

# First Threshings

## First Mennonite Church

Ash Street & Grand Avenue

Hillsboro, KS 67063

620-947-5662/www.fmchillsboro.com

Marvin Zehr, Sabbatical 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)

That in the elements of earth sea and sky  
I may see your beauty,  
that in wild winds, birdsong and silence  
I may hear your beauty,  
that in the body of another and the  
interminglings of relationship  
I may touch your beauty,  
that in the moisture of the earth and its  
flowering and fruiting  
I may smell your beauty,  
that in the flowing waters of springs and  
streams I may taste your beauty.  
These things I look for this day, O God,  
These things I look for.

J. Philip Newell  
(b. 1953)

*Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter*

### **...There is a time for every matter under heaven...**

We are in season of the year when we are very much aware of the passing of time. The school year has come to an end and both students and teachers look forward to the summer vacation. In our church year we have experienced the season of Pentecost and are now moving into a more relaxed schedule during the summer months. The congregation has given Pastor Susan a sabbatical time for relaxation, study and renewal and I am here to fulfill pastoral responsibilities during this time.

During these days, my own thoughts have turned to the writer of Ecclesiastes. In chapter 3 the writer focuses on time:

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven;  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace."

Time passes without our control. Time brings change, some changes are welcomed and some resisted. Time brings new opportunities, and also limits opportunities. So while we can't control the passage of time, it is up to each of us to make the most of the time that we are given.

In this time of changing seasons, how can you make the most of your time? On the one hand, don't become so compulsive that you can't enjoy the season. But also don't just sit back and expect the passing of time to bring automatic benefits. Include time for relaxation, renewal and reflection. Include time with friends and family that you don't often see. Include time for encounters with nature. And don't neglect regular opportunities for worship and time with God. Our summer schedule invites us to experience a time of fellowship during the normal Sunday School hour prior to the service of worship.

Let us make the most of the time that God continues to give to us.

*Marvin Zehr*  
Sabbatical Interim Pastor

June 2016

**There was no Ministries Council meeting in May. The next meeting is Thursday, June 17, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.**

### June Events

- 2 8:00 p.m. Stewardship Committee meeting.
- 5 Joint Service/Picnic with Trinity at the ballpark complex shelter house; 10:30 a.m. service. *Along with food to share, be sure to bring sunshades, seating and table service!* Drinks will be provided.
- 15 7 p.m. Worship Committee meeting.
- 16 7 p.m. Ministries Council meeting.
- 19 Father's Day!
- 22 6:30 p.m. Women's and kids' Summer Party – Kleiber farm: 943 150<sup>th</sup>, Hillsboro: Asia Frye speaker.

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### Upcoming events

July 31-August 4: VBS – United Methodist Church

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### **“I did a lot of community theater growing up; some day it would be kind of nice to get back to doing some of that.”**

*Getting to know Jess Klanderud*

“I was born in Elkhart, Indiana – three and a half months early: I weighed 2.5 pounds so I was in hospital for about a month in one of those incubator boxes.” So began Jess's life. Unlike Jason, she has no siblings but, like him, she has many cousins (in her case, eighteen), and they have constituted her family. They and various family dogs, that is!

“I lived in Elkhart until age three and then we” (she and her parents) “moved to Prince of Wales Island. That was a very good time of my life – from age three to second grade. My uncle and family lived up there at the same time; he was a commercial fisherman. My closest cousin was also there: we kind of grew up together.”

I looked up Prince of Wales Island: it's located just off the west coast of the very south of Alaska which is a sliver of land bordering British Columbia.

“My mom was a social worker on the island; my dad ran an auto body shop for a while and was a cook at the Holiday Inn – the only hotel on the island!” Jess has a ready smile and she smiles often, as now.

We talked about the island and she said, “About 300 or so people lived there in winter then the population got up to about 3,000 in the summer – mostly because of the commercial fishing.”

“What was the closest town?”

“Ketchikan – about 80 air miles away. There's no point measuring in surface miles up there!” She smiled again. They had a general store, J. T. Brown's, so we could get anything we needed on the island but Mom went with some regularity to Ketchikan to court, to testify on behalf of some of her clients, and she would bring back chicken nuggets – a great treat!” Jess laughed at the memory. “I had a dog, Cindy, an Alaskan malamute – basically a domesticated wolf.” And then went on to describe her mother's job. “Mom was kind of a state official so everyone knew who I was. My parents were gone all day, of course, so I had a babysitter and there were other kids living in my little neighborhood.” And, smiling, she added, “Semi-feral children.

“Craig, the town we lived in – it's half way up the west coast – was a 'white' town, not Native American, Tlingit” (pronounced klingkit). “Kids in kindergarten to second grade were a mix of native and something else; in Klawock” (8 miles north of Craig) “they were 100%” (native Tlingit) “but we didn't go there much.

“At three years of age I went through a bi-racial crisis because I thought I was the only bi-racial kid in school. It was a while before I realized that most of the kids were bi-racial!” She smiled as, looking back over time, she realizes was a ridiculous thought.

I asked what it was like to live in Craig. “Craig was rainy, more like British Columbia. We'd wear what we'd call Craig Tennies which were rubber boots; it was muddy everywhere.” She laughed as she continued to reminisce. “My mom wanted a lawn. We lived in a trailer at the time so my dad hauled a bunch of dirt in his trailer – rocks, grass, sand – and he built my mom a lawn. It was just a patch but she put up garden boxes so she could grow a few things. And we went on lots of hikes in the forest. You couldn't go too far because there were bears, but I never remember being afraid.

“Mom was basically doing master's level social work with a B.A. She decided she wanted to get her master's in school counseling so we moved to Bowling Green State University in Ohio when I was in third grade.” (As an aside, she explained that her mother grew up a Mennonite in Archbold, Ohio, so this move had them back in her home state.) “She did that in one year.” (By this statement, Jess implied that her mother was able to combine her work experiences, her drive for more knowledge and her innate intelligence to complete her degree in half the time it takes most students; she's obviously very proud of her mother and, from what little I've seen of them together, they have an excellent relationship.) Returning to her personal history, Jess continued,

“Then she got a job in Jamestown, in upstate New York and I was in fourth grade there.” This wasn’t a school Jess felt comfortable in: “Jamestown was a public school, but kind of preppy,” she said. “The people were terrible. I only spent one year there then we moved to Asheville, New York, a much smaller town in the country, and I attended fifth and sixth grades there. It was fun because, when I got the idea to start a middle school newspaper, the art teacher taught us how to take photos and develop them. It felt like people were willing to help you explore ideas and new things.” Here, they had a shelter dog, a Labrador-Australian Shepherd mix. There was obviously plenty of the sheep-herder instinct in him because she added with a smile, “I was old enough to walk home on my own from the school bus, but he used to meet me and walk me home. Then, as soon as we got home he’d run off: he’d done his duty!”

Jess continued the saga of her early years. “When I was in seventh grade, we moved to Sturgis, Michigan.” (It was about this time that her parents divorced and, a couple of years later, that her mother married Gary.) “School was miserable, but not the worst because of the people.” Sturgis had had some industries but these had declined and it was largely a farming community, so the Mexicans had come in as migrant farmers. “Right when we got there,” Jess explained, “they had a surge of Mexican folks and the town never dealt with it very well. It’s about 50:50 now and relationships between whites and Mexicans are terrible. I finished high school in Michigan. That was something to just get through.” She seemed to wince at her memories but she made the very best of those years by immersing herself in Life, particularly the arts. She’s always been creative and has had a wide variety of interests. “For the longest time,” she said, “I wanted to be a costume designer. I did a lot of community theater growing up; some day it would be kind of nice to get back to doing some of that.” In addition, she’s always loved to read “...all kinds of things. With the benefit of hindsight, I really enjoyed historical stories.” The sum of these would have helped her endure high school but she had the added attribute of being musical: “I took all the music classes I could in high school,” she told me, “including singing and band” (where she played the base clarinet) “and ballet”. Some of her community theater experiences included acting in school plays. “*Guys & Dolls* was a fun show,” she said – and she played the lead in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. “That was a hard show to be in: I had to do a lot of research to really understand Anne’s character; the orchestra conductor was Jewish so he was a very good person to work with.”

PB

(To be concluded in the July issue of *First Threshings*.)

## **Cherishing One’s Hands**

On April 30, a number of women from First Mennonite Church attended a lovely salad brunch at Trinity Church. The theme for the event was “Hands”.

As we arrived we were invited to view several tables of beautiful handwork made by the ladies after which we gathered at the decorated tables with each one receiving a small jar of hand lotion. We were asked to take off all our jewelry and put on lotion and massage our hands, followed with some hand/finger exercises led by Nancy Kaufman. Then Pastor Norma taught us the song *Jesus Loves Me* in sign language, again, using our hands. Arlene Hett finished the program with a very thought-provoking devotional, of course. The salads, tea and cookies were delicious.

Many thanks to the Trinity ladies!

*Ruth Ann Penner*

## **Celebrating Trinity Mennonite Church’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Sunday, May 29.**

Bruderthal Mennonite Church, located six miles northeast of Hillsboro, was organized in 1874; it was relocated to Hillsboro in May 1966 because a dam was to be built that would flood much of the site; during this relocation, they decided to merge with another rural Mennonite church, Johannestal, and the two churches became Trinity Mennonite Church. On Sunday, May 29, Trinity celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their new building.

By 9:30 a.m., the church’s foyer was a sea of smiling faces and outstretched hands as erstwhile friends and neighbors from the Bruderthal community greeted each other then filtered into the fellowship hall for brunch. Some people had come from long distances to attend: many were elderly, of course, but descendants – all the way down to infants – were there too. The room was a-buzz, hushed only as organ music beckoned us into what became a very full sanctuary.

Pastor Norma Duerksen beamed with delight as she opened the worship service by greeting us and announcing the church’s upcoming events. This was followed by the call to worship led by two of Trinity’s former pastors, Arlin Yoder (1991-1994) and Grace Brunner (1994-1996): *This is the day the Lord has made: Let us rejoice and be glad in it... Let us use it to praise and magnify His name... Let us look to our yesterdays and remember how He has loved and gifted us... Let us use it to gain insights for the present and a clear vision for the future... Teach us to follow you in consistent and obedient service.* It ended with the prayer: *We confess to You our confusions and weaknesses. We offer You our moments of joy. Accept*

from us our total commitment to love You and all You have created, just as You have loved us.

We sang *Great is Thy Faithfulness, O God My Father* and the opening prayer was given by Pastor Walt Neufeld (who served in the 1960s and is now 88 years old).

The choir – a medley of about twenty current and former members – was directed by Calvin Buller and accompanied by Pauline Buller, former congregants.

The tone of the service embraced the church's rural roots: Jeff Wintermote (pastor from 2008 to 2014) read the Parable of the Sower from Matthew 13 (later highlighted in Corey Miller's message entitled *God's Good Harvest*) and Todd Lehman (youth pastor from 2001 to 2007) read the encouraging passage of Philippians 1:2-6. Corey, who was youth pastor from 1987 to 1997, spoke enthusiastically and warmly about his relationship with the Trinity congregation (which included meeting Nancy Unruh, and proposing to her in the nursery no less; Was that prescient? he wondered). And he told about being welcomed with a food shower which included fifty pounds of pancake mixes and – novice-cook that he was – even an aloe vera plant in case he burned himself!

After we all sang *We Plough the Fields and Scatter the Good Seed on the Land*, Pastor Norma told us about the church's Summer Food 4 Kids program and encouraged people at the ends of the pews to pass the church's friendship books for everyone to sign: she, understandably, was interested to know the names of all those who came; the offering was taken and was followed by a prayer given by Dotty Janzen who served from 1980 to 1990.

The service ended with a worshipful rendition of us singing *Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow* and Pastor Norma's benediction.

After lunch, Pastor Norma indicated the beautiful floral bouquet from First Mennonite Church and she read greetings from most of their former pastors who were absent; Glen Diener read a statement of congratulations and best wishes from FMC. She also announced that there were buses waiting to transport anyone who was interested to tour the Bruderthal and Johannestal church and cemetery sites. After that, people were invited to reminisce, and several did. Some people remembered the slogan that the people came up with – the rather risqué-sounding "We don't want your dam business!". Pastor Neufeld pretty much summed up the various sentiments by emphasizing the deep despair of some of his then-congregants at their plight – money meant little to those who, along with family members, had toiled for decades on their farms – and at the thought of the dispersal of their tight-knit community. He did

add some humor, though: he remembered that people referred to the government land agent as Judas, and he made everyone laugh with a story which, he cautioned, may or may not be true, but which illustrated a grim satisfaction the otherwise helpless farmer felt in the face of what he saw as government oppression.

A land surveyor was walking around some fields; the farmer came out of the house and told him it was private property and that he wasn't welcome. The surveyor promptly pointed to the badge on his shirt and said, "This means I can go anywhere." So, shrugging, the farmer went back into his house. A few minutes later, the surveyor came blazing towards the yard, screaming for help, closely followed by a charging bull. The farmer yelled to him, "Show him your badge!"

PB

**Dawn Abrahams**  
was honored at the  
**Ellsworth Correctional Facility's**  
**annual awards ceremony**  
**Thursday, May 26, 2016**  
for her years of work there  
co-producing plays with Larry Temple.

Dawn is also being honored as the  
**State of Kansas**  
**2016 Volunteer of the Year.**  
Dawn and a few family members  
(seating is limited) will be traveling to  
**Topeka on Wednesday, June 1.**

**More details about the two events**  
**will be included in the July issue of**  
***First Threshings***  
**so stay tuned!**

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](mailto:bartel@gmail.com).