

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

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“Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet, but he came to realize that Jesus does not wish to be just an example of how we should wash one another’s feet. Only those who have first allowed Jesus to wash their own feet can then offer this service to others. Only they have ‘a part’ with Him” (John 13:8b) “and thus can serve others.”

Pope Francis (b. 1936)

**Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another,
God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**

1 John 4:11-12

I recently heard a member of the Hesston College staff, Carlota Ponds, share a special game that she used to play with her mother and father on a road trip.

As a child in the ‘60s her parents traveled regularly from Kansas down to Texas to see relatives. Each time after driving an hour or so, the Sleeping Beauty game would begin. Carlota’s dad would take the driver’s seat while Carlota and her mom would bed down in the back of the car where the seat had been folded down. They covered up with blankets, snuggled in, and slept while Carlota’s dad drove. Some hours later, when they were almost to grandma’s house, the dad would pull over to the side of the road. Gently he would get out of the car, open the back door, lean in and tenderly kiss his wife and his daughter, his sleeping beauties. They would awake and look at him, returning the love they saw in his eyes.

The meaning behind this Sleeping Beauty game became known as Carlota grew older. The game, she learned, was a way of protecting her and their family as they traveled. Carlota’s mother was Hispanic and her father was African American and, at that time, the climate in the state of Oklahoma was not friendly toward a mixed marriage such as this. By bedding down in the back of the car, mother and daughter were not visible, so did not provoke hate if people had easy access to them, which could well turn to danger for the whole family.

Living in a world of hate, the love in this Sleeping Beauty game was a gift from two grown people who knew the “lay of the land” to their daughter who was, as yet, unaware of it. It was a gift of the power of love in all circumstances.

Carlota shared this story in gratitude and in grief – gratitude that her parents had such deep love for each other, for their child, their relatives and for life as a whole; grief that, for no reason but race, their lives were in danger as they traveled in the United States of America.

In love and with love, God opens a way through the brokenness and sin of this world.

Repent, turn to the love that God stirs within you. In Jesus, God has come near and is “riding in the car” with us.

Pastor Susan

Ministries Council Meeting Minutes February 12, 2015

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

Minutes of December 11, 2014 and January 15, 2015 meetings were accepted as distributed.

Committee Reports. Worship: Met February 5; Lent services' theme will be "Upside Down and Inside Out," focusing on renewal, from the *Leader*. Those guiding the Easter services are: Susie Kliewer (Ash Wednesday); Deryll Amstutz (Maundy Thursday); and, possibly, Nadine Friesen (Good Friday); Mike and Carolyn Kleiber are willing to host the Easter Sunrise Service; Tracy Hefley will provide the children's story during regular worship on Easter Sunday morning. **Nurture:** Met January 21: VBS will be held at FMC, theme will be *Blast from the Past*. Trinity's new VBS coordinator is Doris Kohlenberg. Laura Paulus and Hank Unruh took nine youth to the *Know Jesus* seminar; it was a success; heard Hank's ideas and plans for Youth Sunday, also the MC-USA convention and service projects following it. (Asia is leading the scavenger hunt for all youth at the convention so HiFY will leave early to participate in it.) Viewed the new youth shirts and hats, also the calendar for the rest of spring; pillows from Christmas still need to be sewn shut. **Mission:** No report. **Care:** Susan reported for Laura that they had a good meeting January 28: reorganized their lists; discussed expectations again; Nancy Graber is joining, Glenn Goertz is staying on; they have provided meals for a number of people. **Hospitality:** Haven't met but have sent in a deposit to Camp Mennoscah for the church retreat in September. **Stewardship:** Four members (now including Eric Bartel) met February 5: discussed their punch list (which includes work on the Fellowship Hall roof and various lighting issues) and will prioritize it at their next meeting; discussed the possibility of a finance committee that would be related to Stewardship (see Old Business below).

Council Reports. Discernment: Plan to meet next week to discuss scheduling a DnA session in late March: Jan Amstutz needs to be replaced on Discernment, and Matt Regier on Vision; Missions has needs. **Vision:** Plan to meet March 2, joined by Nadine Friesen who will replace Matt Regier; are exploring what would make the congregation more attractive to younger people. **Coordinating Cabinet:** Met today; the pages in the policy manual with changes should be printed soon: council members will receive corrected pages only; several complete copies will be run where needed. **Treasurer:** No report, but Glen will submit a budgetary

overview for this Sunday's bulletin. **Youth Pastor:** Has been busy but is having fun; setting up for convention (nine kids and two sponsors); trying to nail down \$\$; will be planning the Variety Show; also Wednesday evenings; two weeks ago, he and Laura Paulus took nine youth to *Know Jesus* at Hesston. **Pastor:** Appreciates Hank's "jump-in-it" approach to Youth Sunday and upcoming youth events; good to start working with Aleen and the Worship Committee on Lent and Easter worship times; Jess Klanderud will speak this Sunday in honor of Black History Month; March 1, Mark Rogers (representing Circles) and March 8, Deanne Duerksen (representing Main Street Ministries), will share information with us; reminders: (1) to share the new church brochures with people in the community, and (2) pew cards are available for new attendees to fill out, for her follow-up; this weekend, she will be attending Hesston College's "Overcoming Evil" conference to explore becoming a people of nonviolence; Wednesday evening, February 24, there will be an informational meeting regarding WDC's process addressing governance issues among conferences and the denomination; worship planning and pastoral care continue; thanked MC members who shared their year's activities with the congregation at the annual meeting.

Old Business. (1) Revisited the suggestion to reduce the number of MC meetings, hoping to encourage solid attendance, however people must not feel they are being left unsupported so additional, more focused, meetings may have to be scheduled in between; this year's planned meetings will be: April 9, June 11, August 13, September 10, October 8, and November 12. An additional Sunday afternoon (retreat) meeting will be scheduled in August; (2) Discussed restructuring the Stewardship Committee to include some financial members (renewing the original vision for Stewardship); suggestions for a task force of 3-4 members were made; Doug will contact these persons; Joel will convene the task force (whose goal would be to propose to MC a modification of the present Stewardship structure so more care can be given to the financing of projects, to leave the other Stewardship members freer to focus on the physical work); the proposal should include ways the two groups would relate to each other.

New Business: The following gatherings are scheduled for later this year: MC USA convention (June 30-July 5), Mennonite World Conference (July 21-26) and WDC Assembly (Oct 30-31): we need to formally approve those who've offered to be MC USA delegates, and to inform Doug of any who have expressed interest in being MWC delegates; should decide at the April MC meeting so plans to finance them can be made.

Next meeting date: Thursday, April 9, 2015.

(The official version of the minutes is in the church office.)

February 2014 Our Church Learned Its 3Rs: Renovation – Repair – Replacement.

Look up ‘harassed’ in Roget’s Thesaurus and you’ll find such synonyms as: pained, troubled, careworn, afflicted, burdened, aggrieved, vexed, worried, wounded, pierced, distressed, perplexed, tormented, tortured, agonized. Look up its antonyms and you’ll find descriptors like: serene, cheerful, satisfied, relieved, comforted – and I add another, giddy with joy and relief. Last year, chances are that all those emotions (and more?) were experienced by our conscientious and industrious treasurer.

With three major projects dominating our time, our attention and our wherewithal, 2014 was certainly a bumpy ride for our church. In a rising crescendo, it started with a complete remodel of our kitchen’s interior, rose to a major gas leak, and peaked in the collapse of our sewer system. This last job was massive: it took over three months and required plenty of tools, from shovels, sledge hammers and crow bars to concrete drills and back hoes...and plenty of men with plumbing and utility know-how – and, of course, strong backs. Not only that but, to keep the church functioning, a day’s work wasn’t done until things were cleaned up, covered up and made serviceable. No one wanted to invite accidents.

So, when Joel Klaassen (Stewardship chair) finally announced that the last toilet was back in service, Pastor Susan decided it was time to celebrate – not only was the work completed but the mountainous cost was also fully paid for by the generous support of several families. For about a month while she, Joel, Judy Harder and Glen Diener were creating a celebration for us all to enjoy, they continually primed us to be sure to attend. So, Sunday, February 15 at 4 o’clock, about seventy of us gathered in the Fellowship Hall to be amused and enlightened.

Glen was M.C. and he looked wonderfully relaxed: he tried not to smile too broadly as he told us we were celebrating PTSD – Post Traumatic Sewer Disorder. We all laughed. He thanked everyone for all their prayers and their physical and financial support. Then, it being Oscars season – which reminded him of all the other awards that are handed out, like Tonys, Golden Globes, etc. – he told us he had decided to create the MARVIN awards (which stands for Mennonite Association of Raucous Volunteers Incognito). “We Mennonites,” he said, “have to be incognito because we wouldn’t want to be prideful.”

Joel had prepared several awards: slices of PVC pipe, each mounted on a wood base; he had also prepared a video documenting all the work, and he had stills of various workers with amusing captions. A winner of each group had been decided and Doug Miller (Ministries Council chair), in a good imitation of an entertainers’ award M.C., tore

open an envelope and announced the chosen one’s name. There was a lot of good-natured joshing and laughter.

Judy Harder (our in-house Scene Creator) had dreamed up some games for the kids that represented the very real work that was done under the church: she had a variety of races including a bucket brigade and one where she urged the kids to run “as fast as you can,” with a paper sack filled with sand and tip the sand into a bucket. Also, having had each worker’s spouse sneak a pair of shoes to church that day, there was a game of match-the-shoes-to-the-workers. The kids held the shoes up high and we laughed when some of the owners didn’t recognize their own shoes! “These shoes,” Judy told the kids, “belong to the feet of people who did all that work here at the church. These are too big for you now but, some day, you will fill shoes this big by doing work for people.”

Tim and Alissa Unruh and their boys were recognized appreciatively for being patient while trying to clean the church under the challenging circumstances of such a big mess. And it was gratifying to hear Alissa tell us that they were impressed with how pleasantly cooperative our people were while working under such trying conditions all those weeks.

Finally, Joel showed us the video *All Work and no Play* (or maybe *All Work and No Pay??*) which documented the whole sewer project in good detail, making for a fine historical record.

Then, the fun and games over, a line quickly formed in front of the serving table so attractively set by Marisa Javier from Little Pleasures Coffee Shop: the tiers of beautifully decorated cupcakes, swirling upwards on tiered stands, vanished fast.

A good time was had by all.

PB

Know Jesus – The Anabaptist Game

On January 31, nine youth and two sponsors left Hillsboro after lunch and headed to Hesston in a loud, laughter-filled van. And all had a blast!

Youth pastor Hank Unruh and junior high sponsor Laura Paulus took six of our 6th-8th graders and three of their friends to the overnight W.D.C. conference called *Know Jesus*. Hank served as the male sponsor for Carson Linnens, Caleb Diener, and Joe Knoll while Laura served as the female sponsor for Sarah Diener, Victoria Wintermote, Sarah Paulus and their three friends Jessi, Maddie and Serinda.

After registering, everyone went out in the cold rain and participated in a scavenger hunt on the Hesston Campus. This was to help them become familiar with the campus in preparation for the evening’s event of playing the *Anabaptist Game*. Those who did not enjoy being cold and wet were a

little nervous about what the weekend would hold, but thankfully the weather and activities only got better after that!

After some ice-breaker games and general information, everyone joined together to worship and then hear a great message. Everyone went off to eat in the Hesston cafeteria which was a lot of fun. There were lots of food and beverage options. Hank and Laura cringed a bit as a few of the kids helped themselves to multiple refills of various caffeine loaded beverages, but everyone behaved splendidly!

Session 2 had more songs and a speaker. Then everyone was given instructions for playing the Anabaptist game. This is a strategic, role-playing game that serves to help the players understand more of what the early Anabaptists went through.

The group had to go to find various safe houses around campus where various scenes were acted out by various Hesston college students, faculty and staff. The actors did an amazing job; combined with the dark, cold night, they provided a very realistic experience. The group heard several stories about various Anabaptists including Hector Mondragon, Dirk Willems, Betteken Wens, a group of Anabaptists praying in secret, Margaretha Sattler, Conrad Grebel, and Hesston staff Ron Moyo.

What made all of it so real was the fact that there were actors serving as spies, helpers and soldiers. Getting from one safe house to the next involved careful planning and teamwork. And sometimes, the group still got arrested in spite of their best efforts. The FMC group did end up getting arrested one time when they were tricked by soldiers who had extinguished their torches and were hiding in the shadows.

Once arrested, the group was taken to trial. There, prisoners were questioned about their faith and why they believed the things they did. Hank and Laura watched some of the students really get into it, but we will not reveal who held on the tightest to us and held our hands while being led off to the dungeon! This same person later expressed that they learned what a coward they were, and everyone probably felt some fear themselves at one point or another during the game.

At the end of the game, we all went back and debriefed in our own group. This may have been the sponsors' favorite part as they watched the kids connect with the stories and their own faith. Every single one of our youth offered valuable insights with the group. Most agreed that their favorite story was that of Ron Moyo who shared about growing up in Zimbabwe. Hearing him, and knowing it happened in our modern day setting, was extremely eye-opening for everyone.

We won't talk about the sleeping portion since not much sleeping got done! We will say that some people snore, some giggle, some can sleep through anything and some only sleep a little bit when not in their own beds. And the poor guys had to sleep on a gym floor...after an all-day basketball tournament. Yuck!

The weekend ended with another session of worship and a speaker and then brunch. As they packed up and headed home, everyone talked about how much fun they had, and began planning for the next *Know Jesus* conference in 2017.

Check out the youth bulletin board for more details of the trip.

Laura Paulus



The Passover (Seder) Meal

The Jewish Seder meal is a time-honored celebration that brings into sharp focus God's plan for how humanity may be reconciled to each other and to him; it provides a spiritually exciting education on how God has been trying to teach all Jews down through the ages that Christ is, indeed, the Messiah.

When Tim Kliewer was pastor of Trinity M.C., he used to show a Jews For Jesus video called "Jesus in the Passover" for our Maundy Thursday meal. Dishes of various foods had been set up on the tables in the Fellowship Hall and, by stopping the video, we would participate with the Seder meal as it was being portrayed.

An abbreviated transcript of the video (which was narrated by Rabbi David Brickner) was included in the March 2008 edition of "First Threshings" and is being reproduced here.

Background scriptures: Exodus 5-14; Isaiah 7:14, Jeremiah 31, Luke 2:32, 22:3-5, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

The Passover is the account of God's redemption of the nation of Israel from bondage, from slavery in Egypt. You will see it was all a part of God's plan from the beginning to break down the wall between Jews and Gentiles, and to make us one in the body of Christ. Woven into the very fabric of that story is a picture of a far greater redemption of all the world, from the Egypt of sin through our Passover Lamb, Jesus the Messiah.

To free the Israelites, God chose Moses to go to the Pharaoh of Egypt and say, 'Let my people go.' Because Pharaoh refused, God sent a series of ten plagues upon them. The Israelites were living in Goshen; they were automatically exempt from the first nine plagues, but not from the tenth, the worst one – the death of the firstborn. To be exempted, however, God gave them some commands which they had to follow exactly.

The first Passover was celebrated on the night of the tenth plague in Egypt, and it was to be celebrated as a lasting ordinance. So, through our history, various symbols were added to remind us of that first Passover; By the time Jesus and his disciples were celebrating it, most of the items on the modern Passover table had been incorporated into that observance. The celebration requires a tremendous amount of preparation. (Jesus sent Peter and John ahead to prepare the Passover: Mark 14:13-15). We were to cleanse our houses of all leaven so we eat unleavened bread – *matzoh* – which symbolizes purity and righteousness before God.

Passover is observed largely around the family dinner table. The children of Israel were to eat ready to take off at a moment's notice and, in a near-eastern culture, only free people could recline at a meal; slaves had to stand. 'Once we were slaves, now we are free.' So, we recline on pillows.

The family's matriarch reads a prayer then lights the festival candles. Now, I think it's appropriate that it's the

woman rather than the man who lights the candles, and so brings light to the festival table, because in the same way it was not through a man but a woman and the will of God that the Light of the World came into the world.

Components of the Passover feast.

A small amount of each of the six different symbolical food items is placed in the six compartments of the Seder Plate.

The father (as worship leader) answers the youngest child's four *Why?* questions pertaining to the symbolism of the foods they will be eating: **unleavened bread** (purity/righteousness before God); **parsley greens** (life), **salt water** (tears of life). (Together, the greens and salt water remind Jews that their lives were immersed in tears, '...for truly a life without redemption is a life immersed in tears. But we also remember that God redeemed us with a mighty, outstretched arm. He brought us out of bondage through the Red Sea to freedom. So, by his mercy and grace, our lives have been drawn from tears.) **Bitter root** or **bitter herbs** (horseradish is a ground-up root that makes you cry when you eat it: the Israelites' experience of slavery and very root of life itself can often be bitter); **chopped apple-raisin mixture** (bricks the Egyptians forced the Israelites to make). (The sweetness overcomes the bitterness of the horseradish: even the bitterest toils grew sweet when the Israelites knew their redemption was close); **a hard-boiled egg** (*sacrifice in the Temple at the Passover, i.e., food for mourners*). (The egg is sliced and dipped in the salt water (tears) because we are mourning the fact that this is a memorial to a sacrifice that is no longer – the sacrifice of the Pascal Lamb which was central to the Passover observance but which could only occur in the appointed place, the temple in Jerusalem, and that was razed by the Romans in A.D. 70. From that day until the present, there has no longer been any sacrifice in Jerusalem. And, because of this, the rabbis tell us we can no longer eat lamb as the main course of the Passover meal.)

And so this last item, the *Z'roah*, the shank bone of the lamb, rests on the *seder* plate to remind us of those lambs that were so central to the first Passover back in Egypt and now are sadly absent. (We read about those lambs in Exodus 12. God commanded the children of Israel, 'Take a yearling male lamb without spot, without blemish, without any broken bones, and sacrifice it.' Now, this reminds me of another perfect Pascal Lamb who, contrary to Roman custom, did not have his legs broken. He hung on the cross – and so did Christ fulfill Messianic prophecy.)

Each place-setting at the Passover table has one cup filled with wine which is drunk from four times to 'outline' the meal: **Cup of Sanctification/Thanksgiving** (*sanctifying all that follows*). Then is said a traditional Hebrew prayer 'Blessed art Thou, our God of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine...' And,

certainly, Jesus said that Hebrew prayer – and then he said something that directly relates to it, ‘It is with great desire that I have desired to eat the Passover with you. For, truly, I will not partake of the fruit of the vine until I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God.’ You see, Jesus spoke of a new, or perhaps fulfilled, Passover in the Kingdom and, with this cup, he sanctified all that was to follow in that special Passover in the Upper Room.

Cup of Plagues. A full cup symbolizes fullness of joy so, to symbolically lessen their joy, Jews dip a finger in their wine and, naming aloud each plague in sequence, they drop a drop on their plate, chanting: Blood. Hail. Locusts. Frogs. Lice. Flies. Pestilence. Boils. Darkness. Slaying of the firstborn.’ To prevent him from slaying their firstborn children, God had commanded the Israelites to take the blood of the unblemished lamb they had sacrificed, put it in a basin and apply that blood to the doorposts of their houses, putting it first on the top lintel, and then on the two side posts.

Everywhere that the blood of the lamb was on the top lintel and on the side-posts, death passed over that house. And so redemption came that night to the children of Israel in the land of Egypt. Now, because I believe that Jesus is my Lamb and my Messiah, and because I have, by faith, applied the blood of his sacrifice to the doorpost of my heart when death visits me, death is going to pass over me also, because I have eternal life. Praise God for that!

Next comes the *matzoh tosh*, the bag for unleavened bread. It has three compartments and a piece of unleavened bread is put into each. Rabbis through history think it represents a unity (patriarchs, worship) but disagree on which one. But I believe it represents the unity of our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and here’s why: during a particular time of the Passover we will reach into the second compartment of the *matzoh tosh*. Now, you can ask a rabbi, ‘Rabbi, why do we take the second piece and leave the first and third pieces untouched?’ And the answer is, ‘We don’t know!’ We take this *matzoh* out which we call the Bread of Affliction, and there are three things to notice about it.

First, this is a whole loaf of bread. Yet, look at it; it’s flat like a cracker. That’s because it’s completely unleavened. In fact, we’re so concerned that it be unleavened that we roll it out and, before we bake it, we quickly pierce it and then we bake it at a high temperature on a rack in the oven, and those brown stripes are baked into the bread. So, all *matzoh* is unleavened, striped and pierced. Are you with me? We take this second piece from the middle compartment of the *matzoh tosh* and we break it in half. And we take this broken piece and wrap it in a linen cloth, and it is now called the *afrikoman*. It’s known as the ‘hidden *matzoh*’ and it means ‘*It comes later*’. And that’s exactly what happens with this bread. We have a child carry it outside the Room of Celebration to be hidden for a time – buried

if you will. It’s such an important part of the celebration that the entire meal cannot be completed without that second piece.

Then the family eats a big meal.

Towards the end of the meal, the head of the house will say to all the children, ‘Go and search for the *afrikoman*’ and the kids have a great time looking for that piece. The child that finds it brings it back to the head of the house and receives a reward. The head of the house stands and continues this ancient ceremony by unwrapping this special bread from the linen cloth. He takes it out and begins to break off small pieces for everyone seated at the table. Does this remind you of anything? If the *matzoh tosh* represents the unity of our patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) why, then, is the middle portion broken, buried, and brought back? If the *matzoh tosh* represents the unity of our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – then we know why: it’s because Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, was broken in death, wrapped in a linen cloth, buried in the tomb and resurrected by the power of God, conquering sin and death. And it is no wonder that Jesus Christ took this bread, gave it to his disciples saying, ‘Take, eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ God knew it in advance.

And then our Lord took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’

Now, you know we take the cup four times during the Passover. And, the New Testament tells us that Jesus took the cup after the Passover meal. So, we have the first two cups, then comes the meal. What comes directly after the meal is the third cup. This is called the **Cup of Blessing and Redemption**. This cup helps them look back to the redemption of our forefathers from Egypt and forward to that redemption when Messiah comes. And, Jesus there in the Upper Room with his disciples raised the third cup, the cup after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you for the remission of sins.’ Now, what new covenant was he speaking of? The one that was promised by Jeremiah 31: ‘The time is coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them.’ declares the Lord. ‘This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’, because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’

declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'

The problem with that first covenant was it was a broken covenant; it was written on tablets of stone. The new covenant was to be written on the tablets of our hearts. This, then, was the ultimate condition upon which the new covenant rested, for no longer would sin be atoned for through daily offerings of animals but, once and for all, it deals with the most difficult of human predicaments. And, now we find Jesus there in that Upper Room with his disciples, taking the cup, taking the bread, taking the cup after supper and saying, 'That which you've been waiting for, that which was promised, that new covenant, has now come in my blood.' Imagine how the disciples must have felt after having celebrated this Passover year after year after year and then, one day, in that Upper Room in Jerusalem, seeing its very fulfillment! To imagine that God, in redeeming ancient Israel from bondage in Egypt, wove into the very fabric of that story a great picture, the greatest picture of all, of the redemption of the world from the Egypt of sin through the Passover Lamb who was Jesus the Messiah. And of that redemption you and I partake, if we know Christ as our Savior. If we have, by faith, applied the blood of his sacrifice to the doorposts of our hearts, Jesus is our Passover Lamb. We've been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb.

Hallelujah!

And that's exactly how the Passover concludes: after having the climax of the bread and the cup after supper, we sing hymns of praise" (Psalms 113-118) together with the fourth and final cup, the **Cup of Praise**. This cup is raised, and praises to God conclude the Passover every year with the shout, '*Next year, in Jerusalem!*'

Passover commemorates the hope of a future redemption, and most Jews are still waiting for Elijah, forerunner of the Messiah, to come: they don't understand that the spirit of Elijah has already come in the person of John the Baptist who one day saw a Jewish man coming towards him and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!'

Amen

Where Sadness & Beauty Live Side-by-Side

Spending about three weeks in Southeast Asia was a rich experience for me. Some things that I won't forget very soon: the huge amount of poverty we observed, the sadness of the effects of war, the extravagance of Buddhist temples and Muslim mosques, the good work of several missions groups which tie to Tabor College, and the beauty of the landscape.

Our first stop was in Ho Chi Minh City, (formerly Saigon), Vietnam. There we were exposed to lots of poverty, e.g., people living in shacks, street markets all over where even children were begging you to buy their

products... "Madame, Madame", they would cry as they pulled on your clothes...."only three for a dollar" they would say about their braided bracelets. Also in Vietnam, we visited the War Museum which was so sobering. The horrible pictures of the many children born with severe deformities as the result of Agent Orange made me wonder which would be harder for a parent: to have a child born with extreme deformities or to have them killed along the roads as we saw in many pictures in the museum.

Our next stop was Cambodia where the poverty continued and the visit to the Killing Fields made me weep. What the Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot did to the Cambodian people, as well as Vietnamese and Chinese living in Cambodia, is horrifying. Estimates of between one and three million people were slaughtered in an attempt to create a new society. The shrine exposing approximately 8,000 skulls was sobering to say the least. We also visited the Genocide Museum which had been the prison that held many innocent people before they were executed. In Cambodia, we visited the elementary school and orphanage started by former Tabor employees, Tim and Darlene Ratzloff, 21 years ago. They had taken in the orphans of AIDS mothers and the school is providing a quality education for children of the village near Phnom Penh. We also visited the largest religious edifice in the world...the huge ancient Hindu temple, Angkor Wat.

Our next country was Thailand with its *many* elaborate Buddhist temples, spirit houses, shrines for their dead, and figures of Buddha. It was not unusual to see an elaborate temple even in the areas where most people appeared to live in very dire conditions. However, the closer we got to Thailand, the more you could see improved agricultural processes and there was more industrial development, particularly in Bangkok. In Bangkok, we visited Chonburi where Mennonite Brethren Missions has church-planting groups. We went with two Tabor graduates who are serving under the TREK program to a nearby village on a Sunday morning where they share the love of Jesus with the children of the village.

In beautiful Chiang Mai, Thailand, we spent a wonderful evening with some former Tabor grads who are serving there with M.B. Missions. That was probably the most beautiful country we visited. Oh yes, we also were able to visit an Elephant Park where we rafted and rode elephants through the river and watched some of the elephants paint very nice pictures, play soccer, dance, and shoot baskets.

We left Thailand, which is primarily Buddhist, to go to Malaysia which has a large number of Muslims. We were able to visit some elaborate mosques but also experienced a vibrant worship service at a Christian church.

And our last brief stop was in Singapore, probably the most developed country we visited. There, we went to Gardens by the Sea which was a huge garden with two or three-story waterfalls, thousands of plants, and incredible carved life-size animals appropriate to the

region. We were staying in Little India so enjoyed Indian cuisine while there.

Overall, it was a great experience even though it wasn't easy on my self-confidence or my body to try to keep up with college students.

Deanne Duerksen

Friendship Cake

1 cup Greeting	½ cup Smiles
1 large Handshake	2/3 cup Love
1 teaspoon Sympathy	2 cups Hospitality

Cream greetings and smiles thoroughly. Add handshakes separately. Slowly stir in love. Sift together sympathy and hospitality and fold in carefully. Bake in warm heart. Serve often.

Submitted by Velda Hiebert

Latest Blog from Amelia Brandt (21 Feb 2015)

“Now that I've been here (Sierra Leone) for nearly two months, I'm realizing that I'm starting to find my normal here. Although my life borders on the bizarre – taking U.N. helicopters and having my temperature checked six or so times a day – I suppose you really can get used to anything. And, of course, not everything is so different.

In case anyone was wondering, Netflix actually does work here so *Law and Order* has been part of my weekly routine.

The workload here is heavy, but at least once or twice a week I make a conscious decision to leave my work laptop closed when I get home and try to cook dinner and watch my Netflix.

Last weekend I was able to have a ‘treat yo’self’ weekend with a friend from work. She’s lived here off and on for seven years so she knows where to find a good mani(cure)/pedi(cure). I usually work on Saturday, but I slept in and then met my friend for a mani/pedi followed by cappuccinos and pizza. Then I went home and ate a really nice Valentine’s Day dinner that my roommate (who is French, mind you) made. Then, on Sunday, it was a beach day as per usual. All in all, not a bad normal to have.

Some things, of course, are harder to get used to. Since the city is still on lockdown, we can only get

groceries until 6 p.m. Since we all work a lot, it’s really hard to get to the grocery store before it closes, so that is a constant stressor. And then, when you do get to a grocery store, it’s basically a guarantee that you won’t find everything you need. They are all quite small and often lack basic things that we would consider necessities. I’ve started kind of picking up random things here and there that I know I would use for a recipe and then hoping that something will come together at some point. I haven’t really found my cooking stride yet because it’s so hard to get ingredients, which is frustrating for me.

I’ve also been dealing with a lot of uncertainty around my job. As I’ve talked about before, I’m the OICC (Observational Interim Care Centre) Manager, where children can complete their quarantine period if they don’t have an appropriate caregiver. However, the number of cases is dropping quickly and, as such, the need for OICCs is dropping as well. For the past 3 or 4 weeks, there have been a lot of conversations about what to do with the OICC Training Team that I supervise as well as what to do with me. For those who know me well, you’ll understand how hard it is for me to deal with uncertainty. Finally this week, my role was decided and I’m quite happy with it. I’m currently in a period of transition now to become the Freetown Health Manager. I’ll be essentially supervising all of the health projects that are going on in the capital, which is great for me. I will still have my OICC duties, but we expect those to start reducing quickly.

In the meantime, I’ve also been having a lot of things happening on the Ph.D/Dr. of Public Health front. I submitted applications for PhD/DrPH programs before I knew that I was going to have this job, so things have been moving forward with that since I’ve been here. I applied to Washington University, Tulane, Johns Hopkins, and Boston University. At this point, I’ve gotten interviews at all of the schools and already been accepted to Tulane. I’m waiting now to see what happens with the other three schools as well as what the financial package will be at each. Stay tuned!”

Way to go, Amelia! We’re praying for you! PB

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