

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

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From the hands of your
earth and the lap of your sky,
your gifts are poured on us
each day.

Your arms surround us with
your care; accept our love and
thanks, we pray. Amen, amen,
amen.

Janzen/Warkentin

Hymnal: A Worship Book

No. 97

The righteous give without sparing

Proverb 26b

The autumn turning of the leaves cannot come without me remembering one day during the fall of 1979. I was working for the Bethel College library at the time as acquisitions librarian. Martha Stucky was the head librarian and she ran her “ship” with certainty, clarity, and a glowing sense of joy. Being a librarian was a passion for Martha, and those of us who worked under her were the beneficiaries.

Although Martha was simply joyous about all times of the year, autumn was her particular favorite. She had favorite fall books, favorite fall poems and she had favorite fall cookies.

One morning during the autumn of 1979, Martha brought treats for the morning break at the library and it is the sugar cookies I will never forget. They were regular sugar cookies, good ones, but what was memorable was that she had divided up the dough, colored it in fall leaf colors, then gently put the dough back together, blending the colors only a bit. The result? As she rolled out the dough and cut the dough in leaf shapes, the colors gathered in each cookie were simply stunning.

It was Martha’s passion for her job as a librarian that never leaves my memory. The leaf-colored, leaf-shaped cookies are one part of the way she filled the library with love. She was called to her work and she delighted in sharing the library and her creative love of life with us all.

First Mennonite people are people of passion. We could go down the list and I expect we could all name what each one of us is passionate about. One thing we are passionate about together is our community. In fact, I wonder sometimes if our love for community sometimes outweighs our ability to share our individual passions. We know that, politically and theologically, we are not of one mind.

As important as community is to us, is there room for us to share our passions from time to time? Is there a way we can listen to any one of us talk about what fills us with clarity and joy and purpose? If passion wakes us up at night out of anguish for some broken part of the world which has become our passion, can we hear that from each other? Could hearing each other’s passions, even if we strongly disagree with them, actually make our community stronger?

I think the answer is yes. The strength of my memory of Martha Stucky’s joy and passion for her work and for all the people who came into the library makes me think we all would be richer for sharing the passions we feel. Yes, the cookies we get to see and taste are yummy and beautiful, but these are expressions of a deeper well of joy that God offers us as we live full of the passion of our souls, souls given by God as gifts to the world in all seasons.

Pastor Susan

November 2016

Ministries Council Minutes

October 13, 2016

Present: Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Pastor Susan, Pam Bartel (Hospitality), Marlin Bartel (Vision representative), Tim Frye (Discernment), Douglas Graber (Mission), Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Pat Bartel (Secretary)

Absent: Hank Unruh (Youth Minister), Laura Paulus (Care), Joel Klaassen (Stewardship).

Minutes of September 8 meeting were approved as distributed.

Committee Reports. Worship. Met September 25: all members have recommitted to serve for 2017. They propose that their budget remain unchanged: need Ministries Council (MC) input regarding funding the new hymnals (to be distributed in 2020): possible funding sources are Stewardship's contingency fund, undesignated endowment/memorial monies, Mission & Service budget and/or a special congregational offering. Holly will find out the projected cost of the new hymnals for a target figure. A church-wide discussion is needed to discern interest in the new hymnal before purchase. If we decide to go ahead, Worship Committee would introduce some of the songs during ensuing worship services. Judy Harder is planning for the Advent season. Sunday morning, October 30, the plan is to interview Erica Buller and Andrew Sensenig via Skype concerning their transition to California. Next meeting: October 25.

Nurture. Judy Harder is doing a great job with the children on Wednesday nights emphasizing kindness. Tracy has declined payment for her work and no one is being paid for their assistance on Sundays, so the only people being paid are the Tabor College students (Wednesday nights). It is important that two teachers always be available to teach during Children's Church. Concern about the future of the Committee: Jan and Julie Linnens plan to step down at the end of the year and Tracy doesn't want to assume the leadership role. Should it be restructured? If so, how?

Mission. Working toward November events regarding U.S. prisons; speakers are lined up for the Wednesday meeting (October 26) and the November 13 worship service. Douglas attended a seminar at Goshen College given by professors who reported their (successful) experiences with summer interns working toward changing those "outside" to re-evaluate their perspectives of inmates; he has a copy of the syllabus and materials they use. A specific agenda for Mission Sunday (November 13) (Ben Kreider, speaker) is still being planned. From November 1-15, MCC's collection of boards with quotes of children who have parents in prison will be displayed. Douglas has a copy of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle

Alexander with a study guide. Cake decorations' theme for the Mission Sunday meal should focus on release rather than imprisonment. **Care.** The October 9 baby/wedding shower went well. Several people with private pastoral needs would appreciate our prayers. **Hospitality.** Haven't met recently; helped serve at the shower on Sunday; Wednesday evening meals are going well, also last Sunday's carry-in. Will plan to arrange an event after the football season is over. **Stewardship.** Met October 6; discussed (with Worship) requests to provide more areas in the sanctuary for wheelchairs – i.e., benches will have to be shortened. This will be on the annual meeting agenda for congregational discussion/approval. Will make changes required by our insurance audit. Funk's Electric will update our breaker boxes. Committee budget (\$40 less than their 2016 budget) will be submitted at MC's November meeting. Pastor Susan's microphone headset is being repaired. Phones are difficult to upgrade, and WiFi is not accessible everywhere in the building: Friesen Computers has submitted a quote to upgrade the system and bundle it with our computers. They have talked with Hank about the youth room improvements, and the need for updated white boards in the Sunday school rooms.

Council Reports. Discernment. Met October 12; since several people need to be replaced on various committees, they would like Ministries Team Leaders to help them contact people. **Vision.** They do not have an official meeting scheduled; they have informed Discernment that they still need another member.

Coordinating Cabinet. Met October 12. Cheryl Bartel is working on organizing an event, or series of events, next year to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the current church building. The exact date is June but, because people disperse in summer, under discussion is to have an open time between January and April. Former congregants have shown interest in a celebration but no decision has been made on format or details. One idea is to set up a designated bulletin board or to have a page on the church's website which would contain such postings as recipes, memories, scanned-in letters and old photos. Pastor Susan reviews the youth pastor annually, and Coordinating Cabinet and a member of Vision will review their interview. Alexanderwohl M.C. recently reviewed how to address the possibility of an intruder on their premises. Doug has been serving on a Tabor College task force discussing this issue and he suggested that our church start considering how to address it. The congregation will be apprised of any definitive strategy. Doug plans to attend a Hesston College reflection on the 2015 shooting at the Excel plant and how communities under stress should find

healing and help. MC retreat is Sunday, October 23 at 2:30 in the chapel. Pastor Susan and Doug will help prepare us for Pastor Brett Klingenberg's presentation "Creek Crossings" to our congregation and members of Trinity M.C.. The annual MC USA conference is being held in Orlando, Fla., June 2017. We should start looking for people to be delegates; financial support would be considered on an individual basis since there is no budgetary line item for this. Asia is helping to plan the youth program, and Tim will be attending with her. Pastors are not automatically delegates (per our policy manual). HiFY plans to go.

Treasurer. Income during the last month has been strong. A Peppernut Project Income/Expense Summary showed: 2016 budget income of \$3,448.09 and a monthly transfer to the budget (November 2015 through October 2016) of \$287.34. The October 9 Care Fund special offering was over \$1,500.

Youth Pastor. HiFY is doing well; continuing to cook Bible foods on Sunday mornings; Wednesday (October 16) is the first GAB Session where they are splitting up; HiFY soup supper will be held November 20; youth room floor needs to be repaired/replaced. HiFY have raised most of the funds needed for the improvements to the two rooms they are using.

Pastor. Brett Klingenberg will be addressing common shifts/changes in congregations and how to be more self-aware regarding ours. MC is the leadership group for our church so this is one place where changes and responses to new realities within our congregation will be decided. Susan meets monthly with Pastor Norma Duerksen (Trinity M.C.) to stay aware of our congregations' possible joint activities. Any ideas will be checked with FMC Coordinating Cabinet and likely also with MC.

Old Business. An announcement will be included in future bulletins that Pat Bartel is stepping down from being compiler/editor of *First Threshings*, that M.C. is interested to know if anyone would like to take it over and, if so, that they should feel free to follow their preferred format. Policy Manual annual edits: MTLs should either hand these to Doug or e-mail them to him. Doug makes the changes then distributes the edited pages.

New Business. Doug and Holly will be away during January (until 1/24/17). MC will meet January 26, before the annual meeting (January 29).

Next meeting: 7:00 p.m. Thursday, November 10 2016.

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

November Events

- 3 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Cttee/budget meeting
- 9 Celebrating Kids for Kindness!
8:00 Worship Committee meeting

- 10 7:00 p.m. Ministries Council meeting
- 13 Missions Sunday – carry-in meal
- 16 Last Wednesday evening meal/activities
Advent Ensemble begins rehearsing
- 20 4:00 p.m. Ministerial Alliance/Tabor College
Thanksgiving concert, Hillsboro MB Church
- 24-25 Office closed
- 27 First Sunday of Advent

Advent Thoughts

"Season of Promises" by Mitch Finley

Advent graces the weeks before Christmas, but if we're not careful it gets lost in the holiday shuffle. We all do the holiday shuffle. The weeks before Christmas can be hectic, so full of pre-Christmas activities that we miss its true spirit, which is a spirit of holiness in the midst of the ordinary.

What is Christmas but the celebration of God's love for the ordinary? When the Son of God is born he doesn't come in a spectacular manner, and the first to get the news is a crew of bumpkin shepherds. Jesus is both in the most ordinary circumstances, and he comes into the world in the usual way – "born of a woman," St. Paul reminds us (Gal 4:4). So Advent is a time to remember the holiness of the ordinary.

The ordinary world and ordinary life are so good that God's own Son embraced it for himself. Look around at all the ordinariness in your life. There you are, and it's all holy because God is present in ordinary situations.

Look. Look closely. Look quietly. Look prayerfully. The smallest, most ordinary task is holy. Brother Lawrence, a nobody cook in an obscure 17th century French monastery, turned a little omelette in a pan and saw that it was holy. He picked up a straw from the floor and saw that this was holy. All the ordinary things in your life are holy, too.

God of the ordinary, help me during Advent to be more prayerfully aware of your presence in the ordinary activities of my ordinary day,
Amen.

"During this time, I went to coffee at the Plett's Café with a salesman and found this Plett girl. And that was the start of my real life which has lasted 56 years."

Getting to know Glenn and Janice Goertz

I met with Glenn and Jan at their house one beautiful mid-October afternoon. Jan had made a pot of coffee and she placed a plate of delicious

bite-sized eats on the table. The scene was set for Glenn to start reminiscing.

"I was born in Hillsboro. My parents were Helen and Bruno and I had two brothers, Chester and Leo. Mom died of breast cancer when I was two and a half so I don't remember her. It wasn't until I was 12 years old that my dad married Helen Claassen, a first-grade teacher; that was in '43. She was a wonderful stepmother." He looked at me and said, smiling: "I have no 'step-mother stories' to tell." Then he looked at Jan and added quickly, "And no 'mother-in-law stories' to tell." They both smiled.

"Is there anything else you remember that stands out about your early life?" I asked.

"One memory I have is that we moved our house down Main Street with a steam engine and an International tractor and I was riding inside." He smiled broadly this time. No wonder he was smiling, I thought: that would have been very exciting for a young boy.

"Why did you have to move it?"

"My dad had a Chevy dealership and we moved our house to enlarge the business."

"Do you have any school memories that stand out?"

"School?" Glenn mused, then grinned. "In grade school my dog, Squire, would run to school with me, then he waited by the door, then he'd run home with me at noon, then back to school for the afternoon, then we'd run home together." He laughed at the memory.

"I enjoyed acting in plays also. I particularly remember being in *New York, New York*. And I was Prince Charming in *Sleeping Beauty*."

"Did you have to kiss the princess?"

Glenn laughed rather sheepishly. "Yes. The first time I kissed her at the wrong time so I got to kiss her again." The three of us laughed.

After a pause, he said, "I got a trombone in the fourth grade during the summer. Dad had traded it in on a car deal. I ran over to Mr. Bengston's house – he was our music teacher – and he said, 'We need to get you some lessons.' So I took lessons and I sure enjoyed it. I played in a brass quintet."

"What kinds of things did you do as a family?"

He answered with alacrity. "We played Cribbage, we went on picnics, and we took a trip to California which was a big deal in those days.

"After I graduated from high school, I went to Bethel College. I majored in economics but I had a lot of shop. It took me a while to graduate because I had to work my way through and I was also drafted during this time. In 1953, I was assigned to the medical corps in the army. I went to neuro-psychiatric classes at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, and learned to work on the wards.

That was, like, a six-week school. Then I went to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Aurora, Colorado to work on the ward, training for two months.

"I was in the service from '53 to '55. I went to Japan, then did a short stint in South Korea in the 45th Evacuation Hospital. Then they sent me back to Japan."

Through a series of fortunate circumstances, Glenn was sent on an assignment he enjoyed at Tokyo Army Hospital. Glenn and Jan have several Japanese pictures on their walls which bring back good memories for him.

"After service I finished at Bethel and got a job at Beech (Aircraft) doing quality control for about a year. Then, since Dad was getting older, I came back to Hillsboro and went to work at the Concrete Ready-Mix plant."

"How come you went to work there?"

"In '49 my dad started a concrete business so he was running two businesses. During this time, I went to coffee at the Plett's Café with a salesman and found this Plett girl. And that was the start of my real life which has lasted 56 years. We were married in 1960 and we had this house built in '62." His shop courses at Bethel came in useful then because, although an architect drew up the house plans, Glenn was able to adapt them to be more to their liking and he did some of the mechanical drawings. Looking at Jan, he said, "So we have been in this house 54 years."

Jan decided it was time to intercept Glenn's recollections and catch me up on her early life so she started.

"I was born in Hillsboro to Marie and Menno Plett, and I had two sisters, Lois and Vera, and a brother, Tom. I attended Hillsboro schools all twelve years. When I was in the seventh grade we had a Mr. Klassen for a teacher and he started sports for girls in Hillsboro. We had a softball team and we played basketball intermurals. I also sang in a sextet and other large groups, and began playing 'cello. After high school I attended Tabor (College) where I sang in choir, played in orchestra, and played on the women's basketball team. Glenn and I began dating while I was in college.

"Glenn always worked late and I always worked late: he would come in to the restaurant and drink coffee while I was cleaning up and then take me home."

I wondered how they found the time to get to know each other and Jan smiled and said, "Well, we did spend more time together on weekends.

"I earned my degree in business education. We were married a week after I graduated and moved into our first home above the Gamble Store downtown where we lived for two years until our new home was finished. We honeymooned in the

Ozarks and that's where I took my first golf lesson. I enjoyed it right from the beginning." Jan has been an avid golfer ever since and she and Glenn still play regularly. Not only that, but they introduced their kids and grandkids to it and Jan looked pleased when she said, "And they have done very well and have earned many trophies and medals." I persuaded her to let me include the fact that she has two medalist trophies.

"My first teaching job was at Marion High School," she continued, "where I taught high school business classes for three years." She then went on to describe her job, leaving me breathless. She smiled broadly as she rattled off a list of all her various assignments and responsibilities: "Four class preparations – I taught six classes but two of them were repeats. We wrote our own tests, typed them, and ran them off on a mimeograph." ("Remember those?" She asked me grinning. I did.) "I also typed programs for concerts and plays, took tickets at ball games, sponsored the Pep Club and freshman class, decorated floats, etcetera. Busy, but enjoyable. I loved the high school kids at Marion.

"After three years, I decided to go into part-time teaching. I spent one part-time year at Tampa and several part-time years and one full-time year at Tabor."

Glenn and Jan became sole owners of Concrete Products after his father and brother Chester passed away and Jan joined him to manage the office and keep the books. Seven years later, Glenn had a heart attack and they sold the business. He had worked there for 33 years.

"Now tell me about your family," I encouraged them, and Jan said, "Dyan was born in '66 and John in '68. Dyan, her husband, Dave, and their daughter and son live in Wichita. And John and his wife, Kelly, and their two girls and one boy live in Omaha. Dyan is a vice president at Insurance Management Associates and John is an optometrist at Nebraska Laser Eye Associates, and he manages the surgery center there.

"When the kids were young, camping was a favorite activity, although," she laughed, "our idea of roughing it was not lighting the water heater in our mini.

"We spent lots of time at Milford Lake with friends: riding motorcycles, swimming, enjoying campfires, etcetera. Many times we were a group of six families. Another favorite camping spot was Padre Island, Texas, where we could park on the beach, ride motorcycles up and down the beach, find lots of different shells, make sand candles in holes we dug in the sand, and all the typical beach kinds of things kids like to do.

"Two other trips that stand out in our memories with Dyan and John were the trips to California –

seeing the sun come up at Grand Canyon while eating a large breakfast outside – and going to the East Coast and taking in many historical sites."

Goertzes are a very close-knit family and they see each other quite often. "And what's great," Jan smiled, "is the kids all get along so well. We get together for all the major holidays – Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving – and several other times during the year. All eleven of us are in this house for several days and we have really neat family time. We always have a puzzle on the table and we play lots of group solitaire. And the kids love making peppernuts, bierocks, and cinnamon rolls." She laughed as she said this, acknowledging how much the young people still enjoy the traditions they grew up with.

While Jan was talking, Glenn had been thinking of other things he wanted to tell me. "I was in the clown band," he smiled. "Do you know what that is?" I didn't and I wasn't any wiser after he talked about hungry five music. "We played German music called *The Hungry Five*," he explained, grinning. "We would march against a parade." (And cause mayhem, I thought to myself.) "The music ended up at Tabor and the Schnickelfritz Band is still using it. That's 66 years ago I bought that music."

A major hobby of Glenn's is wood-turning. This is a form of woodworking that is used to create wooden objects on a lathe: the wood moves while a stationary tool is used to cut and shape it. "The first wood turning I did was in school," he told me, "but when I retired I joined a wood-turning club in Wichita." He learned a lot from them and he showed me a few dozen pieces that he has made over the years – mostly bowls of various shapes and sizes, and several 3-inch diameter round boxes with perfectly fitting lids. Each piece is beautiful. His favorite woods to work with are fruit woods and walnut, but he showed me a couple of good-sized bowls made from hedge tree (Osage orange) where he left the bark in place, using it as a frilled decoration around the top of the bowls. It wasn't only unique (for me, anyway) but very attractive. It must have taken a lot of very careful handling as he worked on it so as not to damage it. As he talked, he pointed out the grain in each piece, turning it over and enjoying running his fingers over the smooth surface. He has also carved figurines – even a couple of himself, cartoon-style. It's a good trait when a person can laugh at himself – and Glenn enjoys a laugh, and making others laugh.

Glenn is very talented: he showed me some of his framed photos and the tables that he welded together and topped with stone tile.

All that said, he admitted: "If I had one thing – if I had to get rid of everything else – I'd want to still be able to listen to music. I love going to big

band concerts.” His kids have introduced him to some gadgets and he has figured out how to stream the music through Pandora on the internet so he doesn’t have to buy a lot of individual CDs – and this makes him happy. Who doesn’t like a bargain?!

Jan enjoys making hand-quilted wall hangings using foundation piecing “Which,” she explained, “is a method of sewing small fabric pieces together to make a picture or design. Another thing I like to do is bake, especially zwieback and cinnamon rolls which,” she smiled, “the family MUST have. I also make lots of decorated sugar cookies to share with family and friends on various holidays. And you can add playing golf and going to concerts with Glenn to my fun list.” She paused for a few moments then went on, “After selling our business we spent a year, off and on, traveling through the USA, going in all directions and into almost every state.” One of their travels included what must have been a whistle-stop tour because she dubbed it ‘If it’s Tuesday, this must be Paris’. “We also took a ship ride to Grenada, and had a snorkeling vacation in the 50th state.” (Hawaii, for the uninitiated.)

Our conversation turned to the subject of downsizing. We talked about it at some length then it became obvious that Glenn isn’t ready for that – he and Jan are having much too much fun in their retirement to want to cut back on anything yet!

PB

Verda Albrecht’s life sketch is being deferred to the December issue of *First Threshings*

Women’s Fall Soup Supper

On Sunday afternoon, October 30, at four o’clock, over fifty women gathered in our fellowship hall for the women’s fall soup supper which was hosted by Deanne Duerksen and ably assisted by Aleen Ratzlaff, Judy Jantz and Katherine Hamm. They had included Trinity women in their invitation and several of us brought friends. The tables were decorated simply but attractively in autumnal colors, and the soups, breads, veggie finger foods, the desserts and drinks were set out on long tables.

Deanne welcomed us, Holly Swartzendruber sang *How Great Thou Art*, accompanied by Pastor Susan on the piano, Bethany (Amstutz) Schrag sang *Indescribable* and Katherine, a former Tabor College student of Shin-hee Chin’s, introduced her as our guest of honor.

Shin-hee started off by giving us a thumbnail sketch of her background, from growing up in South Korea, becoming a Christian, being married and moving to California where Ku-Sup was studying for his Ph.D., their two children, Grace and Caleb, and their eventual move to McPherson, Kansas. Shin-hee, who has taught art at Tabor since 2004, brought some of her internationally-acclaimed, more portable fiber-art works to show us.

In the opinion of many of her admirers, Shin-hee is a very much more multi-talented artist than most: she does one-dimensional painting and ink work but her most prolific collection is of fiber art: she handles a needle and various forms of “thread” in a highly unique way. Not only does each piece draw you to it superficially but, carefully studied, each is undergirded by a very much deeper meaning, always to honor God and the human spirit. While I have enjoyed re-reading her books, I have also spent much pleasurable and educational time enjoying many representations of her seemingly boundless imagination through her website: www.shinheechn.com. The broad gamut of her work includes everything from small ink drawings to embroidered quotations, etc. She used photos of as many of the 9/11 victims as she gained access to, to draw their faces; these are mounted in double horizontal rows to resemble windows in the Twin Towers and the whole work is mounted on two vertical strips that are colored smoke-brown at the top to cinders-black at the base, thus representing the demise of those buildings. It is a powerful reminder of the tragedy.

Shin-hee uses all kinds of fabrics from silk to canvas, and threads from perle cotton to embroidery floss. Her fabrics – almost exclusively recycled (the Quilters’ Corner at the MCC sale is a favorite haunt of hers) – and the fabric colors range from muted earth tones to brilliantly exotic.

She has created installation pieces several hundred inches wide or high, and a multitude of smaller pieces suitable as wall hangings, some portraits and some land- and waterscapes. Among the portraits most easily recognizable by many of us are: Anne Frank, Mother Teresa, President Dwight Eisenhower, Father Kapaun and Nelson Mandela. How she can make a zillion 1-inch rosettes resemble a well-known face is a mystery to people like me. All I do know is that she has an nth degree greater patience, perseverance and desire for perfection than I do!

While she focuses on the wrongheadedness of war – of the greatness of the human spirit – and on peaceful reconciliation, Shin-hee mostly focuses on women and women’s issues. Even the Statue of Liberty has rays radiating out from the bridge of

her nose, and the background of the whole painting-cum-thread image is circular to embrace its title as an 'equality-expanding circle'.

Each of her works is carefully thought through and, if you have a chance to read her books, it is time well spent to dwell on the statement with each one. Her imagination and sensitivity to the human condition are boundless – as are her modesty and humble spirit which allow her to always acknowledge God's greatness above all else.

The following quote is downloaded from her website:

I constantly try to valorize devalued woman's labor and the woman's body by reversing the negative insinuations associated with female domains and imbuing them with positive qualities. For that purpose, I often utilize needle, thread, and fabric in order to call into question the deep-seated bias that women's work are trivial, menial, marginal and undesirable. By incorporating wool, fiber, and string into the sculptural production, I convert the conventional "feminine" activity of needle works into a useful medium for the making of art. Through the strategic use of media that have been traditionally associated with the feminine, I want to show that seemingly 'menial female work' can be a source of pleasure and power for women

While being simultaneously inspired both by feminist traditions that emphasize the female reproductive body and the liberating potential of female creativity, and by Christian spirituality that is deeply embedded in my life, I address the complex issues of the female body, creativity, motherhood, feminine identity, and art. In my work, I attempt to carve out what I proudly call feminine territory in which the voices of effaced and silenced women reverberate, and to translate the experiences of women in a way that people of different ethnic backgrounds and cultural experiences can understand and sympathize.

On the level of technique and material, I appropriate and valorize craft techniques such as stitching, random wrapping, and binding. The techniques have an important meaning for me both as a compositional device and as an obsessional activity. In experimenting with a variety of "domestic" media such as clothes, threads, and paper, my hands participate in the process of the intricate linking of the irregular pattern of threads that form vein, skin, and scar. In fact, one can see the process through the complexly interwoven and intricately entangled threads covering the work.

The process of arbitrary wrapping and stitching, which does not differ much from the variety of tedious and repetitive activities that preoccupy women at home, enables me to understand the dynamic creative and inspirational potential of the seemingly

trivial and devalued aspects of women's labors for female artists. The slow nature of my technique seems to reenact the creative process of birthing. This recalls the gradual forming of the fetus through the intersection of capillary within the belly of the mother or perhaps the silkworm's patient and continuous spinning leading the creation of its cocoon. Thus, these pieces speak not so much of sorrow, anger, regrets, but rather, of healing, recovering, inner joy attained by/through converting the physical, oppressive condition into the stimulating and dynamic inner resources for own creative life.

Our program ended with Bethany singing *Our Great God* and all of us joining in the following responsive prayer:

Autumn Prayer

In the fading of the summer sun,
The shortening of days, cooling breeze,
Swallows' flight and moonlight rays

We see the Creator's hand.

In the browning of leaves once green,
Morning mists, autumn chill, fruit that falls,
frost's first kiss

We see the Creator's hand.

Creator God, for daily bread and all who work to
bring your harvest home, we bring our thanks
today.

**Forgive our ingratitude: we who have so much
waste what you have given.**

For those whose harvest is poor, whose crops
have withered, water tainted, children starve,
help those who bring relief and bestow on us an
unaccustomed generosity that all might share
from your garden and all might sing your praise.

**Creator God, provider of all, we bring our
thanks today.**

Thanks to Deanne and the committee members for bringing Shin-hee to our church, and for introducing her to a new audience who showed much appreciation for her creations. Thanks, also, to Eydie Graber and her invaluable help in the kitchen.

PB

Some Changes for MC USA Convention Attendees!

It's with great hope and enthusiasm that I invite you to join us in July 2017 in Orlando, Florida, for the eighth biennial convention of Mennonite Church USA.

Our church has changed a great deal since our first Mennonite Church USA gathering in 2003 in Atlanta, Georgia, and even more so since the former Mennonite Church meeting 20 years ago in the very same Orange County Convention Center. The theme back then was “Beyond Illusion,” a not-so-subtle nod to the fantasy world created by Walt Disney, whose influence extends over everything Orlando. It is safe to say that after 13 years we have moved beyond any illusion that bringing together the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church would cure all of our ills, but I still believe there is great value when the people of God come together. Article 24 of our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says, “We believe that the church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God. Thus, we are given a foretaste of the kingdom that God will one day establish in full. The church is to be a spiritual, social and economic reality, demonstrating now the justice, righteousness, love and peace of the age to come.” As we try to live out our theme of “Love is a Verb,” I am beyond any illusion that our church is perfect. I am beyond any illusion that we have all the answers or that we are fully living out who our confessions claim we are. Yet I have hope that as we struggle together, we can do many great things. Our focus for Orlando is one family and active love. I encourage you to bring your family to Orlando! We’ve expanded our family programming to accommodate families with children. We’ve modified our schedule to give participants time to enjoy the local sights if they like. We’ve changed our meal plan to give you greater flexibility and more affordable options. Now remember that family is more than just biology. We encourage you as a community to support one another to ensure that our gathering represents the racial, gender, economic, regional and age diversity of the church. Bring those who want to learn more about Mennonite Church USA. Bring those who have fallen by the wayside. Bring those who have left but still long for some fellowship. Our Atlanta 2003 theme was “God’s Table, Y’all Come.” Well, as a Texan, I’ll say, “Y’all are still welcome to join us in Orlando,” and if you’re from Mennonite Church Canada, I’ll add, “We remember the North.” The business of the church, our Delegate Assembly, has been pushed to the second half of convention. How can we conduct business and make sound decisions without worship and fellowship? We can’t. So before we do business together, we’ll sing and pray together. Like our youth have for many years, our adults will celebrate and look to the building of their faith first. The focus of our youth convention has always been primarily about connecting with God.

The theme for Orlando 2017 — “Love is a Verb” — reminds us that, for Christians, love is more than just talk and meeting.

I hope to see you in Orlando, putting your faith into action.

We’ve made several updates to the convention schedule that we think will benefit everyone:

- Shortening the convention by one full day
This allows everyone to save on lodging and meals.
- Programming will begin on Tuesday, July 4, in the evening and conclude on Saturday, July 8, around noon.
- Moving the Delegate Assembly to the second half of convention. We’ve heard many times that delegates wanted more time to participate in other parts of convention. So the Delegate Assembly will begin on Thursday evening, July 6, and run through Saturday morning, July 8. This change gives delegates the opportunity to participate in two full days of worship, fellowship and convention programming before focusing on the delegate agenda. They’ll have time to attend seminars and participate in a servant project. Delegates will also have the option to come only for the Delegate Assembly, taking less time away from their jobs and families and saving on registration fees and costs for lodging and meals.
- Adding Big Box Sessions and MennoTalks! Big Box Sessions will take place in the first seminar block each afternoon and feature prominent speakers talking about their area of expertise. Stay tuned for the list of speakers and topics to be announced shortly. Not quite TED, and not exactly Pecha Kucha, MennoTalks will explore a different topic each day, featuring seven speakers from diverse perspectives. The 20x20 presentation format — 20 slides for 20 seconds each — facilitates presentations that are dynamic, fast-paced and concise. Topics will be Celebrating Women; Race, Religion and Justice; and Global and Local Peacemaking.
- Increasing participation in servant project. Going along with the theme “Love is a Verb,” we’re going to schedule everyone to participate in a servant project. We are hoping to make a big impact on Orlando with everyone getting out into the community and putting love into action.

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