

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

Ash Street & Grand Avenue

Hillsboro, KS 67063

620-947-5662/www.fmchillsboro.com

Susan Jantzen, Pastor (pastor@fmchillsboro.com)

Hank Unruh, Youth Pastor (youthpastor@fmchillsboro.com)

Doug Miller, Ministries Council Moderator (dougml@tabor.edu)

Laura Paulus, Secretary (secretary@fmchillsboro.com)

We saw a stranger yesterday.
We put food in the eating place,
Drink in the drinking place,
Music in the listening place,
And with the sacred name of the
triune GOD,
He blessed us and our house,
Our cattle and our dear ones.
As the lark says in her song:
Often, often, often, goes the
CHRIST
In the stranger's guise.

(A Celtic Rune of Hospitality)

We are the body of Christ

Merging into traffic on an interstate is one of the miracles of life. How all of us bull-headed drivers go from two streams to one, even as our pedals are to the floor, is beyond me.

My style is to drop back a bit and let the car coming on to the highway know that I will give room. No one else in my family operates this way, and my one son states that my caution and graciousness create a greater road hazard than his style, maintaining his road speed. We both have trouble trusting the style of the other!

A great principle must be at work here. In the birds-eye-view of things, there somehow seems to be room for all moving parties in the great merger of life.

Jesus' called ones (the meaning of the Greek, *ekklesia*, church, means "called out ones") are constantly merging. Called as family beyond blood ties, we find ourselves suddenly side-by-side, learning to know each other all the time – next to each other in the pew, hearing each other's voice in spoken word and song, sensing each other in corporate prayer. Join a committee here at FMC and you not only learn more about the inner life of our congregation but you learn to know, and therefore understand, the inner lives of brothers and sisters on the committee. Similar learning happens in Sunday School discussions, perhaps more deeply, as we learn and listen together over time. And, at the same time, each of us is continually getting to know our *own self* better. That is, each of us is moving as well, at the same time as we are "merging" with others in church. Life-long learning.

Becky Gage is merging into our First Mennonite Church life. Talk about driving up the "on-ramp" on to the FMC Highway! The office is quite the place to get right into the thick of it.

In her interview, Becky clearly stated her desire to serve people and I believe it is *just this* which is at the core of the miracle, at the core of the principle of merger. As on the interstate, in a church setting we are all moving in the belief that Jesus is with us, calling us out to care and serve. The Spirit is guiding us, nudging us to respond more deeply, more flexibly with each other than our first knee-jerk reaction. Created with a heart for worship and service, we actually find *ourselves* in this merging process. We find ourselves in God. In God, we are able to strongly move forward *and* merge with each other, even with different stories, different burdens on our hearts, different emotional states, different understandings of God and God's work in the world.

What is not different is our source and direction. As physical and spiritual beings, God is our center, our hope, our life, our destination. Sent by God, Jesus calls us toward God, the reality that makes merger happen, empowered by the Spirit. It is a miracle because it is otherworldly – divine love keeps the flow going, pulls it forward. The sooner we trust *this*, the better.

Pastor Susan

September 2015

FMC Ministries Council Minutes
August 13, 2015

Location/time: FMC Chapel, 7:00 p.m.

Present: Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Pastor Susan, Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship), Hank Unruh (Youth Pastor), Keith Harder (Vision), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Pam Bartel (Hospitality), Tim Frye (Discernment), Glen Diener (Treasurer), Pat Bartel (Secretary).

Absent: Joel Klaassen (Stewardship), Laura Paulus (Care).

Opening Meditation/Prayer: Doug: Genesis 22.

Minutes of June 18, 2015 meeting were accepted as distributed.

Committee Reports. Worship. Met June 24: discussed ways to make handicapped sanctuary seating more amenable; summer plans; no Tabor College Sunday this fall (last spring, other churches reserved FMC's available Sundays); their task force (Holly Swartzendruber, Ethan Koerner, Don Penner, Joel Klaassen) together with *Sounds Great* of McPherson are working on improving sound through the sanctuary mics; Judy Harder will plan the Advent-Christmas worship services; Aleen, w/Pastor Susan, plans to attend the Nov. 21 worship seminar at Bethel College. Next meeting Aug. 19: will discuss worship style preferences, increasing the number of leaders for worship and for children's story time. **Nurture.** Met Aug. 12: Discussed VBS (thanked everyone who helped make it a success); SS teachers/helpers for fall are believed to be in place; need teachers for Wed. nights; information will be posted with kids' rosters and locations of SS classes, etc. A teacher training session will be held Aug. 26 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the Safe Sanctuaries guidelines; Wed. night activities: Sep. 9 through Nov. 18, Jan. 6 through Apr. 20, 2016. No regular Wed. night activities Feb. 10 (Ash Wed.), Mar. 16 (Spring break), Mar. 23 (Easter week) or Apr. 20 (Variety Show). HiFYers who only attend Wed. nights will be encouraged to participate in our church's Easter commemorations. No SS Sep. 6 (Labor Day w/end) so regular classes will start Sep. 13. Feedback from Aug. 9 listening session was presented; Pastor Susan reported positively on VBS. **Mission.** Susan reported on their behalf that Elfrieda Funk has agreed to join this committee which will probably become more of a coordinating committee with scheduled meetings only once in spring and once in fall; Creation Care needs refocusing now our church's management of the city's recycle center is no longer needed; Michelle Armster (MCC Central States) will be our Mission Sunday speaker (Nov. 8) SS/worship. **Care.** Doug read Laura's text that their members

have been in contact over the summer unofficially; they are meeting various needs (meals mostly); will meet in late Aug. **Hospitality.** Met to discuss the church retreat at Camp Menoscah (Sep. 19-20): will meet again to solidify plans; pool party is scheduled for Sun., Aug. 22, 7:00-9:00 p.m.; it is a time to socialize, not necessarily to swim. **Stewardship.** Doug read Joel's report: Met Aug. 6; will possibly hire outside help to review the books (possibly every three years to reduce expense: if adopted, a budget line item will be created for it); a subcommittee may explore more choices for giving, and will review our present methods of making deposits, counting money etc.; sanctuary ceiling light bulbs and the banner flood light will be replaced soon; options with a potential church secretary candidate are being explored; completed a contract with Hassman Termite for twice-annual treatment (Oct./Apr.) for oriental roaches, etc.; some downstairs hall lighting has been fixed; next meeting is Sep. 3 at 8:00 p.m.

Council Reports. Discernment (DC): Holly Swartzendruber will join the DC: (Ministries Council (MC) affirmed her unanimously); discussed spiritual gifts at their second DnA session; almost everyone from the first session attended: plan to meet individually with those who participated to see how interested they are to serve the church (a new approach); still trying to discern who might be a youth sponsor (female, preferably, since Hank plans to split the youth into male/female groups). May allow people to commit to a 4-week or 2-month term – either ask the congregation at large to suggest candidates (excluding parents) or submit their own names, then he and Hank would create a schedule. A Safe Sanctuaries requirement is that there has to be a second adult on Wed. nights (7:00–8:30) with Hank, to help with the Arts & Crafts Fair, soup supper, also for HiFY trips and other off-campus events, e.g., to accompany youth when they shop for Christmas families. As a minimum, the sponsor would have to watch the Safe Sanctuaries DVD and sign the Safe Sanctuaries agreement. With the fall discernment season about to start, DC members will contact chairpersons to check on their willingness to continue. DC will help out with any needed replacements. Tim's mother, Jo Frye, has offered to teach anyone (including kids) who wants to learn how to bake cinnamon rolls for the A&C Fair – possible dates are September 12 and/or 18. The church needs to provide a thank-you to Jo. **Vision (VC):** Held a second round of listening groups attended by 13; 15 to 17 (from the under 50 age group) attended the first meeting: both groups' ideas/concerns were very similar; all committees will

be asked to process this input; some specifics are already being addressed. Fellowship opportunities outside Sun. morning worship were suggested, e.g., small groups. After discussion, it was proposed that a more general report be given to the congregation Oct. 25 at 6:30 p.m. (to be confirmed by VC members). Hank said HiFY could provide a light meal or dessert, and ask for donations for Main Street Ministries. With DC, VC continues to explore adding a (preferably younger) VC member. Susan's sabbatical dates aren't set yet but plans for coverage will need to be made soon. VC will meet again soon.

Coordinating Cabinet: The suggested MC meeting dates for the upcoming school year are: Sep. 17, Oct. 22, Nov. 12, Dec. 10, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, Apr. 21, and June 16. All will be at the church at 7:00 p.m. unless modified. As last year, Stewardship members may be invited to attend MC's Sep. meeting so they can hear Ministries Team Leaders' (MTLs) reasoning for funding ministries that have stipend positions or any other special budget items. Joel supports this plan: MC affirmed it. **Treasurer:** Distributed copies of latest Budget vs. Actual Expenditures by Program sheet; encouraged MTLs to check their line items; accepts the current negative Ministries Fund cash flow balance (-\$3,412.41) as being typical of late summer. MTLs should prepare their FY 2016 budgets before Glen meets with Stewardship in early October so he can finalize input to the MC by early Nov. Final budget will be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting (tentatively Jan. 24, 2016). No one responded to verbal and bulletin announcements offering to host the Great Pumpkin Run so, after a discussion, it was officially suspended for this year: its future is uncertain. **Youth Pastor:** HiFY has assembled a video report on the MC USA convention to be shown at this Sunday's worship service. Everyone's excited to start Wed. evenings back up: Victoria Wintermote (8th grade) will join the high schoolers' discussion of Gerald Mast's book *Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling*. Sun. mornings: 7th graders will join the High School group, going slowly through Shane Claiborne's book *Jesus for President*. Focusing on being mission-oriented (locally and beyond), HiFY will also study stories from the

Martyrs' Mirror and learn how to make difficult life decisions for Christ. Continuing to connect middle and high schoolers: on Wed. nights the two groups will be combined and divided by gender: girls will use the *Spark* curriculum; the boys' curriculum not yet decided. Will be inviting older men and women to visit. With Susan and Sam Schrag, pastor of St. Louis (MO) Mennonite Fellowship, the initial planning phase of a possible mission trip next summer is being worked on; HiFY very much appreciates the bulletin board that Stewardship has hung in the hallway across from their room. **Pastor:** Four copies of Mennonite World Conference convention booklets (with a synopsis of each workshop) are being made available for people to read, to see the broad range of issues they covered. Worship speakers for upcoming Sundays in Aug. are: HiFY (reporting on the MC USA convention: 16th), Asia Frye (update on her MDiv studies: 23rd), and, since we plan to focus our "fifth" Sundays on personal stories, Dawn Abrahams: 30th). Susan has met with Eydie Graber and Verda Albrecht to plan Wed. suppers: Verda won't be as available; Eydie is fairly confident about the meals but needs a 4:00 p.m. helper. Has been keeping in touch with our newer worshipers; fall worship will focus on "Call"; has been receiving Listening Session information; an open house is planned at the Etcetera Shop to welcome new manager, Angie Becker. (We are encouraged to attend.) At our Wed., Sep. 9 evening meal, we will thank Laura Paulus for her work in the office; we are encouraged to write her something specific or do something to show our gratitude. We must honor the secretary's limited hours (four mornings a week) by helping her all we can: write out our bulletin announcements, consolidate our requests for work, etc. – and refrain from making requests on Sundays; hiring process for a possible replacement for Laura is underway. Has been working with Doug on our MC retreat for Sunday (16th): 4:00–6:00 p.m. in the Chapel; looking forward to the church retreat at Camp Mennoscah, Sep. 25-27.

Next regular meeting date and time: Thurs., Sep. 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.
(*The official version of the minutes is in the office.*)



M.C. Retreat Minutes, August 16, 2015

Location and Time: Chapel, 4:00–6:00 p.m.

Present: Doug Miller (Moderator/Coordinating Cabinet), Pastor Susan, Aleen Ratzlaff (Worship),

Hank Unruh (Youth Pastor), Keith Harder (Vision), Jan Amstutz (Nurture), Tim Frye (Discernment), Glen Diener (Treasurer), Pat Bartel (Secretary).

Absent: Pam Bartel (Hospitality), Joel Klaassen (Stewardship), Laura Paulus (Care).

Opening Meditation/Prayer: Doug Miller, on Genesis 12.

Activities:

- What does it feel like to be new?
- Committees that may need to be connected differently to the church structure.
- Nuts & bolts.
- Report from Vision on the recent listening events.
- Gratitude exercise.
- Reflections with Pat and Glen.

Actions:

- It was decided to move the Great Pumpkin Run committee from Stewardship to Hospitality.
- Men's/Women's Fellowship will be under the Care Committee.

- The Mission Committee was urged to seek closure with the City of Hillsboro regarding our church's role with the city's recycling program. Also, we and the Mission Committee want to be alert to a person or persons who can give leadership to the church's creation care concerns.
- The A/V Technology Committee will remain under Stewardship.
- MTLs were encouraged to process with their committees and bring to the Oct. MC meeting their ideas for possible use of church memorial funds.

We closed at 6:10 p.m. by singing *The Butterfly Song* and teaching it to Hank.

Doug Miller, Moderator

September events

- 3 8:00 p.m. Stewardship Committee meeting
- 9 Wednesday evening activities begin:
 - 6:15 Supper: recognition of Laura Paulus' service as our secretary
 - 7:00 HiFY and children's activities
 - 7:05 Adults: *Freed-Up Financial Living* w/Danielle Bartel
- 10 7:00 p.m. Worship Committee meeting
- 11-13 Women's & Girls' Retreat at Camp Mennoscah – Nadine Friesen, speaker
- 12 Cinnamon Roll workshop w/Jo Frye
- 13 5:30-7:30 p.m. Spanish gathering: Fellowship Hall
- 17 7:00 p.m. Ministries Council meeting
- 19 Arts & Crafts Fair
- 26-27 FMC retreat at Camp Mennoscah

October events

- 4 World Communion Day
- 8-11 Bethel Fall Festival
- 16-17 Tabor Homecoming

"I'd like everyone to know that I'm a proud Christian woman and I have a lot of compassion.

I would want everyone to feel welcome to visit with me. I would be happy to lend an ear.

That's what I enjoy."

Getting to know Becky Gage

Becky's parents are Gerald and Juanita Ediger (she's no relation to Paul and Marcella as far as she knows, but she might be related to Joel Klaassen through his Mennonite Brethren relatives), and she has two sisters, Jessy who's older, and Audrey who's younger. She told me Becky's her given name: it's not short for Rebecca.

Becky grew up in Hillsboro so she's a Hillsboro High alum. She reminisced about her school days and how she and her sisters used to walk or ride

their bikes all over town until the street-lights came on. "I like the small town atmosphere for my children to grow up in," she acknowledged. That said, now that she has two small boys (Harper who's nearly nine and four year old Jack – legally Jackie Gage III, she said) she's very protective of them even playing out in the yard on their own. "Times have changed," she admitted rather sadly.

"What do your boys like doing?"

"Harper's really into video games." And, implying that he spends too much time on those,

she's trying to steer him into other activities. She described him as being the more reticent of the two boys. "He's our quiet one. And Jack recently learned how to ride his bicycle without training wheels so," she smiled, "he's very excited about that. He's our wild one!" She laughed.

Becky was previously married to Harper's father. She feels very strongly that marriage is a lifetime commitment but also believes that God wouldn't want anyone to stay in an unhealthy relationship.

I asked about her husband, Jackie. It turns out he started life in McKinney, Texas then, when he was in eighth grade, his father decided to take a job in Hesston and they relocated to rural Lincolnville. As a field service representative for Nielsen (a television ratings company) Jackie installs equipment in customers' homes that monitors their viewing habits, then that information is sent off so stations can determine audience size and composition and adjust their programming accordingly. "He's the representative for the state of Kansas and he travels into southwest Nebraska as well. So, he puts in some long days but," she said brightly, "he gets to come home every evening. It might be 11:00 p.m., but at least he gets to come home."

I wondered how she and Jackie met. "We met through mutual friends. My friends and I would go to Marion when we were in high school to hang out and so did he; instantly, we had a connection but it was always a situation of us both dating other people. We were good friends for about eight years then, one day, I needed my tires changed on my car so I went to Rod's Tire. I knew he worked there – so" (laughing) "I decided to go there and not somewhere else. We hadn't seen each other for a while. We just reconnected, and started dating – and we got married September 12, 2010. He's been a blessing – everything my first marriage lacked. He's been there for me. He's been helping raise Harper since he was two years old so he is his dad."

"Does he still see his biological dad?"

"Yes, he spends every other weekend with him."

Reminiscing about the Hillsboro she grew up in and what she used to enjoy, she said, "I remember when we had the Ben Franklin store downtown" (where the Etcetera Shop is now), "and two of my favorite places that I miss dearly are the Iron Kettle and the Dari-ette: my grandmother would always take my sisters and

me there every Saturday morning for coffee break and I miss that. They had the best caramel rolls!"

"How about vacations?"

"My family always vacationed in Colorado – Colorado Springs and Estes Park mostly. My dad is a die-hard Broncos fan so we'd visit the old stadium, when it was Mile High. Because of him, my sisters and I are all big Broncos fans!" She laughed again.

"Where have you worked?"

"The place I worked at longest – about five years – was the Marion County Noxious Weed Department. I was the office manager."

"What kinds of things do you like to do?"

"I don't have a lot of time," she laughed. "In fact, I was telling Jackie the other day that I ought to find a hobby I like: I feel like I spend all my time at work, and taking care of the kids and the house. I have always enjoyed art, maybe I should find some classes to take." After a few moments' thought she added enthusiastically, "I decorate cakes. I'm not going to say I'm the best at it but I really enjoy doing it! I've posted pictures of all the cakes I've decorated on my *Facebook* page for people to browse through. Occasionally, I get calls for orders; in fact, I have one due on Saturday." (I thought – should've articulated, but our conversation veered away – it'd be fun to see what she comes up with if she'd be interested to join us for our Mission Sunday noon meal.) She continued, "I worked in the deli at Wal Mart in McPherson for a while: when the bakery needed help I was eager to volunteer. I learned a lot from the decorators there.

"I also do in-home care for an elderly woman – knowing she can rely on me to make her day-to-day activities easier makes me happy."

"How did you come by that job?"

"My little sister used to be her employee then, when her son was born, she wanted to be a stay-at-home mom. I was between jobs at the time and I thought, 'that's something I might like to try.' It's a new experience but one I really like to do; I started working for her last year." From Becky's descriptions it sounds like the lady – 78 years old – is a great character. She's from Arkansas and has had a hard life, weathering a lot of family heartbreak; now, she's developed arthritis, osteoporosis and has COPD (a chronic lung disease) so she needs help with housekeeping, cooking and general care – although, according to Becky, she's feistily determined to be as independent as possible. "She's a lot of fun; she's

always giving people trouble but in a good way,” Becky smiled. She enjoys being with her every afternoon.

Becky grew up in the Hillsboro M.B. Church. She reminisced about the old church: “It was beautiful. When I came here for Pastor Susan to interview me, I asked her to show me the sanctuary because I’d only ever been in the hallway before. And, seeing the stained glass windows and all the wood, it made me miss our old church all over again.” We laughed about what a rabbit warren her old church was and she said how much, as young kids, they enjoyed poking around all the hallways and rooms.

“When were you baptized?”

“When I was thirteen.”

“By Dennis Fast?”

“Yes. He was a great preacher.”

“Is there anything else you’d like to tell our congregation?”

“I’d like everyone to know that I’m a proud Christian woman and I have a lot of compassion. I would want everyone to feel welcome to visit with me. I would be happy to lend an ear. That’s what I enjoy. The one thing I know, for sure, about myself is that I have a giving spirit and I want to do something to help people where I feel I am making things easier for somebody, or make their day a bit brighter. I want to make an impact.”

On the emotional level, Becky has a nice introduction to our congregation in that she already knows or is familiar with several of us – Nadine Friesen, Deanne Duerksen, Tracy Hefley, and others. And, on the spiritual level, it’s uplifting to know that she’s so willing to help people on their path through life. May God richly bless all of us as our relationship develops – and may we all be a blessing to God.

PB

This isn’t Goodbye, just Au Revoir! *Laura’s musings as she doffs her secretary’s hat.*

Four years ago, I became your FMC office secretary. Shortly after beginning that role, I wrote a short piece in the *First Threshings*. It was a top ten of sorts about being your secretary. I thought it only fitting to close out my time as secretary with another top ten. So, here are the top ten things I learned as your secretary:

10. It is possible to attend and work where you worship. I have more respect and appreciation for Pastor Susan, various people, and committees than I would have experienced through just attending.

9. I also learned that it is difficult to attend Sundays and Wednesdays when people only see you as the secretary. My biggest regret of the job is that I could never just sit and enjoy a service, because my secretary hat stayed on. Some of this was my own fault – God bless my husband and children as I did “one more thing real quick” – and some of it is yours. If our new secretary attends any of our services, please remember that she is there as a person, and email her or call her the next day at the office.

8. The bulletin is the worst part of the job. No matter how many proofers we have and how many proofs we do, there is almost always a mistake.

And people are more than willing to tell you!

Please, have grace on Becky and Pastor Susan.

7. You all are one of the best parts of my job. As my time as secretary wound down, I realized that your little visits into my office were what brightened my day. I loved getting to know you and hear more about your lives. We have amazing people at FMC. Some would say the best.

6. This one goes along with number 7, but it deserves its own spot. I feel like I learned something from you every day; mostly tidbits about life, some scientific lessons, many Biblical truths, grammar lessons, and more. My favorite lessons were the ones about what God had taught you and the things that made me laugh. I heard some hilarious stories and even better jokes, especially from Mr. Glenn Goertz, who is the funniest person EVER.

5. I came into this job excited to serve. After all, I was taking over from Linda Mathis, who had the biggest servant’s heart. And while I continued to want to serve you and Pastor Susan, I quickly learned that there are not enough hours in the day to get the job done so I had to prioritize. So, please know that while Becky really is sweet and there to serve you, she has plenty to do at all times. So if there is something you can do easily, please do it and don’t dump it on her desk. I promise she

would love to serve you and will do so if she is able.

4. Eydie. That woman is amazing! She will cook anything for anyone for pennies yet it is always yummy! Working on Wednesdays always made me hungry as Eydie worked in the kitchen to prep the evening meal.

3. Joel Klaassen. I want to be like him when I grow up. Seriously, he is the best. Not only does he have the best jokes (you may be noticing a theme; clearly I am easily amused although I argue that FMC members are hilarious!), but he is always there when you need someone whether it is a proofreader, an IT guy, someone to laugh with, or more, Joel is your guy. My dream job is to get paid to follow Joel around on his daily adventures. Even one-handed, he does more things for this church than anyone will ever know.

2. Pastor Susan. I do not even have the words to express all that this woman means to me. She is the best boss and mentor I could ask for. And yes, she is as kind as she seems to be on Sundays. But she is also funny. I mean really funny! This woman has loved me through many of my worst moments and laughed with me in my best. And she cares about every member of our church more than anyone could even imagine. She gives more time to our members than she is paid for, and she does not complain about it. I am certain that even her

greatest fans would be blown away with how much time and energy she devotes to FMC.

1. And finally, I come back to you. You are what I learned most about during my time at FMC. I love you all. I love our intergenerational community. I love that I have people whom I want to adopt me (seriously, Doug and Pam, can we get the paperwork signed?), and people I want to adopt (any of the Diener kids, Carson, Victoria, Joe, and Velda). I love that my children have grandparent figures (Joel & Nancy, Glenn & Jan, Keith & Judy) as well as cousin and brother/sister type relationships (Reese, Maddox and Coop, Noah and Lana, Abby and Ellie, Carson and Caleb). Yes, I have learned all of this through my membership, but the lessons have been enhanced by my position as your secretary. I got to know you deeper. I cannot believe that God gave me this job for four years.

Please know, FMC family, how sad I am to leave you as secretary. However, I know that God is moving me along to teach and write. I also fully believe he has brought Becky to us for our benefit and for hers. She is so great and so are you. It is a match made in Heaven....literally. I wanted to leave this job while I still loved it, and I have managed to do that. I love you, FMC. And I cannot wait to see what is next for us all.

Spanish Gatherings

To God be the glory, great things is God doing!

A handful of us from First Mennonite Church have joined Juana Pritchard's call to have periodic gatherings of Spanish-speaking families and college students here in Hillsboro. About twice a semester, we Spanish Gathering folks host a Sunday evening time of fellowship, food and fun. Much of the visiting is in Spanish to provide a place for people living here in an Anglo culture to speak their own native tongue. The joy of being together is visible as we meet around a Mexican holiday or Spanish Christmas customs and foods.

Juana's call is to provide the organizing work and the Christian emphasis that includes prayer and singing. Not all who attend are believers, so gathering is a way of growing spiritually, as well as enjoying the sheer goodness of being together. But Juana rejects being a "lone ranger" organizer. She meets regularly with Pastor Susan, and our group of Spanish Gathering supporters is becoming more comfortable with our role of entering into relationships, learning more Spanish, and opening our hearts and homes to those with whom we don't normally interact due to barriers of language and culture. Enrollment for Spanish-speaking Tabor students changes each semester which means we will keep taking the initiative to invite and nurture those who are around at any given point. Spanish-speaking Tabor students come from a wide variety of counties – all are far from home. Meanwhile, our gatherings give a place to get to know the Hillsboro community's Spanish-speaking families as well.

Juana values working across congregational lines here in Hillsboro. First Mennonite helps support the minimal costs through our Mission & Service Fund and occasional use of our Fellowship Hall. We ask for your continued support in prayers of thanksgiving and for guidance as we journey on with our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters.

We will gather September 13, 5:30 to 7:30 pm in our Fellowship Hall, celebrating Mexican Independence Day, September 15. We will also gather December 6 at the Tabor athletic training center

for Christmas piñata food and fun. All are welcome to attend! FMC people who have attended include Susie Kliewer, Douglas and Nancy Graber, Jan and Deryll Amstutz, Tim Frye, Jim and Susan Jantzen. Joel and Lori Soohoo and Jon and Juana Pritchard are also involved.

SJ

Blast from the Past – VBS 2015

Since VBS was held at our church this year, Pastor Susan was the host pastor, supported by Norma Duerksen (Trinity) and Morita Truman (United Methodist) – all women, as someone remarked! Tracy Hefley was our M.C. – and a truly excellent one she was! With a bright smile, she stirred up the kids' enthusiasm; she encouraged us to donate money, food and back-to-school items for the less fortunate kids in our community, and she gave us instructions on where to be that evening, when.

The theme verse was, "**We can count on God's love. God is love!**" (1 John 4:16) and the kids learned it quickly. *(It's totally amazing to me to watch kids visit with each other while the adults are giving them instructions and/or trying to teach them something: I'm not sure I can credit them with half-listening but, when they'd finished chatting, they'd turn to the front and join in perfectly! Maybe I should just give them credit for being quick at learning to copy those around them!)*

Tracy was followed by two Time Travelers: Julie Linnens (in a sparkly gold tunic and shoes, and black leotard) and Asia Frye (in mustard-yellow jeans, leather vest, cap and googly glasses). Each evening, through their energetic renditions of Bible stories, we learned different attributes of God's love – Incredible: God hears Israel and sends an unlikely hero (Moses) (Exodus 3) – Faithful: God rescues Rahab, a true friend to His servants (Joshua 2) – Invincible: God strengthens David, a shepherd boy (1 Samuel 17) – Unconditional: God's Son forgives a woman with a sinful past (John 3:16, Luke 7) – Real: God answers the church and frees Peter from prison (Acts 12).

After the story time, the different age groups were rotated among singing, supper, mission, crafts and games. They learned several songs, each with all kinds of lively actions: the energy was palpable and the noise was sometimes deafening, but, several weeks later, the kids can still give you full renditions if you ask them! For mission, different people told us of their experiences in

places like Haiti and countries in Africa, the reason for the Marion County toy run, and making new friends through a basketball mission to Thailand; the kids were all very attentive. The crafts varied from turning a paper cup into a burning bush to painting rocks with a scripture verse; again, the kids were all very absorbed in their creations. And Jason Klanderud (ably assisted by his sister and Caleb Diener who showed great maturity in working with the kids) was in charge of the games. He was a whiz, coming up with all sorts of challenges on our small patch of grass: the kids had great fun.

The numbers fluctuated somewhat from one day to the next but 82 kids up through about-to-start sixth grade took part.

It's a huge amount of work to organize a week-long event like this so, many thanks to Laura Paulus, Tracy Hefley and everyone else who worked so well.

In more ways than one, this year's VBS was a blast!

PB

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

