

# First Threshings

## First Mennonite Church

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Gracious God, we thank you for gifts that belong not to us alone but to all our sisters and brothers since they, too, are created in your image.

Let their need become our need; let their hunger become our hunger; and grant to us also a portion of their pain, so that in sharing ourselves, we discover the Christ who walks with our brothers and sisters.

*Hymnal: A Worship Book*  
No. 750

Christ's is the world in which we move,  
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love,  
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,  
and Christ is the one who meets us here.

*A Touching Place* (Bell, Maule)

Ann (Balzer) Doerksen, now of Newton, was seated on the plank and cinderblock benches in the FMC alley café at this year's Arts & Crafts Fair. She waved me over to visit, since I knew her from Bethel days. We sat together and visited with her daughter and another friend who was with her. Ann had happily purchased some FMC peppernuts. She had such fond memories of peppernut baking as she grew up at First Mennonite. "Everyone worked at it," she said. "The church where I attend now tries so hard at intergenerational activities, but when I was growing up, we had that totally figured out at First Mennonite!" Peppernut baking for Arts & Crafts Fair – that's all you need!

It was good to hear this perspective from someone who grew up here at FMC. In the world of church there is a *strong* pull to view the grass as greener at another church. Comments such as, "They have this," and "They do that," quickly generate feelings of inadequacy. But, in reality, church is a challenge everywhere. Community is a challenge everywhere.

One place I see this played out is in our support of Mennonite Central Committee. The push to support MCC in North American churches is sometimes a numbers push. One church advertises the number of school kits they have prepared, and the next church feels shy because they provided a lesser number. Can we see ourselves accountable before God alone for what we generate? That is really the only criterion that matters.

The universal challenge of life in the community in which you are placed, with all its warts, is more than evident in the actual MCC work locations. "Progress" in goals set by MCC workers is most often painstakingly slow, seemingly one step forward is followed by two steps back. Yet, this MCC work is valued and supported by MCC as an organization. Can we be as appreciative of our imperfect ventures here at home? Does our demanding and competitive sense that we are not good enough *build* the church, or *hobble* it? Are we willing to trust that the work that God is doing is really of God, worthy of

praise and heartfelt joy and support? The church is a human community, but it is called and fueled by God. We must not forget that, especially when we make comparisons with our human eyes.

Further, while our MCC publicity may make it appear that we are doing it all alone as Mennonites around the world, the reality is that MCC is a part of a fabric of many agencies that bring their strengths together to work in demanding situations. There is not room or energy for competition in the world's most desperate places. MCC does not get caught up in the we-can-do-it-all mentality.

I don't think our North American churches should get caught up in that mentality either. We at First Mennonite cannot do it all. We never could. (Christ himself could not do it all while he walked this earth: he summoned the help of twelve disciples.) But, out of honor to God who loves us and is *breathing life* to the world through us, we must say, "Thank you, Lord, for your gift of intergenerational opportunity," however imperfect it may feel to us. Call to mind, frequently, that Jesus is with us, beside us, in these days. Speak well of the brother- and sisterhood we have in our midst. Speak well of the life we have together in our community of faith – don't criticize or belittle or despair. God is hoping you will rightly give him the praise for our imperfect church community.

*Pastor Susan*

### **Ministries Council Minutes September 8, 2016**

**Present:** Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Pastor Susan Jantzen, Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship), Glen Diener (Treasurer), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Douglas Graber (Mission), Tim Frye (Discernment), Hank Unruh (Youth Pastor), Pat Bartel (Secretary).

**Absent:** Laura Paulus (Care), Joel Klaassen (Stewardship), Pam Bartel (Hospitality), a representative from Vision Council.

**Minutes of Aug 18 meeting were approved** after changing the AMBS location from Goshen to Elkhart in the Youth Pastor's report.

**Committee Reports. Worship:** Haven't met since Aug 18 but all the worship leaders and children's time leaders are scheduled through Nov 20; members must decide by Sep 27 if they want to continue to serve on the committee. **Nurture:** Gratitude was expressed that all teachers and helpers for all the Wed night classes are in place; teachers will be blessed in church this Sunday morning (Sep 11); the youth room is painted; the northeast room is being painted; Jan will not continue as chair next year; Julie Linnens might be leaving the committee, too, and Tracy Hefley has said she will not be chair, so new committee members are needed. Safe Sanctuaries policy states there must be two adults in each classroom, and the people inside must be "easily observable and/or interruptible": if necessary, doors will be left open. Hand-offs (i.e., adults responsible for picking up children after class) have to be clear-cut so kids are constantly being supervised. Pastor Susan will create an announcement for future bulletins. **Mission:** On

Wed, Oct 26, and Wed, Nov 2, prison ministry will be discussed and prison care kits from MCC will be introduced. Michele Armster is the resource person. Ben Kreider has agreed to be our Mission Sunday speaker (Nov 13). **Care:** Susan reported that there will be a carry-in and combination shower (wedding/two babies) Oct 9. **Hospitality:** No report. **Stewardship:** Met Sep 1; have purchased three new corded microphones to try out for making announcements; a total of seven could be replaced (fellowship hall and sanctuary) at a cost of \$100 each; there are a few more roof leaks to work on; the upstairs bathroom is working again; working with HiFY on their requests. Next meeting is Oct 6.

**Council Reports. Discernment:** A copy of the letter they hand out to Ministries Team Leaders (MTLs) each September was handed out, asking them for updated information about their area of responsibility, to be submitted to Discernment by Oct 1. **Vision:** No MTL has been named for Vision Council (VC) yet; Doug met recently with members Kelly Linnens, Marlin Bartel and Nadine Friesen, also Pastor Susan.

**Coordinating Cabinet:** VC needs at least one more member; Discernment doesn't choose its own MTL; rather, Ministries Council (MC) affirms a proposal brought by Coordinating Cabinet (CC). CC proposes an MC retreat for Sun, Oct 23, at 4:00 p.m. Brett Klingenberg, Pastor at FMC-Beatrice, Nebraska, may provide input on understanding our congregational culture. Susan's current term runs through mid-July 2017: separately, she and VC will seek God's direction for the future; if there is agreement that she should consider an additional term, VC will initiate a three-year review; as this

discernment continues, Stewardship will be drafting a budget for next fiscal year, it having been suggested that a *status quo* budget be compiled and revised later, if necessary.

**Treasurer:** A printed budget report was distributed: next Sunday's bulletin will report a balance of approximately negative \$4,500; MTLs are reminded to return their budget sheets to Glen by Sep 30.

**Youth Pastor:** Arts & Crafts Fair is Sat, Sep 17; plenty of people have offered to help; the TV in the pie-room will be moved to a side aisle in the sanctuary. Preparing for HiFY activities Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings: on Sunday mornings they will be cooking biblical and other foods that will teach biblical lessons. They are studying *Love is a Verb* materials from next June's MC-USA convention as well as *Love is Obeying: Love in Spiritual Practices*, which gives opportunities for prayer and inner reflection. Youth room is under construction: they are building the white board and working with Tim Unruh on what to do (eventually) with the flooring under the floor tiles. They've gained two 8<sup>th</sup> graders on Wednesday nights (for a total of four girls and seven boys). Feelings regarding the newcomers are mixed. Laura Paulus is an excellent sponsor. Some small outings are being planned but transportation will be needed since they only have two cars: one is to Fall Fest at Bethel on Oct 1, and stay for the football game—but this means a long commitment for that day. Next summer's convention will be held in Orlando, FL. They estimate each youth will have to raise about \$1,100, for a current total of approximately \$12,000. They are considering how to raise that amount of money. Sponsors are also needed (two male and one female for our group, per convention rules). Transportation considerations: fly, go by train, or maybe join with one or more other groups who are going by bus.

**Pastor:** A draft letter to members who don't pick up their mail was distributed to MC members; after a discussion, it was suggested that, to be less formal, it could be signed by church secretary Becky Gage rather than Pastor Susan, and that a variety of ways for recipients to respond be given (e-mail to Becky, phone, or written note), giving a deadline to respond by. The letter could also offer to e-mail church news. Worship services through the first Sunday in October (World Communion Day) will focus on Exodus and Deuteronomy; the following two or three Sundays will focus on Genesis then, two Sundays in November will be arranged by two people in our church who are enrolled in seminary classes that require them to provide a service dedicated to a psalm of a particular genre. Harold

Woelk needs prayer for his back and, when it is better, for a driver to bring him to church once a month. Gratitude was expressed to everyone who attended the appreciation gathering for Don & Carolyn Penner and Derek & Katherine Hamm as they transition to other communities. Susan is working on a Showalter grant to submit in spring and is returning some photos and recordings to people who lived through atrocities in Chad. Hispanic gathering in our Fellowship Hall on Sep 18. (Sep 15 is Mexico's Independence Day). Eighteen people came to their Easter Sunday event. This ministry has received good recognition by the parents of the Hispanic Tabor College students.

**New Business:** MTLs were reminded to check their area of responsibility in the Policy Manual and to send Doug any updates by the next MC meeting, Oct 13. Pat Bartel will continue as editor/compiler of the church's monthly newsletter *First Threshings* through the December 2016 issue; MC will consider how to proceed. The Pumpkin Run should be added to Old Business at the October MC meeting: it has a budget line item but no one has stepped up to take charge of running it this year.

**Meeting adjourned 8:50 p.m.**

**Next meeting:** Thursday, October 13, 7:00 p.m.  
(*The official copy of the minutes is available in the church office.*)

### October events

- 2 World Communion Day
- 5 Regular youth/adult supper and Christian Education activities: Doug Miller will talk about his newly published resource on vocation
- 9 Spirit 'n' Celebration will sing during worship  
Carry-in meal, Care showers (wedding/two babies)
- 12 Regular youth/adult supper and Christian Education activities: Derek Hamm will show photos from his summer long-distance bike trip (sanctuary)
- 19 Regular youth/adult supper and Christian Education activities: Asia and Tim Frye will lead a wrap-up discussion on Sabbath practices
- 23 4:00 p.m. Ministries Council retreat/Pastor Brett Klingenberg talk.
- 26 Regular youth/adult supper and Christian Education activities: MCC prison focus #1
- Nov 2** Regular youth/adult supper and Christian Education activities: MCC prison focus #2

**“The very first year I coached the high school girls’ basketball we came in third in the state!”**

*Getting to know Lee Albrecht*

Lee smiled as we arranged our meeting and said, “If there’s a large truck parked in our yard, then I’m home.” And, as I drove up to Albrechts’ house, there it was, dominating their front yard. For five years now, Lee has worked for Brad Wiens putting in 12-hour days, getting home around 6 p.m., so I arrived at 8 o’clock. I appreciated him and Verda carving out time from their very busy schedules to visit with me.

Lee started off the interview: “I was born in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, in my grandparents’ house during a snowstorm in February.” Verda added, “His dad brought his mom in from the field then he went back home because he had chores to do, and two other kids (to take care of).”

Eventually, the family consisted of two girls and two boys. “I was third,” he said, “and they’re all gone. We all worked hard on the farm.” Lee has a ready smile and he smiled broadly as he joked, “That’s why I still work too much.

“I remember a lot about milking cows; we fed the baby calves – had to teach them to drink out of a pail.”

“And they did that before and after school,” Verda added, and he agreed.

“I guess that carried through to our children because our son, Mike, had a paper route about sixth grade, and he’s been very successful. He lives in South Dakota and he works for a company, Scotchman Industries. He never did a day of college and now he’s their national sales director.” (Scotchman’s website indicates that the company is located 100-plus miles east of Rapid City and describes it as “a leading producer of metal fabrication equipment, accessories and custom tools”. Lee and Verda are understandably proud of Mike’s business acumen.

Lee continued to reminisce. “Before I quit teaching, I bought a combine and started on the wheat harvest because my dad had done that also.” Mike had just finished his second year in high school when Lee took him along to South Dakota. Lee smiled again as he told me: “The daughter of the guy we were going to cut for was just in eighth grade. They had a telephone romance for four years. She graduated high school the 17<sup>th</sup> May and the 24<sup>th</sup> May they got married.” He laughed with pleasure as he

added, “They recently celebrated their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They have three daughters – the eldest is an RN in South Dakota; the second one (and her husband) are school teachers and the third one became a school teacher last summer. We have four great-grandchildren, all in South Dakota.”

He then switched to talking about their daughter and son-in-law. “Tom and Margo’s daughter, Katelyn, just graduated from Emporia with a teaching degree, and she got a job teaching first grade at Slate Creek Elementary School in Newton. She just got married September 17. And their son – our only grandson – is just starting his junior year at Pittsburg State: he’s interested in mechanical engineering.”

It speaks volumes that Lee wanted to talk about his family before detailing some of his own life.

“It’s interesting,” I said, “that you have so many teachers in the family.”

He agreed. “I really enjoyed teaching and of course I was always involved in coaching – junior high boys’ football for 17 years – junior high boys’ basketball and girls’ basketball and track, and coaching high school girls’ basketball for seven years. I also was assistant high school boys’ basketball coach.” He smiled, and it was obvious that these memories were gratifying. Then he said, with relish, “The very first year I coached the high school girls’ basketball we came in third in the state!” A fine record indeed.

Lee then went back in time and said, “I attended Bethel College – graduated with a major in Industrial Arts – then I took a couple of courses at Emporia State so I could teach. I started out teaching in Hillsboro and Lehigh.”

“So you decided not to do anything with the industrial arts?”

“Not professionally, that’s right, but we have remodeled several houses and I have built quite a lot of furniture. One year, I built a solid oak dining table and put it in the MCC sale.” (Hearing that reminded me that Albrechts have been very strong supporters of MCC for many years.) “And I’ve built oak dining tables for both our son and daughter. Also, I built the folding-chair rack at church.” Lee did an excellent job on the rack and it’s proved very useful over the years. But, as far as a career went, he chose to teach 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students math – arithmetic – and P.E.

“The thing I remember more than anything else – my very first sixth grade class – there

were 32 students including a paraplegic and a student who had epileptic seizures – and Miss Kansas, Margo Schroeder.” My face must have shown that that name didn’t mean anything to me so he explained, “That’s Dean and Clarièce Schroeder’s daughter.” I well remember Dean, and Clarièce continues to worship with us so I was glad he put me in the picture.

“I really enjoyed being with those kids,” Lee said again.

We talked about what is expected of teachers nowadays and about discipline, and he said, “One reason that I was successful teaching and coaching was because the kids wanted to play and they knew that, if they didn’t behave in class, they wouldn’t get to play. So that helped with the discipline.” He smiled again. “I’d say to them, ‘I like to joke and play around as much as anyone but when it’s time to get to work we have to get serious.’ I felt like I had a lot patience but it’s frustrating when you’ve explained something and one of the students says, ‘I don’t get it!’

“One thing people won’t know about me: I always wanted to fly, and I got my pilot’s license, and we had a few trips. We flew the (Jim and Jeannie) Funk family to Sisseton, northern South Dakota near the Minnesota border. One time, we had a little questionable weather – low visibility. We had to stop in Yankton.” He had to assess carefully whether or not to continue the flight. “Could we take them?” he wondered. “I didn’t have an IFR. We knew there were low clouds. The only thing I could do was come down lower. We had to wait about an hour and thankfully it cleared up. On the way back we got almost to Yankton; there was a bank of clouds 10,000 feet high. We had to take off and circle Yankton. We were above the clouds.” Verda well remembered that, too, and commented, “It was very beautiful up there, when you can see above the clouds.”

“What does it mean to not have an IFR?” I asked.

Lee explained that a VFR is a Visual Flying Rating, and an IFR is an Instrument Flying Rating. And he laughed as he added, “When you don’t have an instrument rating your IFR stands for ‘I Follow the Road!’”

PB

Verda’s life sketch will be included  
in the November issue of  
*First Threshings*.

### **Research Report Update and Thank You**

Many of you know that, for my doctoral dissertation, I have been working on a report researching responses to the Vietnam war by Kansas Mennonite colleges.

Last summer (2015), I asked FMC people to help me by responding to surveys and/or talking with me directly so this is both an update and another “Thank You” for those who answered already (and for those still considering answering).

I am grateful for your prayers and for the research support grants I have received from KSU, three of which are special endowed grants created to underwrite doctoral research on topics on Kansas history and one on research concerning Southeast Asia.

My research continues to go well, after taking a break from it due to my father’s ill health and passing last year. In all, Gary and I have traveled more than 10,000 miles since 2009, driving to archives (mostly Mennonite archives, but also those of the Army War College and several college and university archives) and speaking with people coast to coast. This last summer, I worked in the Fresno Pacific University archives where I received some expert assistance that enabled me to work on a particular aspect of activity on the subject. (We were also able to visit with good friends Andrew Sensenig and Erica Buller and to see the Buller-Sensenig babies the week before they came home from the hospital).

A number of FMC people responded to the surveys put in mailboxes last summer – some of them opened new doors to information and others confirmed what had been little “bunny trails” that I had not been able to verify. Please continue to feel free to finish the survey, send me an email, or ask to get together for a visit or interview. Many people think they “don’t know anything,” but it is surprising what people do know, and do not realize is helpful in clarifying an issue. In all, there are at least 43 people here at FMC who were at FMC then and who were old enough to remember certain events in Marion or Harvey counties in particular. (Several people were late in middle school, but most were raising young families.) There are even more who were not involved at FMC from the late 1950s to the

mid-1970s but who are involved now. So, about 50 people are still around. That's a LOT!)

The research is NOT about FMC in particular, but since so many people who were here then are still here, FMC gives an important window on thinking about Vietnam and how people looked at the war.

I am especially interested to know when people in the area began to "think about Vietnam" and the war there. Did you hear something at church? Through the nightly news? Via radio? Through communications by Mennonite missionaries or those who had been there? For example, I remember very distinctly at what point, as an adolescent in Louisiana, I became totally aware of the war: I was reading a newspaper and saw statistics of American men killed and it was as if the print jumped out at me causing me to ask myself, "What does this mean?" Maybe you had a moment of similar awareness. I am very curious about how people in rural Kansas began to experience the war.

Here are the kinds of particular questions I am still considering:

- Were you aware that General Hershey came to Hillsboro in 1962 and that he was featured at a Tabor College forum that was attended by more than 3,000 people? (Even more showed up, but seating was full.) Were you a member of the draft board, or did you have dealings with the draft board?
- Did you ever have contact with Delbert Wiens who came to FMC and presented a talk on Vietnam and missions? He was later a professor at Tabor, and then at Bethel and was widely connected with all sorts of discussions.
- Draft age men from FMC were fairly evenly divided on whether they performed alternative service or served in the military. Were you, or one of your friends or family members, one of these? How did you make your decision to take the direction you took? How were you treated when you returned home?
- Were you friends with the young Hillsboro man who did not return home from Vietnam? Did this affect your thinking?

- How did you obtain information? Did your family subscribe to *The Wichita Eagle*? Did your family have a TV or radio? Were you or any of your family members involved in the discussions and events in the WDC or Bethel, Tabor, or Hesston colleges?

Those are just suggestions of the kinds of things that might "prime the pump" and give you an idea of the project in general. Please always feel welcome to suggest another idea, or someone you think might be a good information source. Much of my research is fleshed out, but knowing more will make it even better.

Thank you, as always,  
*Robin Ottoson*

### **Treasurer's provisional report of proceeds from the Arts & Crafts Fair**

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
<u>Peppernuts</u>		
Fair day:	\$3,789.00	\$5,989.05**
Add'l sales:	\$ 690.00	
Net income	≈\$3,600.00	\$4,677.79

<u>FMC Café</u>		
Fair day:	\$4,763.00*	\$4,615.00

\*Not enough expenses have been reported to be able to provide a net income.  
\*\*Total receipts including fair day sales

All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timeliness and space availability. (Anonymous submissions are accepted but not preferred.) *First Threshings* is distributed the first Sunday of each month so materials should be submitted at least one week previously. Comments pro/con regarding any aspect of the newsletter are also welcome. Please address these to Pat Bartel, compiler/ editor: mailslot 107 or meadowlark. [bartel@gmail.com](mailto:bartel@gmail.com).