

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

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A Light Breather

The spirit moves
Yet stays:
Stirs as a blossom stirs,
Still wet from its bud-sheath,
Slowly unfolding,
Turning in the light with its tendrils;
Plays as a minnow plays,
Tethered to a limp weed, swinging,
Tail around, nosing in and out of the
current,
Its shadows loose, a watery finger;
Moves, like the snail,
Still inward,
Taking and embracing its surroundings,
Never wishing itself away,
Unafraid of what it is,
A music in a hood,
A small thing,
Singing.

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)

**For the beauty of the earth, For the beauty of the skies
For the Love which, from our birth, Over and around us lies:
Christ, our God, to Thee we raise
This our Sacrifice of Praise**

(Folliott S. Pierpoint (1835-1917))

Earth Day was April 22. This has caused me to stop and reflect on the importance of the earth, creation and our call to care for all that God has made. Genesis 1 reminds us that “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep.” Then God created light, water, vegetation, and trees of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God brought forth creatures of every kind. And that too was good. Next God created humankind in God’s own image. God blessed them and empowered them to have dominion over what he had created. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Earth Day is a reminder that we are called to be participants with God in the continued care of all we have been given to both enjoy and to maintain life. But our temptation is to use and abuse it. Care of the environment has become a source of controversy in our political culture today. There is increasing opposition to regulations that seek to manage and preserve our environment. Many of our leading scientists are being ignored as we continue to pollute the earth. This should cause us to reflect and ask what we can and should do to protect the earth from moving toward destruction.

In Psalm 24 we are reminded: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.”

This suggests that we are given responsibility to care for the earth that God created. It is not ours, but we are caretakers of God’s creation. This means we cannot only use the earth’s resources for our own personal advantage, but we must also be ready to embrace our responsibility to preserve and share what God has created and given to us.

I encourage each of us to find ways that we can conserve the earth’s resources. I am mindful of this each time I volunteer at Book ReViews, the used bookstore in Newton. We receive used book contributions and make them available for resale, with all profits going to local charities. Any books that cannot be sold we recycle. This is one small way we can care for God’s creation. What are you doing, or, what can you do to be a responsible steward of the earth, as little as that may seem?

Marv Zehr
Sabbatical Pastor

May 2016

Minutes of Ministries Council Meeting April 21, 2016

Present: Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship), Glen Diener (Treasurer), Hank Unruh (Youth Pastor), Pam Bartel (Hospitality), Marv Penner (Sabbatical Pastor), Carolyn Penner (Vision), Pat Bartel (Secretary).

Absent: Joel Klaassen (Stewardship), Douglas Graber (Mission), Laura Paulus (Care), Tim Frye (Discernment)

Minutes of the February 18, 2016 meeting were approved as distributed.

Committee Reports: Worship. Met April 5 to plan for Pastor Susan's sabbatical: upcoming messages will be brought by Nadine Friesen, Keith and Judy Harder, Matt Regier and Asia Frye; most Sundays have worship leaders assigned; some Children's Time leaders are needed. Susie Kliever would like help finding people to carry in the Bible, prayer shawl and lamp each Sunday; one possibility is for the greeters to do it. To be discussed at the next committee meeting are: (1) Help to monitor the flowers below the pulpit and decorate the altar, and (2) the summer possibility that Sunday school for kids be held 9:15-9:45 and worship from 10:00-11:15

Nurture. Met in March. Some helpful ideas were expressed regarding summer Sunday school as a result of the survey: several people have offered to help provide a light breakfast beforehand. Teachers will be recognized and blessed during worship May 8. Vacation Bible School is planned for July 31 to August 4 at the Methodist church. As a side issue, it was agreed that a quilting frame may be set up in the chapel this summer, unless a negative reaction is received; the frame would be propped against a wall if the chapel is needed for a large group (e.g. for a funeral). **Mission.** No report.

Care. No report. **Hospitality.** They served about 60 at the Easter brunch; appreciated the help of Judy Jantz who did the centerpiece arrangements, also Eydie Graber who advised and helped with the food and coffee.

Wednesday evening, April 13, Eydie and Verda were each given a \$25 gift certificate from Serenity Gardens as a thank-you for all the meal preparing that they have done over the years. They are planning an "FMC at Restaurants" evening to be held soon, and will provide chocolates for Mothers Day. **Stewardship.** Met April 7. Our FMC Everence Representative, Danielle Bartel, has met the requirements to earn our church the maximum matching funds available. The nursery ceiling has showed a leak coming from the boys' bathroom upstairs: Lester Funk and Stuart Funk will repair it. Tonight is work night for yard cleanup. Tree-trimming at the cemetery will be done in May.

Council Reports. Discernment: No report.

Vision. Met with Doug Miller and Aleen Ratzlaff to smooth the transition for Pastor Susan's sabbatical: are pleased that Marv is with us.

Coordinating Cabinet. Met this afternoon. Trinity M.C. is having a 50th anniversary celebration May 29. It was agreed that our church should send flowers and a card. Doug will draft a congratulatory letter (to be approved by Pastor Marv and Carolyn) which would be read publicly, if Trinity so wishes. Glen Diener will represent our church; Marv will work with Becky on ordering flowers. Tim Frye will be invited to give the congregation a report on May 29 regarding their family's semester away; Asia will speak after she returns.

Treasurer. The ministries fund balance is a little over \$10,000. The Variety Show (April 20) brought in \$386, which was less than usual. Since some people didn't realize it was a HiFY fundraiser, there will be another chance to donate. The April 17 offering for AMBS was \$745. At the April 7 Stewardship meeting details regarding church investments were discussed. **Youth Pastor.** The youth had fun creating the Variety Show and being in the event. He is working on organizing the service trip to St. Louis: some of the youth are involved in basketball camp and drivers education at the end of June so their departure date is uncertain; their return date of July 5 is fairly definite. The only adult definitely going is Hank: there should be a female sponsor too. The lack of sponsors, especially on Wednesday evenings, is a concern. Through Discernment, he hopes previous short-term sponsors will agree to another term: lack of sponsors means the Safe Sanctuaries policy could be jeopardized and/or activities limited. He is working on summer activities in and around Hillsboro: excited by their fundraising ideas, e.g., a dog wash. He has distributed surveys to youth and parents seeking ideas for the future of HiFY, and how Hank might improve; he plans to meet with parents soon to decide on summer activities and again in late summer to decide on next year's activities. Youth room walls have been painted, now the flooring needs to be refinished. **Pastor pro-tem.** Marv enjoyed the Variety Show. Things are going well from his perspective: he's getting to know people again and those he doesn't know have been good about introducing themselves; would appreciate feedback on people to visit: shut-ins, those who've experienced grief, also those anticipating surgery, etc. We are invited to call him at home, if necessary: 316-283-8308. He plans to mostly follow the Lectionary for his sermons.

Old Business: Seeking up to ten delegates for the July 29-30 WDC meeting, Doug (and Marv) will draft a bulletin announcement inviting people to assume that role; Doug will support this with a vocal one. Sometime in the next few weeks Doug will distribute to Ministries Council members the revised Policy Manual pages.

Next meeting: Thursday, June 16 at 7:30 p.m. (Note change of time)
(The official version of the minutes is available in the church office.)

May Events

- 3 7:00 p.m. Worship Committee meeting.
- 5 8:00 p.m. Stewardship Committee meeting.
- 8 Honor our graduates (during worship).
- 14 High School graduation, Tabor College commencement.
- 15 Pentecost Sunday
- 16 Last day of school.
- 22 Bethel College Baccalaureate/Commencement.
- 29 No Sunday School.

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Our May-June preachers are:

- May 1 Nadine Friesen
- May 8 Marv Zehr
- May 15 Keith & Judy Harder
- May 22 Marv Zehr
- May 29 Matt Regier
- June 5 Sunday School picnic (TMC in charge)
- June 12 Asia Frye
- June 19 Marv Zehr
- June 26 Hank Unruh

HiFY's Annual Variety Show – April 20

The fellowship hall was a-buzz with amused anticipation, some of it caused by Nadine Friesen alias Minerva Earple Hickenoper, as about fifty of us waited for Hank to introduce the show. This he did by quoting "Labeling Keys", a poem by Taylor Mali who's a favorite poet of his. The poem ends by asking, rhetorically, *Who here knows nothing of magic that escapes every time a key that should unlock a door does?* And Hank likened the symbolism of keys that unlock a mystery to a variety show, such as ours, which is a mystery until it's unlocked!

There were eleven acts, each unique and fun. We started with a twist to the *Wedding at Cana* story as retold by Deryll Amstutz and featuring him, Douglas Graber, Jan Amstutz and Nancy Graber: two guests, Jonah and Zebedee, were traveling across-country to Cana, late for the actual wedding but, they hoped, still in time to enjoy some of the week-long celebration afterwards. At Cana, they were greeted with the news that Jesus and his friends had over-indulged and were most responsible for the host running out of wine. Mary was angry with them for causing embarrassment to their host; she goes up to her son

and tells him and his companions that it is time for them to leave. Jesus assures her that it is not time for them to leave and, as things turn out, the wedding celebrations continue with, of course, wine of superior quality which everyone appreciates, including Jonah and Zebedee.

Next came our inimitable nonagenarian, Velda Hiebert, whose act was entitled *Farmer's Market*. She wheeled in a food cart on which were items covered with a white cloth. She started by telling a few jokes and then, lifting off the cloth, showed us several sacks of New Year's cookies she had made that morning and told us, "There are six in each sack, and they cost \$5 which will go towards the youth program." What a generous, inventive lady she is! This gesture was very much appreciated, and people stepped up promptly to buy some.

Joshua Diener (5th grade) was up next: billed by the evening's MC as a great pianist who'd spent a lot of time practising, he played *Malagueña* by Ernesto Lecuona, and did a great job. He obviously enjoys playing, and is progressing very well.

Up came three of the bigger guys, billed as H.O.G. (Hoops of Glory): this involved very dexterous hoop-bowling by Wes Shaw (freshman) who was able to make the hoop hesitate long enough for, first Joe Knoll (freshman), to quickly crawl through, then Joe and Brodie Rathbone (sophomore) one after the other, then, amazingly, Joe, Brodie and Wes himself to get through. What a feat – and it was celebrated by Wes doing a backwards aerial somersault off the platform. "And that," Hank said matter-of-factly but with a grin, "is why you hear weird noises coming from the youth room on Wednesday nights!"

Always energetic, two of Hillsboro's illustrious school teachers (illustrious because USD 410 recently won the Governor's Award), Julie Linnens and Lenna Knoll, involved the crowd with a skit based on *Let's Make a Deal*: the first person to answer their challenges to find a penny, a gray hair (Elfrieda Funk gamely presented one of hers), an earring, etc., was invited to claim their prize by digging into Julie's sack of "stuff"; there were many mystified looks on the faces of the kids who brought back their prizes!! And, perhaps the most fun was Julie's ending salvo, *Julie's Trick*, "Which," she said, "is going to embarrass my family big-time". She demonstrated the basketball *Spider*: legs apart, she bounced a basketball two times in front of them then two times behind, non-stop, for many seconds. That feat took skill and coordination and made everyone laugh and clap!

Up stepped "Joshua's Friend," Glen Diener. Glen was wearing a baseball cap set askew and a flannel shirt half-untucked, and he carried a skinny, round case which, during the patter between him and

Joshua, revealed that it contained an instrument he'd been learning recently; he was obviously proud of his feat as he carefully unpacked...*Ta-dah!*...a pair of cymbals. Joshua's role was to play *Stars & Stripes Forever* on his i-pad while Glen, cymbals poised, waited for his cue. He waited...and he waited. He had a gormless expression on his face, then he'd suddenly take a deep breath thinking his moment had come only for the music to change, and he'd drop his hands dejectedly, twist them differently through the cymbal straps, stand back up and be ready for another cue... After a while he got impatient and took over the i-Pad, fast-forwarding the music to what he thought was his cue. He was foiled again – but he ended triumphantly: with great gusto he crashed his cymbals over and over, deafening us all but making us laugh.

The next act was *Minute to Win It*: guided by Brodie and ably assisted by Sarah Diener (9th grade) and Victoria Wintermote (8th grade), Aaron Paulus (3rd grade) and Cooper Hefley (2nd grade) were challenged to re-stack about 20 plastic cups they were holding so the green cup on top circled back to the top. It was quite a race. Aaron had great presence of mind when his cups came away more than singly: he'd put, say, three in his mouth and pull them down one by one to add to his stack. He sure can think on his feet!

Then Tristan Rathbone (6th grade) and Filo Cruz (6th grade) sat on two chairs by the platform. They wore loose-fitting shoes for the no-hands-kick-both-shoes-from-feet-to-platform contest. Shoes went flying, but harmlessly. The final contest for Joe and Wes was to down three cans of Pepsi. That was tough! Even the first can couldn't be chug-a-lugged. Part-way into the second can, there was quite a slow-down, and then impatient onlookers (Pepsi lover's??) Aaron, Joshua, Caleb Diener (7th grade) and Carson Linnens (7th grade) jumped in, taking over the challenge quite zealously. There was more and more burping and, before long, paper towels had to be brought out to clean up what wasn't drunk. It's good their hearts are young and strong.

Act No. 9 was *Sput* pronounced *Shput* by Ms. Higgenpooper – “Not,” she croaked, offended at the very thought, “Higgenpooper”, as some would have it. She was dressed rather as a bag lady whose makeup had been applied in layers over time and she launched into a litany of exhortations after telling us that her mantra is *To Aspire to Inspire Before I Expire*. She expounded on ways she takes to stay healthy. “I have taken good care of myself: I don't eat natural foods because people die of natural causes.” Rather, she advocates eating things like Twinkies and drinking pop because they have plenty of

preservatives: “The older you get the more preservatives you need,” she wheezed. As far as body shape, Pick a name that works for you: “Eat just as much as you want because brain cells, they come and go, but fat cells stay for ever.” After that she rattled off a few jokes. Do you know what happened to the man who backed into the meat grinder? He got a little behind. Do you know what the doctor said when he'd finished the operation? Well, that's enough out of you. What's a row of rabbits hopping backwards called? A receding hareline. And others! Next came some Church Bulletin Bloopers: If you have children and you don't know it, we have a nursery. Ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. Our ushers will eat latecomers. The peace-making meeting has been canceled due to a conflict. And others! And she ended with age-appropriate hymns: 45 years: *God Will Take Care of You*, 75, *Nearer My God to Thee*, 85 *This World Is Not My Home*, and 95 *Lord, I Am Coming Home*.

That was a hard act to follow but, to the tune of the Beatles' song *Yesterday*, Nancy and Jan sang a fun song called *Exercise*. Some of the lines were: *All my poundage seems so far away – It doesn't look as though it's here to stay. Oh, I believe in exercise. Suddenly, I'm not half the girl I used to be: there's no layer hanging over me. Oh, I believe in exercise. Yes, it had to go, heaven knows, it could not stay. I won the no-belly prize for this song on exerci-i-i-ize, exercise. There will never be a compromise. Though I'd never win a beauty prize, I'll still believe in exercise!* That went down well, too, and, to wind up the show, Sarah Paulus (7th grade) and Ruthie Paulus (1st grade) did a dance number: it was cute to see the big-sister/little-sister interactions as they did their routine.

If you weren't there be sure to show up next year: not only for some high-jinks and good laughs but also to support HiFY: it's a fundraiser.

PB

Threatened with Resurrection (Excerpt)

**I live each day to kill death;
I die each day to beget life,
and in this dying unto death,
I die a thousand times and
am reborn another thousand
through that love.**

**Julia Esquivel
(b. 1930)**

“It's very important, in our 'e-world', to foster the ability to connect with each other physically. Too many young people are losing that.”

(Concluding the interview with Jason Klanderud from the April issue of First Threshings.)

As the children are developing their personalities and abilities, Jason is thinking carefully about what he sees for his family and what he wants them to become and do. “For the first time in my marriage my wife is working fulltime and I am part-time, and what I see in this transition is that we are a much better team than at the beginning: I have taken a much more active role with our kids because I am with them more – more than a lot of fathers are able to. Given that changes my goals. Some men’s goals are, ‘I am going to build my business and, in ten years, it’s going to... whatever.’ I am thinking, I have two children who are very bright and talented, and they have every opportunity, more than I had.”

Jason admits he loves young children and, being with a group of them at church on Wednesday nights has given him the opportunity to weave learning about God into their various activities. He laughs rather ruefully as he admits that half the time they don’t seem to be listening, but he’s found out that they absorb more than they seem to. “I understand that it’s important that, as a man and a father, I have presence with these kids. I want them to feel they can trust me, and can approach me whenever they want to. I want them to see that’s how they can approach God.

“Lana loves being on stage. Both of them are so expressive. She’s a dancer, a performer, and she can sing. We’re getting both of them into dance class soon.”

Jason is taking classes with Derek Hamm at Tabor College, working towards a Graphic Arts degree. He admitted, “I live with fractured time: I have a business at home; I am a student; I am a dad and I have a wife.” That said, he proved he has his feet on the ground when he expounded on his attitude regarding our embrace of all things technological. “It’s very important, in our ‘e-world’ to foster the ability to connect with each other physically. Too many young people are losing that. I’ll be 40 in September which isn’t old, yet I see how change is happening in our society. I remember when there were no cell phones, no internet, no computers; you went outside to play and there was nothing else to do. Millenials grew up with all this technology – it’s so normal for them to communicate with people by texting any more. I went with the students from the (Tabor College) Minority Student Union to Kansas City; we went to one of these open-air markets and walked around with the students going shopping, and tried new things. In the evening we went to a dinner

restaurant. I tried to facilitate a conversation but the first thing the students did was get out their phones and start texting for, like, ten minutes. The issue of diversity is people tied by sports – mutual interests – music, drama. These students had just had some great intercultural experiences, and they’re an intercultural group: they should’ve been discussing what had happened that day with each other” (but they were basically ignoring each other).

“There’s no doubt it’s a challenge moving into a new community for these students – and we’re experiencing that too” (as a family). “We all have the challenge because we have to work through those media, but there’s a trade-off where we don’t get this intimacy that generations before would have taken for granted. I see us all struggling with that.” He said he doesn’t think young people know how to put their gadgets away and relate to people face-to-face, and that that is very detrimental to their relationships.

“I have experienced so many different cultures in this country and through my international family, of course. It’s unique – how we see the world is very different: we see it from multiple contexts so I can relate to them in a way that they can culturally understand. The things we focus on are different but we all want the same things from life, just differently, and that has helped me focus on what is important. I have become really good at listening to people and reading them, and asking myself, ‘What do they want?’ I am the oldest cousin on my mom’s side so I have seen them all grow up; I think it’s all how you enter into the conversation with someone. I already understand that I am different from them so, what I do, I go with where that person is. That’s a good stance to take – to really try to understand the text, the syntax, and the words they use.”

As a Christian, Jason has learned to look within a conversation, a relationship, and to tap into his understanding of theology to see who God is in it. He ended our conversation by saying, “That’s something (Saint) Paul would have had to do since he was meeting new people all the time, and they were from different ethnic groups with different languages.”

PB

“The Strangest Story of All”

By C. S. Lewis

We come to the strangest story of all, the story of the Resurrection. It is very necessary

to get the story clear. I heard a man say, “The importance of the Resurrection is that it gives evidence of survival, evidence that the human personality survives death.” On that view what happened to Christ would be what had always happened to all men, the difference being that in Christ’s case we were privileged to see it happening.

This is certainly not what the earliest Christian writers thought. Something perfectly new in the history of the Universe had happened. Christ had defeated death. The door which had always been locked had for the very first time been forced open. This is something quite distinct from mere ghost-survival. I don’t mean that they disbelieved in ghost-survival. On the contrary, they believed in it so firmly that, on more than one occasion, Christ had had to assure them that he was *not* a ghost. The point is that while believing in survival they yet regarded the Resurrection as something totally different and new.

The Resurrection narratives are not a picture of survival after death; they record how a totally new mode of being has arisen in the Universe. Something new had appeared in the Universe: as new as the first coming of organic life. This Man, after death, does not get divided into “ghost” and “corpse”. A new mode of being has arisen. That is the story. What are we going to make of it?

The question is, I suppose, whether any hypothesis covers the facts so well as the Christian hypothesis. That hypothesis is that God has come down into the created universe, down to manhood – and come up again, pulling it up with him. The alternative hypothesis is not legend, nor exaggeration, nor the apparitions of a ghost. It is either lunacy or lies. Unless one can take the second alternative (and I can’t) one turns to the Christian view.

“What are we going to make of Christ?” There is no question of what we can make of him, it is entirely a question of what he intends to make of us. You must accept or reject the story.

The things he says are very different from what any other teacher has said. Others say, “This is the truth about the Universe. This is the way you ought to go,” but he says, “I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life”. He says, “No person can reach absolute reality, except through me. Try to retain your own life

and you will be inevitably ruined. Give yourself away and you will be saved.” He says, “If you are ashamed of me, if, when you hear this call, you turn the other way, I also will look the other way when I come again as God without disguise. If anything whatever is keeping you from God and from me, whatever it is, throw it away. If it is your eye, pull it out. If it is your hand, cut it off. If you put yourself first you will be last. Come to me everyone who is carrying a heavy load. I will set that right. Your sins, all of them, are wiped out. I can do that. I am Rebirth. I am Life. Eat me, drink me, I am your Food. And finally, do not be afraid, I have overcome the whole Universe.” That is the issue.

Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent & Easter
Plough Publishing House

Acts 2:1-4, 31-33

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

(Peter said), “Seeing what was ahead, (David) spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

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.