

# First Threshings

## First Mennonite Church

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A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord – and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

Isaiah 11:1-5

“We must educate our people to the truth that having more and more things is not the true measure of a good life. What makes life more meaningful and joyful are spiritual values, which help us to respect our rivers, mountains, sea, and one another.”

Pastor Kumalau Tawali  
Church of South India

There were benefits to having Jim’s client’s tiny house in our back yard. These last months, the deck attached to it was the perfect place to go around suppertime. Jim’s workday was winding down and I could be outside catching up with him. The deck was high enough to be away from some of the bugs closer to the ground – the breeze came through nicely as I enjoyed a glass of cool water, the cozy slatted roof overhead.

But the biggest advantage of the tiny house in our little back yard was meeting people. Granted, four-plus years is not a long time to have met all of Hillsboro residents. But, if we were to live here another decade, we would not have met some of the people who stopped by to see it! I had no idea so many different kinds of people were among us, both here in Hillsboro and countywide. Rustling together a meal or cleaning up my own kitchen, I would look out the window to yet another car stopped in the alley, a man or woman crawling out, already looking at some aspect of the tiny house that had caught their eye before they had even shut their car door. What I know now is that there are all sorts of people who live around here, people who do not run in the circles of Mennonite churches or ball games, or public school events. I am grateful that a combination of steel, wood and glass in our backyard led them to our doors.

Truth be told, in addition to learning to know more people, Jim and I came to notice something just beyond or underlying all the visits we had – friends, neighbors and these new people included – all of us are curious about a different way ahead, maybe a better way ahead. 95% of those who visited the tiny house would never live in one themselves. But we sensed that almost 100% of them are looking for a right and good way to live all aspects of their lives – financially, socially and environmentally. Tiny-house living is just one answer to a question that we all have: can we imagine a way that builds rather than tears down our God-given gift of a beautiful land on which to life and love?

We are both glad the days of the tiny-house-in-our-backyard are done – we are delighted to turn our affections towards our own home that has waited patiently for attention. But I am grateful for the new idea that Jim and owner, Katherine, ventured into. She may be the only one we know who’s living the tiny-house life at the moment, but we all learned new things, saw new faces and stirred our spirits to keep dreaming about a God-honoring life we can all move toward.

*Pastor Susan*

November 2015

## **MINISTRIES COUNCIL MINUTES**

**October 22, 2015**

**Present:** Pastor Susan, Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship), Joel Klaassen (Stewardship), Pam Bartel (Hospitality), Tim Frye (Discernment), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Laura Paulus (Care), Glen Diener (Treasurer), Pat Bartel (Secretary).

**Absent:** Keith Harder (Vision), Hank Unruh (Youth Pastor)

**Opening prayer/meditation:** Doug Miller

**Minutes of September 17, 2015 meeting were accepted as distributed.**

**Committee Reports. Worship:** Met October 6: considering incorporating changes to our services during Advent, in response to Listening Sessions suggestions; several people are interested to join the committee; they have a good group of leaders for children's storytime.

**Nurture:** People are needed to help in some classes and in the nursery on Wednesday evenings. Will start accumulating items for student end-of-semester boxes (Derek Kelsey and Grant Knoll). **Mission:** Susan has been working with Susie Kliewer regarding Mission Sunday; Susan visited with Michelle Armster (Mission Sunday speaker) at the MCC Central States office. HiFY will join adults in the Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour when Armster will give an overview of her MCC work, focusing on Jeremiah 31:15-17, (future hope for your children). She's working with Discernment to find someone to promote an earth care program for our church; she was impressed with the movie *From Paycheck to Paycheck* that Circles showed Tuesday (October 15): seven people from our church attended.

**Care:** They have received a \$500 match with Everence for one family and will try for a second Everence loan for another family. Katherine (Goering) Hamm has agreed to join the committee: may add another member. They would appreciate more people providing whole or partial meals: coordinate through Laura.

**Hospitality:** The church retreat September 26-27 (theme *Competition and the good that comes out of it*) was much enjoyed by the 39 who attended; they will plan the after-service Christmas Eve gathering. **Stewardship:** Met October 8: they have a snow removal plan; approved the HiFY project *except* that the youth will not be allowed to paint the doors – rather, new doors, which they can paint, will be installed; will check out the Christmas lights soon; some hall lights need replacing. Their budget has been kept flat: will have to plan an increase to include next year's audit. Will move the church's blueprints to the filing cabinet in the northeast closet on the main floor; need input from Michael Dunn (Sounds Great in McPherson) regarding the clarity of the sanctuary sound system. Next scheduled meeting is November 5 at 7:00 p.m.; Doug and Susan will attend.

**Council Reports. Discernment:** Met October 13.

Discussed ministry opportunities still to be filled: Ministry Team Leaders (MTLs) need to inform them of all committees and subcommittees that need replacements (i.e., make sure subcommittee members have been contacted); new committee members would start in January. Would like to have Jason Klanderud provide video work, as needed. **Vision.** Susan reported that: the full VC hasn't met this month but they still want to plan a congregational meeting (date unknown). **Coordinating Cabinet:** Met today although Keith was absent: reflected on last night's congregational meeting regarding homosexuality; about 23 attended. The meeting's two main purposes were: (1) to help inform our delegates who'll be voting at the WDC Assembly of our congregation's stand, and (2) how to continue to be church together when we don't agree. Several informational sheets were handed out including Rainbow Mennonite Church's July 2014 resolution to "...*uphold the right of individual congregations to discern how homosexuality will be subject to Biblical interpretation...and that pastors, with the affirmation of their congregations...may officiate or refuse to officiate ceremonies...regardless of the sexual orientation of those being united.*" For our delegates to feel the pulse of our congregation we are invited to, anonymously, fill out a Yes or No ballot on the above. It is being considered whether to ask voters to identify themselves as members or regular-attender/non-members. It was agreed that the perspective of anyone who's committed to our church should be valued. Also at next Wednesday's meeting, delegates will be invited to report on what has transpired at previous WDC meetings they've attended in preparation for the upcoming Assembly. This year, given the size of our membership, our delegates have ten votes between them. Traditionally, our delegates have each voted as he/she felt led; they should feel free to vote their conscience – but, given this topic, ideally, they should also consider the varied perspectives of our congregation. It was agreed that our congregation would appreciate hearing a report about the Assembly and the vote on Wednesday, November 4 (after the Assembly). **Treasurer.** We have a positive balance; wrapping up accounting totals for Arts & Crafts Fair sales: four pounds of peppernuts left to sell; is working on the 2016 budget. **Youth Pastor:** Hank was absent. **Pastor:** She appreciates the Wednesday evening congregational input (October 21 and (upcoming) 28) to visit regarding the "homosexual" LGBTQ issue that delegates will be voting on at the WDC Assembly; Asia will preach November 1; Michelle Armster will preach November 8 (Mission Sunday). Becky is: (1) going through our church's membership records, (2) filling in our church's documents of the last 15-20 years for the GC/MCUSA

archives in North Newton and (3) if approved, will create a photo collection of current members and regular attenders using one of our bulletin boards; Cheryl Bartel would like to attend our November 12 meeting to start discussing a 50th celebration of our church building. Reminded MTLs to update their agenda calendars for their ministry areas, to submit at the January 21, 2016 meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS.** Doug and Glen made changes to the College/Seminary Scholarship policies: these were approved unanimously with one abstention. Final versions will be made available for public viewing/use.

**Next meeting:** November 12, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.  
(*The official version of the minutes is available in the church office.*)

### November Events

- 1 4 p.m. Soup Supper with Trinity:  
Judy Harder speaker
- 5 7 p.m. Stewardship committee meeting
- 6 TC: 9:45 a.m. Lifelong Learning: *The Many-Changing Faces of Kansas Weather*:
- 8 Mission Sunday: SS/worship speaker: Michelle Armster, MCC Central States  
Carry-in meal  
BC: 3-5 p.m. Krehbiel Auditorium:  
KIPCOR viewing of *Chasing Ice*.
- 12 7 p.m. Ministries Council Meeting
- 18 **Last Wednesday evening this semester**  
6:15 p.m. Supper  
7/7:05 p.m. Activities
- 19 7:00 p.m. Worship committee meeting
- 20 TC: 9:45 a.m., *On Stage, Back Stage: The working life of National Geographic photographer Jim Richardson, as told by his spouse, Kathy Richardson.*
- 22 TC: 4 p.m. Fall choral concert
- 25-29 BC/TC: Thanksgiving break

### Early December events:

- 2 BC: 11 a.m.-noon *Messiah Sing*, BCMC
- 3 TC: 7 p.m. Instrumental Christmas concert
- 4 BC: 5:30-9 p.m. Christmas Gala  
TC: 9:45 a.m. Lifelong Learning: *December Delights – a holiday wrap-up*
- 5 BC: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 5 Places of Christmas
- 6 BC: 3-6 p.m. Faculty organ recital  
TC: 7 p.m. Handel's *Messiah*  
BC: 8-8:30 p.m. Lighting of the Green

The first Sunday of Advent is November 29.  
We look forward to sharing Communion.  
Watch for more information about supporting the work of Mennonite Central Committee during Advent, especially by providing comforters to those in need – and be sure to consider joining the Advent Ensemble.

### Celebrating Advent

Looking back through family photos, I am reminded that there were several years when the Advent wreath candles in our home were not the purple and pink combination, nor the red and green combination. Instead, each candle was a brown, an ivory, and two hues inbetween. Rather than love, peace, joy and hope, those years the candles stood for all the colors of people's skin here on earth. Over the Advent weeks, it was lovely to see the candle flames go from one to two to three, then to four, until at last all God's children of every color were blessed by the coming of Jesus.

*Pastor Susan*

### Advent & Christmas Day: a short history

It is thought that, sometime in the fifth century, Advent was introduced to the church as a six-week fast to help Christians prepare themselves spiritually for Christmas. It was seen as an equivalent of Lent, so Advent has sometimes been referred to as the Winter Lent. In the sixth century, it was reduced to its current length of four weeks.

The focus of the entire season (which begins the Sunday nearest to St. Andrew's Day, November 30) is to celebrate the birth of Jesus the Christ in his first Advent, and to anticipate the return of Christ the King in his second Advent. This year, the first Sunday of Advent is November 29.

### Colors of Advent

Historically, purple has been the main color used for Advent because it reflects penitence, fasting, and the color of royalty to welcome the advent of the King (Jesus Christ). Recently, some churches have used other colors – for instance, they mark the third Sunday of Advent with pink or rose, colors that represent joy. Many Protestant churches use blue to distinguish the season of Advent from Lent.

### St. Andrew

Andrew is considered to be Jesus' first disciple. He was introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist and spent several hours listening to him; he then went to

his brother, Simon Peter, and said, “We have found the Messiah” and took him to Jesus (John 1:35-42).

The tradition is that Andrew was martyred on November 30 late in the first century, and was crucified on a diagonal cross (because he said he wasn’t worthy to be crucified upright, as was Jesus).

Tradition, also, has it that Roman Emperor Constantine (b. 280 and emperor from 312-337) issued an edict that protected Christians in the empire, and ordered Andrew’s relics to be moved to Constantinople; an angel appeared in a dream to St. Rule (a Greek monk) and told him to take some of the relics to the ends of the earth for safekeeping. He obediently took a tooth, an arm bone, a kneecap and some fingers from Andrew’s tomb and sailed north with the remains until he was shipwrecked off the east coast of Scotland. There he established the city of St. Andrew’s (now the location of a world-famous golf course!), and the relics were placed in a specially constructed chapel.

In 1160, the chapel was replaced by St. Andrew’s Cathedral, which became an important medieval pilgrimage destination. Much of the cathedral is in ruins today, but St. Rule’s Tower is one of the buildings still standing.

St. Andrew’s relics were probably destroyed during the Scottish Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century, when Anabaptism came to be), but a plaque among the ruins of the cathedral shows modern visitors where the relics were kept.

Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and now we know why Scotland’s national flag is a white diagonal cross on a blue background.

### December 25th

How do we know Jesus was born on December 25?

For almost 300 years after Jesus’ death, there was no mention by anyone (including Christians) of Jesus’ birthday; commemorating birthdays wasn’t considered important in those days. Around 200 A.D., Tertullian of Carthage reported the calculation that the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (the day of the crucifixion according to the Gospel of John) in the year Jesus died was equivalent to March 25 in the Roman (solar) calendar. March 25, being nine months before December 25, was later recognized as the Feast of the Annunciation to commemorate Jesus’ conception.

Given this thinking, Jesus was believed to have been conceived and crucified on the same day of the year and dates Jesus’ birth to the winter solstice. (This idea appears in an anonymous Christian treatise titled *On Solstices and Equinoxes*, which is thought to come from fourth-century North Africa.)

Along with deductions that Jesus was conceived in spring (some said March, some April and others May), two birth dates (not corroborated by any ancient Christian writings, however) were widely recognized – December 25 in the western Roman empire and January 6 in the east (especially Egypt and Asia Minor). In his treatise *On the Trinity*, St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) wrote, “[Jesus] is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which he was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never man laid, neither before him nor since. But he was born, according to tradition, upon December the 25th.”

So, why did December 25 become the most popular of the two suggested dates to commemorate Jesus’ birth?

It turns out that the majority of scholars consider it to be the more logical one: the date was borrowed from pagan celebrations. The Romans had their mid-winter Saturnalia festival in late December and barbarian peoples of northern and western Europe kept holidays at similar times. Then, what became the final straw for church leaders was that the Roman emperor Aurelian established a feast of the birth of Sol Invictus (the Unconquered Sun), on December 25. Accordingly, it is thought that early Christians deliberately chose December 25 to encourage the spread of Christmas and Christianity throughout the Roman world: they reckoned that, if Christmas resembled a pagan holiday, more pagans would be open to both the holiday and the God whose birth it celebrated.

“In the end we are left with a question,” concludes Andrew McGowan in his December 2002 article *“How December 25 Became Christmas”* and reprinted at ([www.biblehistorydaily.com](http://www.biblehistorydaily.com)): “We cannot be entirely sure. Elements of the *festival* that developed from the fourth century until modern times may well derive from pagan traditions. Yet the actual date might really derive more from Judaism—from Jesus’ death at Passover, and from the rabbinic notion that great things might be expected, again and again, at the same time of the year—than from paganism. Then again, in this notion of cycles and the return of God’s redemption, we may perhaps also be touching upon something that the pagan Romans who celebrated *Sol Invictus*, and many other peoples since, would have understood and claimed for their own, too.”

**Andrew McGowan** is Dean and President of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale and McFaddin Professor of Anglican Studies at Yale Divinity School. For a full account, read his book, *How December 25 became Christmas*.

It seems the date of Christ's birth is an enigma wrapped in a mystery! For me initially, I found it disappointing – appalling, in fact – to think that our Christmas celebrations would be recognized by pagans, but God moves in mysterious ways, and there's no doubt but that his ways are the best ways. I have decided I am open to accepting them. **PB**

Other sources: [www.timeanddate.com](http://www.timeanddate.com)  
[www.biblicalarchaeology.org](http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org)

### **Wake from your sleep! Introduction to Advent**

St. Paul tells the Romans, “You know what time it is, now is the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers.” And Jesus tells his disciples, “Keep therefore awake for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” They're not saying this to frighten us, but to make sure we don't miss the wonder that is Emmanuel. Advent is a wake-up call to the Church, a time when we're prodded into beginning again, taking more notice of our spiritual surroundings, once again getting going on the work of the kingdom in the world. For some of us, if we've neglected the spiritual side of our lives, this wake-up call is going to jar us into awareness, and at times we will want to pull a metaphorical pillow over our heads and pretend that it's still dark. For others of us, it's a welcome opportunity for a fresh start.

The season of Advent calls us to wake up and be aware of the presence of God in our lives and in our world. We need to respond.

During Advent we recall both the beginning of Jesus' time on this earth and his return in glory. Our readings remind us that we who have been baptized into the life and death of Jesus have nothing to fear from the end of time. This is not to say we have the luxury of waiting passively for the Second Coming, secure – even complacent – in the confidence that Jesus was born, died on the cross, and saved us, and all we have to do is wait until he comes to take us home. The promise of the Second Coming contains an insistent challenge. The Gospels show us the way to work for the fullness of the kingdom.

Diane M. Houdek  
*Advent with St. Francis*

### **Hiking – Making Beds – Visiting – and Glimpsing Pope Francis**

Our home away from home during the month of September was the International Guest House in Washington D.C. IGH is a hospitality service of the Mennonite Church, welcoming people from all countries and cultures. (See exterior and interior photos at [intlguesthouse.mennonite.net](http://intlguesthouse.mennonite.net).)

Keith and I worked as short term volunteer staff, joining directors Ray and Mary Kratz and co-worker Sothea Da who are serving as year-long volunteers. Sothea is a young adult from Cambodia serving with MCC.

All five of us took turns with tasks such as cleaning, making beds, serving breakfast and evening tea, plus managing reservations. We alternated shifts taking either the 7-3 or the 3-11 shift with the exception of enjoying one day off each week and additional free time on Sundays.

Our twelve-page instruction booklet outlined details and expectations for creating a well-run bed and breakfast environment for our guests. Up to 15 guests are able to stay in the house for one night or for the maximum two-week stay.

Our guests came from many places and for many reasons which made for lively conversations and memorable interactions. We met people from Liberia, Morocco, Japan, Pakistan, Netherlands, Sweden, South Australia, Kenya, Ireland, and Germany. We also met folks from Seattle, Tennessee, New York, California, Colorado, Indiana.

We visited with Quakers, Catholics, Muslims and Mennonites. Guests came because of the Pope's visit, as political activists, as tourists, as students and researchers, and in transition.

Then there were also three jazz band members playing in a nearby night club, the homeless woman who regularly feeds the birds near the Capitol, the four Mennonite women having a reunion while seeing the DC sights and a former Goshen College president visiting friends.

Encounters with the many guests were highlights of our time in DC.

We also enjoyed visiting museums, Mt. Vernon, Washington National Cathedral, Kennedy Center, Arlington Cemetery, Library of Congress, etc. Experiencing DC during the Papal visit was another highlight. We managed to be on the parade route and get a great video while visiting with others while waiting for the arrival of the popemobile.

The same evening we attended a magnificent concert in the Pope's honor at the Kennedy Center.

There's more! We were delighted to be near a large park area so we could keep up our walking and hiking. The guest house is located 4½ miles from the

Capitol and we had easy access to a bus line when we did not walk.

We continue to be grateful for opportunities to travel together as well as to return to our church and home here in Hillsboro. *Judy Harder*

**“I want to help them (students) find fulfillment in graphic arts – to connect with it on different levels so it remains interesting throughout their lives.”**

*Getting to know Derek Hamm*

Derek’s parents are Brenda (Friesen) and Rod Hamm, and he’s a nephew of Nadine Friesen. Brenda is artistically creative and the way Derek described his dad’s handwriting it sounds like it could be classified as calligraphy, although he’s more into organization and sales than being artistically creative. So, while Derek has inherited artistic genes, he wasn’t initially interested in art. He said, “I didn’t do art in high school, I was more into sports – basketball – but, my senior year, there was a course with computers with a design component to it and I found myself really getting into it and spending ‘way more time on it than it required. And *the* art student in the class remarked on what a good job I was doing; she told me, “You’re really good at this – you should do graphic design.” When he enrolled at Tabor College, he was considering a pre-medical degree, and he started off taking classes like calculus.

Towards the end of his freshman year, Derek began to feel stuck and that he was being put in a box by people who’d known him all his life because they’d comment on how much he’d changed when, in fact, the only change he was aware of was that he’d started to wear glasses. He grinned. He wanted to spread his wings – find out who he’d be in a different environment – so he decided to move away from Hillsboro – make new friends – have new experiences – and try his hand at studying graphic design. He transferred to John Brown University, an interdenominational Christian liberal arts college in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. “They had these courses that went deeper into video and computer modeling,” he explained. “I just took the graphic design stuff.” He then went on to say, “I feel really lucky to have found the art and design field and to realize, even in my sophomore year, that I felt a sense of purpose. It sent me off on a trajectory early on.”

JBU did require students to take some religion classes and one class he took was Evangelical Theology. When meeting people whose backgrounds were different from his, that class helped him figure out how to connect with them and not feel like he was a minority because he was a Mennonite. He said, “When I realized that Mennonite wasn’t the default, it made me appreciate it for myself and come to really identify with it.”

One of Derek’s JBU professors had worked at Hallmark 30 years previously and suggested he apply to work there – and, more importantly, Derek showing his portfolio at a review in Kansas City, led to him to being

offered an internship at Hallmark after he graduated. “It’s a 3-month program,” he said. “It’s like grad school that they pay you for, and it’s a good experience. Then they hired me on fulltime and I worked on their website.” And he added, “I guess there were a dozen or so of us in the group and we’d do, like, the development coding. We’d make small updates to their website maybe weekly, and larger re-designs of the whole thing every few months.” He smiled. “Hallmark has three to four-thousand employees so whenever you make major changes it’s like trying to turn a big ship.” Not only that, but one thousand or so fall into the creative fields including writing and illustrating – a difficult group to satisfy, no doubt.

Derek was amazed to find out that, at that time, the average length of time that an employee had been there was seventeen years. And he told me about an 80-year old woman who had been painting ‘flowers and bunnies’ for them for sixty years. We digressed a bit when, visualizing her sitting at a table for eight hours a day, painting (or mulling over possible creations) I asked how her health was. He said it was quite a trek from one end of the building to the other and she’d have had to walk around quite a bit so she didn’t seem creaky.

Derek also worked on the marketing design side. “Being Hallmark,” he said, “they had ad(vertising) agencies for big campaigns but, for more regular updates, they have an in-house marketing design team. We weren’t making the products, we were presenting those products.”

We talked about things like card designs – whether the words fit the designs or the other way around – and he said, “They have writers create the messages they use, and then they work on designs to fit them.”

I asked where he lived in Kansas City. He grinned and told me that, for the first 6 months, he rented a room in a house then, one day when he was wandering around neighborhoods, he came across one called *West Side* and saw a very low-key, hand-painted sign with a phone number on it. Intrigued, he decided to call and ended up living in a ‘room’ that used to be a livery stable.

He said the *Livery* was built in the late 1800s as a commercial stable-yard and there were all these long, narrow rooms (17’ wide by 70’ long) that fronted on to a courtyard with a brazier in the center which was the social focus of the neighborhood. (Given the odd dimensions of the rooms, did they house a horse and

carriage in each one? Who knows!) They were unfurnished and very Spartan with rough cement walls and floor, and the only daylight came in the front end, so the rest of the room was lighted by little more than a bulb or two hanging from the ceiling. He bought some rugs and some second-hand furniture from Marion Ogden (Oggie) in Marion and moved in. (After he told me this he laughed and said he still has it in storage.) He found the group living at the *Livery* to be quite eclectic, dynamic and interesting and he enjoyed the view, looking down on the city below.

“Hallmark was a great place to work, especially for a first job,” he admitted. He felt very fortunate that, through his professor’s introduction, he was able to just show up there and to be immediately offered work that he enjoyed. He was there about 3½ years then he felt rather overwhelmed by all the older people who’d been working there for many years, and felt like he might start to fossilize. “It felt like I needed to try something else,” he said decisively. He found out that Bruce Plank was leaving Tabor and it seemed a good opportunity to interview for his job.

“I took one class from Bruce before I left Tabor, and we got along really well.” Derek appreciates the basic structure of the graphic arts program that Bruce set up, “And,” he said, “I definitely want to keep things he had going – but, then create my own path. I have tried to keep the elements that should be kept and update the things I think should be done. We do things differently – but I love learning! At Hallmark, part of the art job is to sit in one place for several hours, so I would look at stuff and read and learn. And all that became really useful when I started teaching; it was nice to be compiling information to share with others instead of just hoard in my brain. That’s something that’s fun about teaching: I’m doing research and it’s part of my job to figure out how to present new things. It’s fun and it’s scary to have something you care about and enjoy, and share it with other people: when it works it’s good, but when they don’t feel as enthusiastic, it’s bad.” He grimaced.

I changed the subject and asked him what students have taught him. He thought for a bit then said, “I think what students have taught me is how to work with people, and how to draw good things out of people, which usually means being the first safety-net if they get in trouble – but not micro-managing. This is the first time I have ever been responsible for other people’s experiences beside my own, and it has been a learning curve, but also really good to think about.”

“Have you taken any pedagogy classes?”

Derek laughed briefly and said, “To get this job, I have an understanding with Tabor that I’ll get my Master of Art & Social Practice degree so I’m working on that while teaching – so I’ve just started my third year of a three-year program through Portland State University in Oregon. He took his pedagogy class in

January 2014 and was pleased to find out he’s doing some things right, but he learned some things too.”

“How many classes do you have to take?”

“We do three quarters a year – fall, winter and spring. I go up there for one month of the year from mid-May to mid-June. I live in Portland. And then I have made several shorter trips for things. They have this set-up for flexible residency, so you’re there for some of the year and then you have freedom to be other places. The Art & Social Practices degree isn’t specifically related to graphic design – it’s more a general MFA (Master of Fine Arts) in art, with an emphasis on how particular art interacts with the public – in schools or other institutions – with people in the process of creating it. It’s about engagement with things outside the art world, close to what a museum’s education department does – how we bring this to people, particularly: Do we make these things that we have accessible to a broader group of people? It was nice to bring those two things together.”

Derek talked about how important cards have become in our lives. Part of him feels it should be easy for people to write a short note to Grandma but he acknowledges some people struggle to find the right words to say, so it’s good there are card companies like Hallmark that provide messages that fit one’s needs.

He ended by saying, “I love that I’m teaching graphic design at a liberal arts college where the idea is you don’t just learn it as a single subject but how it connects and engages with other disciplines – so, making students think about that, and helping them navigate through it all and see the whole picture.”

To end our conversation, I asked Derek what his goals are in his job and he said, “I want to help them (students) find fulfillment in graphic arts – to connect with it on different levels so it remains interesting throughout their lives.”

*P.S. This interview started in December 2014 so, given Derek’s busy life, it has gone through a long incubation. Another long incubation has been his relationship with Katherine Goering – from their being freshmen together at Tabor College, to Derek transferring to John Brown University and then working in Kansas City where they met briefly through a mutual friend, to Katherine moving to Arkansas, and then both of them moving to Hillsboro to pursue their relationship. Nadine Friesen officiated at their wedding which was held at Goerings’ place in the country on October 10, a gorgeous fall day. Acknowledging their journey to this point, Derek ended by saying, “Now we’re in the same space.” They both smiled.*

*Derek will graduate from Oregon State University-Portland in May 2016, and Katherine said the family plans to travel up there to help him celebrate.*

*We, your church family, wish you God’s richest blessings on the rest of your journey together, Derek and Katherine – and, may you continue to be a blessing to God.*

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**Guided Thoughts, Prayers and Actions**  
**offered by**  
**The Center for the Study of C. S. Lewis and friends**  
**and**  
**“Season of Promises”, Advent Daily Devotional by Mitch Finley**

*The rock bottom message of Advent is Hope.*  
MF (b. 1945)

I set my heart on God with all my trust and with all my might... He wills that our hearts should be lifted high above the depths of earthly and vain sorrows, and rejoice in him... He loves us and enjoys us, and so he wills that we love him and enjoy him, and firmly trust him; and all shall be well.

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

Make a list of the things you are hoping for. This may include advancements in your career, the success of an important relationship, the completion of a project, or any number of things. When you have finished the list, look over it. Circle one item and say a brief prayer for God's help in bringing this about. If praying feels uncomfortable, consider whether the item you have chosen is something you should hope for. Ask God for clarity. Resolve to hope for those things that bring you closest to God.

CSL

*Advent is a quiet season. Listen carefully. Advent carries a quiet message, it says that God is near, our God who is unlimited love, unconditional love, is near.*

MF

Try some form of contemplative prayer this week. One way is to choose a word that reflects what you feel you need from God right now (one syllable is best), e.g., *peace, love, strength*. Get comfortable in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. When thoughts come crashing in repeat the word silently to yourself as a symbol of your intention to sit adoringly in God's presence. The point is not to “get” something out of this time of silence, though you may find yourself relaxed afterward. One of the main functions of contemplative prayer is spiritual detoxification: letting go of the junk that clogs our souls. Try the one word (centering) prayer for a few days. Another option is to focus on a

mental image (or icon). A third option is to repeat over and over, slowly and lovingly, the Jesus Prayer (either silently or aloud): Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me, a sinner. CSL

The time of action does not differ from the time of prayer. I possess God as peacefully in the bustle of my kitchen, where sometimes several people are asking me for different things at the same time, as I do upon my knees before the Holy Sacrament.

Brother Lawrence (1614-1691)

*To open our heart to the true spirit of Advent is to open our heart to the gospel, the Good News that invites us to a new way of thinking and a new way of living.*

MF

Sometimes it may seem to us that there is no purpose in our lives, that going day after day for years to this office or that school or factory is nothing else but waste and weariness. But it may be that God has sent us there because but for us Christ would not be there. If our being there means that Christ is there, that alone makes it worthwhile.

Caryll Hartlander (1901-1954)

*Advent is a time to cultivate genuine humility.*

MF

The person who cares nothing for praise or blame knows great inward peace, and it is easy for the person whose conscience is clean to find contentment and quiet. Praise does not make you holier than you are, nor blame more wicked. You are exactly what you are – you cannot be said to be any better than you are in the eyes of God.

Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)

All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timelines 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

