced a little. "This is the second year I volunteered and both times I sensed a quality program making a difference in the lives of a great number of children. And I was impressed with the ways the servant leaders inspire the scholars to make a difference in our world. They model and coach respect for others and self and our world. Also, each morning would begin with a lively community-building time. There'd be chants, songs – including a version of the *Halleluiah Chorus* – recognitions, stories, and lots of movement. And they were good at maintaining clear and consistent guidelines and expectations for servant leaders, scholars, volunteers and parents. There was a high degree of respect for diversity modeled and taught. I appreciated the chance to observe and assist a skilled and dedicated staff managing a wide range of administrative details and programming while teaching and leading 100 lively scholars full days. The staff also offered a few evening parenting meetings, a weekend event, and they will have a grand finale program open to the public.

"Scholars regularly use a unison 'good job' chant during the recognition moments of the morning opening assembly. One day during Acting Club after I complimented someone, they spontaneously broke out with the good job chant and surrounded the deserving scholar. And I was impressed with the scholars' ability to practice on their own what they were being taught."

The main production of the week was a story-telling adaptation of the book by Seymour Leichman, *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*. "But," Judy said, "I also enjoyed looking for stories reinforcing ways we

can make a difference in a variety of circumstances. I appreciated their catching on quickly to the story-telling style of following the instructions I would give as I told the stories. And we enjoyed theater games and exercises. I also provided costumes, props, and activities for 'after care' scholars while they waited for parents to arrive between 3:00 and 5:30. The scholars chose costumes and props to become a 'character' to be interviewed by a talk show host (often Sam) in front of a live audience (other scholars). Sam played roles in stories plus led one of the groups when we divided into two groups for acting exercises. I appreciated the opportunity to work alongside him," Judy said and smiled as she added, "Rainbow scholars loved *Sam-I-Am* or *Sam-The-Man*!

"During our final morning volunteering at Freedom School was when the Acting Club presented *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*; we presented this to the entire school and staff. It's a mythical Renaissance story about a boy who chooses to sing about the beautiful world for sad villagers throughout the Kingdom, and to sing about the sadness of the villagers before the King. The boy's singing is an example of making a difference in his world.

"I will always remember the actors' focus during the performance," she said, "on the intent and the circumstances of the story. They seemed to feel a sense of accomplishment and I felt both relieved and grateful! I have a hunch many of them will be good characters – on and off stage!"

Judy's last comment was very exciting to hear. "I recognized a seventh grade girl I met two years ago who seemed poised and pleasant, and demonstrated leadership skills. When I met her as a fifth-grader she seemed on edge and constantly seeking attention. She recognized me and offered that she has been a scholar in this school since she was five years old and is eager to be old enough to be on staff."

What an uplifting example of an empowered young person! And, what a gift Judy has that enriches the lives of young people through her drama talents!

PB

Notes from WDC Assembly (7/31 – 8/1)

Our church's five delegates were Douglas & Nancy Graber, Jeff & Tammy Wintermote and Keith Harder. We were given some general comments on the Assembly during worship last Sunday: the following, written by Douglas, is an in-depth account of a message and a break-out session he experienced.

In Houston as it is in Heaven.

Marty Troyer of the Houston, TX, Church of the Sermon on the Mount, shared some of the elements detailed in his book, *The Gospel Next Door*, during his

message entitled, *In Houston as it is in Heaven*. He asked the question, What if what we want is already here? Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand!

Troyer has been inspired to preach in the streets from the government buildings, yes, even in the rain. People need the Gospel, we must take it to them! The love of God is for the whole world. The news clips and internet are giving us information overload. It results in dividing the listeners up into various camps of persuasion. There is a larger force at work to hold us together in mission. We as Anabaptists have a mission. Jeremiah encouraged God's people to seek the peace (shalom) where they were. We are people with a word of shalom, a cry for Justice, and looking out for the common good as we live out our lives with what we need, and not more.

In Beatrice, NE, Kathy has involved herself with other young women by being a Mother to mothers.

We can do a lot of good in the world; programs abound. But the world is begging for a break in the cycle of violence. We are people of God's peace – we have heard the message, we know our God to be a God who desires Peace. Does he not break the bow and the spear? We are to pursue the peace of God and let Him gather in the harvest of people to himself. Let our individual efforts become part of a mosaic of stories which show the renewed effort of the church, to become a movement of peace in the world today.

**Call to abundance – Joy of the Lord –
found in the mission of God.**

People respond to simple requests of inclusion. One story told of a man, confined to a wheel chair, who asked to host communion. He has offered himself at every chance since, to be involved as such a host. People are waiting to be given a chance – let's not delay in finding ways, even little ways, to bring them in, get them involved.

Love everything that God made. Think about the extent of such a statement. Is there any line we can draw to cut out part of creation, a group of people, or this person in our community?

Follow God however you are; you don't have to be perfect to start doing it, especially if it is next door!

Rural Mission is Alive and Well:

Creek Crossings with Brett Klingenberg

Rural churches are well defined by the "geographic features" that sustain them: family history, traditional cuisine, and long-held friendships. But, as rural churches experience numerical decline, how do we live into our geography while welcoming outsiders?

German people can be quite unemotional, hard-working, thrifty, machinelike. When they worship and sing, they do it with their inner strength and dedication. They just are not able to sway and wave their hands in

the air for, the higher their arms are lifted, the heavier they become. It is just how they are!

Our churches have a character shaped by virtue of the place where they are set, just as a farm's fields are shaped by the flow of a creek or the rise of a hill, or a rocky soil area (best left as pasture) versus the black loam of the flood plain (great for row crops). A good farmer utilizes each variable and adapts his use of that geographical creation to what is a best practice for it.

Churches have tried to increase their membership by changing their image. Would they be more "welcoming" by taking the word Mennonite out of their name, or talking less about peace in their message, hiring a non-Menno pastor, or bringing in a band, etc.?

We need to know our churches' features, then reveal them, show others who we are, and continue to tell the stories that have made our specific church what it is. Communities of people lose the memories of the past, the stories that shaped and guided that specific group of people to what they have become.

Just as the creek cutting through the land needs a crossing in order to farm the other side, so the church needs to generate crossings to allow access by others into the church community. Mennonites started to recognize that our churches were very much a collection of bloodline families (Funks, Bartels, Grabers, etc.) who were all quite comfortable meeting and greeting each other – and that, even after several months' trying, some guests would leave, feeling unable to settle into the flow of the congregation. So, thirty-six years ago, some churches formed Shepherd groups which they still maintain: they carve up the congregation into small cell groups which are reconfigured every two years. This gives new persons a point to plug into a non-blood focus group and the existing church members a time to break out of their pattern and reach out to others.

Other examples of "creek crossing" can be found if looked for and tried: saying the Lord's Prayer using the old words, or repeating the apostles' creed, may draw in someone of another faith history, because it is what they remember as being part of church. A church needs to be seeking out what they can do to be more inclusive while being open and honest about their faith elements and what they believe. The congregation needs to work with their landscape, know their strengths and their weaknesses, and strive to be the church under the power of the Holy Spirit.

All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timeliness and space availability. (Anonymous submissions are accepted but not preferred.) *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.