

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

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What power there is in
a pure love for Jesus –
love that is free from
all self-interest and
self-love!

Thomas à Kempis
(1380-1471)

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion
and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles**

2 Corinthians 1:3b-4a

There were four kids in my family, but as a kindergartener I was the only one home when my mother received the phone call – the car my dad was driving had been in a highway accident. Dad's elderly mom was hospitalized in Hanover, Kansas with a broken pelvis, as was my little brother, with 25 stitches in each leg. Dad had minor injuries but his father had died in the accident, bending protectively over my little brother as it happened.

Having taken the call in Wichita, sitting on our red couch in the living room, my mother was weeping such deep cries I knew in a moment what I needed to do. "Mom, I will get Mrs. Pavlick." Between her sobs Mom nodded. I ran out the door and cut across the neighborhood street diagonally, down about four houses to the brown house where Mrs. Pavlick lived. "My mom is crying," is really all I could say, standing there on her cement front porch. Mrs. Pavlick sensed, also, in a moment what she needed to do. She came over to our house, through the front door without ringing the bell, and there I just stood watching as the two women sat, one holding the other, both weeping together. I was unable to comprehend all that must have happened. But I felt calm and at peace: Mom was being held and cared for.

From this vantage point 54 years later, I can see that God's presence filled my young soul in those moments. In my short life I had known emotional pain and physical injury. But when mom was hearing the news, then sitting down on the couch in shock and distress, I was given the gift of peace and a neighbor who felt peace, too. I couldn't put my own six-year old arms around her – I didn't have enough of life behind me to offer her what she needed. But I felt strength and courage, as I told my mom, "I will get Mrs. Pavlick."

It wasn't long, and Mom was driven up to be with my brother, Dad, and Grandma. In the tough weeks and months that followed, dear church friends walked with both Mom and Dad. But in the moment of tragic news, God was there, with me, with Mom, with Mrs. Pavlick who had never before set foot in our home.

Thanks be to God who is unshakably present, who fully knows our need.

Pastor Susan

February 2015

MINISTRIES COUNCIL MINUTES

January 8, 2015

Present: Laura Paulus (Care), Glen Diener (Treasurer), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Pam Bartel (Hospitality), Tim Frye (Discernment), Keith Harder (Vision), Joel Klaassen (Stewardship), Pastor Susan.
Absent: Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Andrew Sensenig (Mission), Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship), Hank Unruh (Youth Pastor), Pat Bartel (Secretary).

Keith Harder presided over the meeting in Doug Miller's absence, and opened with prayer.

Minutes of December 11, 2014 meeting will be discussed for approval at the February 12 meeting.

Committee Reports. Discernment: "Called out" names for our congregational work were reported; a female youth sponsor is needed; Erin Unruh will accompany Hank to convention. **Vision:** No report.

Coordinating Cabinet: No report. **Care:** New Ministries Team Leader (MTL) is Laura Paulus. Nancy Graber is joining Care Committee, taking Elfrieda's list. Committee has been busy with meals in the past 30 days. **Hospitality:** Pam Bartel is getting acquainted with MTL duties. We agreed to proceed with our traditional Camp Mennoscah retreat weekend; our deposit is due January 13. **Mission:** No report. **Nurture:** Hesston College is hosting *Know Jesus* for 6th to 8th graders January 31 – February 1. In future, we may need a fund-raiser or a budget line item for SALTeens to prepare for this event. Jan Amstutz will likely go; a male sponsor is needed.

\$30 support per person (youth and sponsors) was requested and affirmed. **Stewardship:** Sewer project will be completed next week; Laura was asked to take photos this coming week; met January 6 and organized a punch list; committee needs new members (would like to include a woman); discussed funds and how they are invested; are thinking of dividing into two groups (finance and stewardship; a snow-removal plan has been devised; many keys have been distributed: the church must be locked up by 8 p.m.; the courtyard will be discussed. The committee has a one two-sided summary sheet in preparation for budget approval at the annual meeting. **Worship:** Children's story volunteers for worship are welcome; Jocelyn Graber (AMBS) is coming January 18; grateful for those who have memorized passages from the book of Mark for our January worship services. **Treasurer's Report:** Annual report is almost completed. Highlights: The FMC Ministries fund began 2014 with a \$9,700 balance and ended 2014 with a \$8,200; in mid-summer this ministry fund balance had turned to a deficit of about \$20,000. With strong contributions through the last half of 2014, we were able to cover this cash flow deficit and end 2014 with \$8,200; strong appreciation was voiced to everyone who contributed. There is no need to use the Franzen money at this point. Stewardship is reviewing

some of the funds that are earning interest, and discussing how to report income in the bulletin: currently the figure includes a carryover balance from the prior year; no conclusion was reached. Stewardship is considering forming a finance subcommittee: this would not need to be brought to Ministries Council. (If it is to be a separate committee, Ministries Council would need to approve it.) **Youth Pastor:** No report. **Pastor's Report:** Pastoral care and worship planning has been full; caring before and after memorial services is strong and meaningful; very grateful for year-end reports and so much meaningful work occurring in our fellowship; reminded members to greet new attendees; Mennonite World Conference involvement should be discussed in February; Pam Bartel will handle the retreat deposit for Camp Mennoscah.

Old business: None.

New business: It was M/S/C unanimously to accept the Coordinating Cabinet's designated offerings schedule for 2015. Reminder: each committee is to give a verbal report at the January 25 annual meeting: just provide one or two highlights from the written report your committee has submitted; include a couple of events completed; list members of your committee (and subcommittee); name a couple of events completed; tell a story or personal note from the last year; share several ideas for the coming year. Photos would enhance the annual meeting. With Joel's technical help, Glen Diener will show some slides of financial figures.

Next Meeting: February 12, 2015.

February events

4	6:15 supper; 7:00 p.m. classes/activities
8	Youth Sunday
11	6:15 supper; 7:00 p.m. classes/activities
15	4:00-5:00 p.m. <i>Time of Thanks</i> : Fellowship Hall
18	Ash Wednesday
22	First Sunday of Lent
25	6:15 supper; 7:00 p.m. classes/activities

Upcoming events:

March 1	Carry-in meal
April 5	Easter Sunday
April 17-18	MCC Relief Sale
April 26	WDC Children's Choir event

If we do not bear the cross of the Master, we will have to bear the cross of the world, with all its earthly goods. Which cross have you taken up? Pause and consider.

Sadhu Sundar Singh: 1889-1929?

MC USA Convention June 30-July 5 in Kansas City

Convention is a biennial gathering of thousands of Mennonite Church USA members. It is truly a faith formation event, where people can come together to worship, to learn, to discern and to fellowship. Convention details on the MC USA website are yet to be completed, and the hotels are not taking room reservation requests until March 3, but here are some of the Special Events highlights:

Tuesday, June 30

- 8:45 p.m. Exhibit Hall grand opening – booths, indoor soccer tournament, shoot some hoops
- 9:00-11:00 p.m. MennoFolk coffee house: live music (nightly)
- 10:00-11:00 p.m. Hymn Sing (also Saturday night)

Wednesday, July 1

- 9:00 p.m. *Panic Squad Improv Show* (comedy)
- 9:30-11:00 p.m. KC Crawl in the Power & Light District. Restaurants will provide special deals to convention-goers
- 9:00-11:00 p.m. Film Festival (to be held nightly)

Thursday, July 2

- 5:00-11:00 p.m. Trip to Worlds & Oceans of Fun. (\$30/person, pre-registration required)
- 9:00 p.m. Bluegrass Concert: Book of Jebb and Five Times Harder. (You know some of the performers!)

Friday, July 3

- 9:00 p.m. Kansas Mennonite Men's Choir concert. (Again, you know some of the performers!)
- 9:00 p.m. Ted & Co. drama, *Listening for Grace*
- 9:00-11:00 p.m. Music Mixer (youth, young adults)
- 9:00-11:00 p.m. *An Evening with Alan and Debra Hirsch* (a dynamic, interactive conversation on the state of church-planting and mission in the U.S.)

Saturday, July 4

- 9:30-11:00 p.m. *Mennos Got Talent* (interactive talent show)
- 9:00-10:30 *The Anabaptist Game* with Michele Hershberger



According to the January 19, 2015 issue of *Mennonite World Review*, the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Interests (LGBTQ) has, for the first time, been granted exhibit space at the MC USA convention. This was agreed to after consultation with the MC USA Executive

Board since BMC has participated in MC USA conventions for many years.

Erwin Stutzman, who is executive director of MC USA, said that conversations about sexuality are happening all across the church and the leadership team felt it was the right time for the executive board to revisit MC USA's policies about the use of convention space. "We desire to be proactive rather than reactive...and to remain in loving conversation with people who have long been part of our church and conventions for many years." MC USA is also negotiating with the Pink Menno group on renting a room at the convention center.

Pink Menno's website states, generally, that they envision the day when LGBTQ individuals are fully included in all aspects of life within the Mennonite Church because the church is fully living out Christ's radical love toward all people. Their vision is to achieve healing and hope for the Mennonite Church through the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals. And they plan to remain a visible, vocal presence supporting, sustaining and furthering genuine dialog. Pink Menno's pledge is to be a nonviolent, loving, welcoming presence...providing social, spiritual and emotional support for those experiencing exclusion or spiritual violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, using whatever is positive and uplifting to communicate their message.

Walking with God

Caminemos con Dios

En march avec Dieu

An interview with César Garcia, **Mennonite World Conference** general secretary, was printed in the January 19, 2015 *Mennonite World Review* under the title, *Rare Opportunity for Transformative Experience*.

This year is North America's turn to host the conference, to be held July 21-26 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Garcia says that MWC began as a single meeting in 1925 when a small group of European and North American Mennonites planned a "conference" to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Anabaptism in Switzerland. Since then, conferences have been held every five or six years, often to celebrate historic occasions – and, over time, to consider themes of interest and concern to Mennonites as a whole. He goes on to say that more than 1,000 registrants are expected to attend the Global Youth Summit which will immediately precede the conference. *To ensure a good GYS turnout from Anabaptist-related churches around the world, and to cultivate leadership in those*

attending, each MWC member denomination is invited to send one young adult delegate.

For the first time, there will be planned activities and programs for children from age 4 through high school.

Each day will start and end by including everyone – in the morning with singing with an international choir and in the evening with a worship service that will include participation from all continents.

Garcia believes this is a rare opportunity to become involved in a spiritual experience that will be truly transformative.

† † †

Here is some information that MWC would appreciate being disseminated:

MWC's Vision

MWC is called to be a communion (Koinonia) of Anabaptist-related churches linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service, and witness.

MWC's Mission

MWC exists to: (1) be a global community of faith in the Anabaptist tradition, (2) facilitate relationships between Anabaptist-related churches worldwide, and (3) relate to other Christian world communions and organizations.

MWC achieves its mission as it:

- encourages member churches to commit to each other on the basis of shared convictions of theology and practice;
- nurtures solidarity through joint activities and communication among the members;
- promotes biblical and theological reflection by and among the members;
- accepts counsel from members for its life as a community;
- supports the member churches in ministry to the world, and
- facilitates relationships with other international Christian communities.

† † †

MWC is encouraging congregations to learn about our Anabaptist global family and they suggest that reading Alfred Neufeld's book *What We Believe Together: Exploring the 'Shared Convictions' of Anabaptist-related Churches* is a good starting point as, in addition to general information, it includes questions for discussion.

Part of the conference's agenda includes **Assembly Scattered** which allows guests to visit MWC churches and ministries on the way to or from **Assembly Gathered**. Participants will experience church life in North America and the diversity of the faith community. Visits will focus on church-to-church engagement, allowing visitors and hosts to develop friendships, worship, learn about community concerns, tour historic and cultural sights, share meals and experience mutual hospitality.

As MWC prepares to gather, we can help!

1. Pray for planners and participants, that they will feel the Spirit's movement as they come together and share in this time.
2. Support the assembly fund, individually or as a congregation, so that people from all over the world will be able to attend: (www.mwc-cmm.org, or P.O. Box 5364, Lancaster, PA 17606).
3. E-mail the names of any musicians (instrumentalists and gifted vocalists) who could serve on worship teams or perform in the Global Church Village: pennsylvania2015@mwc-cmm.org.

**Just a closer walk with Thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,
Daily walking close to Thee,
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.**

(Author unknown)

Gleanings from *Bread & Wine: Readings for Lent & Easter*:

"The purpose of Lent is to create a healthy hatred for sin, and a passionately felt need for grace" (Edna Hong 1913-2007).

† † †

"...the lures of this world are too seductive for us to begin to change the world unless we are changed, unless conversion of life and morals becomes our pattern. The status quo is too alluring. It is the air we breathe, the food we eat, the six-thirty news, our institutions, theologies, and politics. The only way we shall break its hold on us is to be transferred to another dominion, to be cut loose from our old certainties, to be thrust under the flood and then pulled forth fresh and newborn. Baptism takes us there.

On the bank of some dark river, as we are thrust backward, onlookers will remark, 'They could kill somebody like that.' To which old John might say, 'Good, you're finally catching on' (William Willimon b.1946).



One way we can be “baptized” is to bring before God any- and everything that obstructs our relationship with him. The following *Soul Feast* (which has no attribution) may help restore such disharmony as a broken relationship if we practice the following:

- ❖ Relax and breathe gently. Become aware of God’s presence, imaging it as light and warmth. Allow this Shekinah (glory) to fill your consciousness.
- ❖ When we are in God’s presence we are not alone. We are there with all God’s children held in the divine embrace. Choose one of those children with whom you do not have a harmonious relationship.
- ❖ Lift this person into God’s light. Visualize God’s love bathing the person and gently penetrating animosities, dissolving differences and pain, cleansing wounds. Use any images that seem appropriate: dark becoming light, ice melting, confusion ordered.
- ❖ See yourself with this person in a restored whole relationship in God’s light – newly created, fresh and beautiful, as seen through the eyes of divine love.
- ❖ “See” old animosities dissolve, and ask God that this beauty be fully realized according to his design for the two of you. Thank him for whatever gift of healing is given.
- ❖ Release you both into God’s care until you pray again.

This exercise can tutor us to use our imagination more actively in other prayers. We are not trying to manufacture results, rather, we are envisioning with God the restoration of creation.



Another exercise to help one become more aware of one’s feelings in relation to God, and give permission to express them in prayer, is to write your own psalm.

If you have held on to feelings like grief, anger, or a desire for revenge, believing it would be dangerous to express them to God, try writing your own prayer in psalm form:

- Select a psalm that voices the feelings you wish to speak, e.g., Psalms 13, 22, 42, 77, 88 and 94.

Ask God to help you accept the reality of your feelings.

- Get acquainted with the psalm you’ve chosen, especially the verses that best express your attitudes.
- Lay it aside and begin to write your own psalm to God. Let it emerge from your experience, your feelings, and your faith.

He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven.
Thomas Fuller (1608-1661)

Thanks to those who, during our January worship services, memorized passages from Mark’s gospel: you breathed new life into the scriptures.

The following are some responses to their pilgrimage with this exercise.

“At first, we would sit down and read the passage together. Once we felt we did not need the Bible with us to know the passage, we tried to make it part of our routine: sometimes we worked on it while cooking dinner.

The thing that struck us about the passage was the fact that Jesus had to step away from everything to have time to pray, showing us that, even when it feels like everyone is demanding your time, you still need to step away to pray.”
Hank & Erin Unruh

“I believe that telling scripture in a worship service is different than reading, or even reciting memorized words of a passage. It involves study, and learning more of the setting – background, who, why, etc. – to get one’s own understanding of the meaning. Hopefully then allowing the passage to speak now and get beyond what I’ve always “known” it to mean, and making the text my own.

Jesus, in Luke 10, was approached by an expert in the Law who intended to trap him. Jesus’ response was to ask the expert what the Law said and “how” the expert “read it” or, to put it another way, “What was the expert’s understanding?” After the expert’s good response; Jesus, with a story, ‘trapped’ the expert into gaining additional understanding.”
Deryll Amstutz

Also submitted by Deryll:

“We are not called to follow the Bible; we are called to study the Bible and follow Jesus. Jesus says love and forgiveness is the true revelation of God’s nature and character which we should imitate” (Alan Storey).

There was an Iraqi pastor who explained the source of our current confusion...“Christianity began in the Middle East as a relationship, it moved to Greece and became a philosophy, it moved to Rome and became an organization, it moved to America and became a business.”

“I tend to go back to the Bible as a model, because I don’t know a more honest book. I can’t think of any argument against God that isn’t already included in the Bible” (Philip Yancey).

“Love trumps doctrine – for Love trumps the law – because Love trumps the rules – EVERY TIME!!!“ (Vincent Harding).

“Memorization of text for performance is really embodiment of the text. It’s more than in the mind, it’s in the body. Speaking aloud, allowing full resonance of the voice, and moving while speaking, are very important. It becomes muscle memory. As in acting, what you’re saying needs to make good sense to you, or you have no motivation to say it. So it’s helpful to break apart the lines into their parts of speech, see how the writer is building their argument or unfolding their story, and then put it back together again after you understand the mechanisms at work.

Scripture is particularly interesting because different passages are different things – an argument built using logic, a letter intended for a particular group of people, poetry, accounts from memory, stories passed down through oral tradition, etc. Context matters.”

Laurel & Ethan Koerner

Seeking Healing in El Salvador

In the January issue of First Threshings, Laurel mentioned her El Salvadore project. In the following article, she provides us more detail.

Laurel launched into the subject, smiling enthusiastically. “This new play project began in 2012 when Juan, one of my Master of Fine Arts classmates, told me about Radio Venceremos, founded as a rebel – clandestine – radio station that ridiculed the government, and it functioned for the guerilla resistance to El Salvador’s military action against its own people. The guerillas were active throughout the 1980’s, and Radio Venceremos (RV: which means We Shall Overcome) had a lot to do with shaping that civil war. The bits of stories Juan shared with me were captivating, and we immediately saw their theatrical potential.

“Since our initial conversation on it, Juan and I have been doing extensive research, interviewing people involved with the station and with combat, recording their stories, and sketching out ideas for how to stage some of what we’ve learned. There is an enormous amount of

raw material to sort through – many possible stories to tell – so, deciding which threads to pursue is difficult. As we work, some questions we’re seeking to answer are: Who is this play for? What are we hoping to achieve with it? What are we saying about the people involved, about their country, about ours? Is there a ‘side’ we’re choosing in our telling, inadvertently or intentionally? What is it for me, a privileged white person, to be authoring this play?

“In July (2014), we visited El Salvador which was a homecoming for Juan and a first introduction for me. We spent a few days in San Salvador at the Museo de la Palabra y Imagen (Museum of Word and Image) which is dedicated to memorializing the guerilla efforts, recording the atrocities committed, instilling values of peace and personal responsibility, and offering educational programming to the local community. Two key members of the RV team, Santiago and Chiyo, now work for the museum, and it was a privilege to be their guests.

“After a few days spent digging through archives and documenting the museum’s contents, we rented a car and ventured into the mountains with Chiyo as our able guide. His own story is one of incredible bravery in the face of great loss, the only survivor among his seven brothers. He offered his memories to us at one war-torn location after another. ‘That ravine is where they dumped my brother’s body.’ ‘Here is where I was standing when I learned of my last brother’s death.’ Each village we visited included people who were willing to share their experiences.

“The week of January 12 (2015) will be another big leap forward in this project. In L.A., Juan and I will lead a first workshop of what we’ve written so far. Our collaborators, the actors, will teach us more about how the play should look, feel, and sound than we could ever determine sitting at a keyboard, and it’s thrilling to watch them take a spark and fan it into flame.

“We have some answers to the questions we keep asking: This play is for the displaced Salvadorans, primarily those in L.A. but elsewhere, too. We are offering a gift, a celebration of that culture, a surviving voice calling out, strong and clear. We want to tell the truth, and to see people hearing their truth. This is called ‘theater of witness’; it’s theater that carves out space for the recognition of atrocities committed, that gives the stage to victims and,

for the rest of us, notes the value in the listening, the being with.

(Since writing this in mid-December, Laurel's time has been largely pre-empted by other responsibilities; she and Juan stay in touch over the phone and hope to be getting together in March, during spring break.)

Laurel Koerner

One Public Health Nerd's Journey Into An Outbreak

*This is the title that Amelia Brandt gave to the first post of her blog *Entering the Unknown*.*

She left her apartment in Boston January 5, one week late after a bout with dengue fever. But the delay was serendipitous as she ended up flying to Sierra Leone on the same plane as the woman who hired her to work at GOAL, "So," she said, "I had someone to guide me through the rather complicated process of getting to my new home in Freetown." She's living with two colleagues in the third-floor apartment of a four-story house they share with other international staff; it has lovely views and a large balcony where they enjoy breakfast every day.

Amelia explains that, in Sierra Leone, where GOAL is working to annihilate ebola, she is program manager for GOAL's first Observational Interim Care Center (OICC), (although they are opening more all the time). She spends many days in the office or at meetings. "When I do have to go to the OICC's (quarantine units for kiddos), I won't be allowed to go into any "red zones" so, all in all, my risk of catching ebola is very small." In other words, she should never be in a position to have to be suited up with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

"An OICC requires a combination of child protection, psychosocial, and infection control expertise that very few organizations have," she explains. "GOAL has put together a team of six nurses who specialize in OICCs and our job is to provide training and support to them throughout the country, and make sure the OICCs are running correctly. My job, specifically, is to supervise the group of six nurses and be the focal point for GOAL's OICCs. It's been easy to jump into the job but I still have a lot to learn." That said, she continued, "I'm already attending meetings with major partners (like UNICEF) on my own. There is no time to get oriented, you really just have to jump in with both feet and hope you don't sink. Everyone here is working full tilt. That's kind of the expectation. My biggest fear here isn't ebola but rather it's making a big mistake or just not meeting the expectations of my colleagues – people I have a great deal of respect for. I have no doubt that

coming here was the right decision and I just hope that I can rise to the challenge."

A glimpse into Amelia's daily life includes a few obstacles "...like my search for a can opener, which ended today, and my search for a coffee maker/French press/something, which is ongoing. And our mattresses have zero give and feel kind of like sleeping on a piece of wood.

"Infection control is really intense. There are buckets full of chlorine water with little spigots where you have to wash your hands before you go in anywhere, from grocery stores to restaurants to our office. At the office, we have to have our temperature taken by an infrared thermometer before we can go in and, if it's too high, we aren't allowed in.

GOAL staff are required to be driven everywhere. To go further into the field, Amelia has traveled by U.N. helicopter. "The first 10 or 15 minutes of the trip you feel like perhaps one of the coolest people in the world. Then you realize that the noise is nearly deafening and you can't really do much, and it does get old kind of fast."

"In some ways," Amelia admits, "my life here is easier than in Boston. We have drivers, someone to clean our apartment, someone who does our laundry." However, this is still an emergency situation, and in a very different culture. "Anyone who has lived in a developing country can tell you that there is always a gap between what you expect and what happens. The combination of an extremely poor country, a raging epidemic, and staff that are stretched to their limits means that expectations are further from reality than I think they have ever been for me. As some of you may know, I like to plan just a little bit, and I don't much like not being in control, so this week I found myself testing the limits of my patience." In this case, a UNICEF meeting she was attending went on an hour longer than she expected it to, she got back to the office after hours and so couldn't pick up her ticket to travel to Kenema the next day; she found out it hadn't been bought, but later was told she was to be driven there. There were more miscommunications the next morning and her arrival in Kenema was further delayed by frequent checkpoints where they make you wash your hands and they take your temperature. But, once at Kenema, she was pleasantly surprised by her colleague (who frustrated her by rarely answering her e-mails): they got along well, and the visit was a success. Amelia said, "The OICC that GOAL is running there is very impressive, and it was really nice to get out of the office." She strengthened her relationship with one of the nurses on her team, and became better acquainted with a colleague who will be in charge of another OICC, to be

opened soon. She was relieved to be able to admit that she left Kenema feeling really happy with the visit.

On January 25 she posted that she was finally able to make it to Port Loko where GOAL has its ebola treatment center, which currently employs over 300 people and has received a lot of press. "However, I didn't even see the treatment center," she admitted; "I was there to observe the OICC training unit that I supervise do a training at an OICC in the area.

"OICCs are popping up all over the country with extremely varied levels of expertise and experience. Not to mention that everyone was figuring things out as they went along since no one had ever built an OICC before. That was the catalyst for creating our training unit. They travel around the country (often on a moment's notice due the unpredictable nature of the ebola response) and do training and mentoring with OICC staff."

GOAL wants to set up a training unit in Kumala. It's a very isolated town but the staff are determined to find a way to do it. "If we have to go down there and sleep in the car," she was told, "we will get it done. Don't worry about it, boss."

Training implementation hasn't yet been perfected: at the Port Loko OICC, three caregivers were working with the children without wearing gloves or PPE; then one caregiver walked out of the red zone and into the green zone where Amelia was standing, without washing her hands. This was a heart-stopping moment for Amelia as she realized she was at a higher risk in that moment than she had been at any point during her three weeks in Sierra Leone. "The caregiver didn't come anywhere close to touching me and none of the kids were symptomatic (when ebola is contagious) so, in reality it wasn't that much of a risk. What I realized from that experience is that the training unit that I work with is much braver than I had ever realized before. They walk into these OICCs with no fear because they know that this training is essential to keep the kids there safe as well as prevent the spread of ebola back into the communities."

Another realization that has come to Amelia is that it's very important for her to define her own social life rather than just go along with what other people are doing, which is easy to do when you live in a house full of people. "I've also realized that, when you work with a pack of workaholics (and have some workaholic tendencies yourself), it's pretty easy to get into unhealthy habits like skipping dinner a lot and eating shawarma every day for lunch. I'm trying to get a handle on what things I can actually cook here so I can eat better, and also trying to set boundaries like limiting work talk at home. I know that this is an emergency

situation and my life here won't ever be quite normal, but I need to make it as normal as I can or I won't be able to cope.

"This weekend, I was able to take up my favorite sport again – boxing!!! I had no hope that I would be able to do that here, but someone had a number for a boxing coach in her phone from the last person who had owned it so she gave it to me and I set up a lesson for today. It takes place on the beach, which is kind of cool...except that people gather around to watch you, which is mortifying. I realized two things during my lesson: I'm in awful shape, but the team at South Shore Sportfighting taught me well because my fundamentals were spot-on ☺. Watch out for my left hook, y'all, it's a knockout punch."

Amelia's blogs make for excellent reading: one gets swept up in the vivid verbal "paintings" of her experiences – and she's includes photos which help us to be even more in tune with her new surroundings. She's extremely busy so she only has time to post a blog every few days. Catch up with her at: ajb-theunknown.blogspot.com

Request for FMC paper records of all kinds

In an age of all-things electronic, it turns out that paper records are still in demand because e-gadgets morph so fast, so here's a request from the Mennonite Library and Archives in Newton.

In an effort to reclaim storage space, church members often discard documents, not realizing that they tell an important part of the story of church life (both local and around the world). If you have items including yearbooks, newsletters, or annual reports, please consider donating them to the Mennonite Library and Archives in Newton. In particular, MLA would like to fill in some gaps in their collection of *First Threshings* and the church yearbook. (In particular, they need 1991, 1995-2006, and 2008 to the present.)

If you have any materials along these lines that you're willing to donate to MLA, please take them to our church office so that duplication can be avoided, and they can be taken to Bethel as one collection.

Thank you very much!

Robin Ottoson

All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timeliness and space availability. (Preferably, they should 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