



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

January 19, 2022

From Pastor Tom

Congregational Care: Whose Job Is It?

Let's talk about care within our (or any) congregation. Is it the pastor's job? Quick answer: of course! Is it a particular committee's job? Equally quick answer: of course! Is it the whole congregation's job? Another quick answer, at the outset: of course!

And now for a less "quick" explanation. Congregational care is shorthand for caring for the overall wellbeing of everyone who is part of a given congregation. One's "well-being" encompasses many things: our physical health, our emotional health; the health of our relationships, of our spirits; and of any other aspect of our humanity of personhood one imagine. Congregational care always begins with the question, "How are you doing?" Next, ideally, comes care-full listening to the answer. And finally, following up.

It absolutely is one of my jobs, as your pastor, to provide congregational care. It says so, in the "First Mennonite Church Manual of Policies and Practices," Section II, Page 2, under "Tasks": "With Care Committee, the Pastor will have pastoral care responsibilities, including visitation, responding to pastoral emergencies, caring for the bereaved, and premarital counseling. Conducting weddings and funerals is an important part of the Pastor's role. The Pastor will also be involved in the preparation of prospective members." Note, first of all, that it says "with Care Committee." As a church in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, you want your pastor to work in a collaborative way, as part of a team, or rather, teams. One of those teams at FMC is the Care Committee (see Section 1, Page 15 in the Manual for more information.) Your pastor is not responsible for providing congregational care all on his or her own. Nor do you want him to be. To be sure, I am hired (and paid) to use part of my time to that end, to ensure that that part of a congregation's overall ministry is carried out. But even if I used all of my time attending to congregational care, it wouldn't be enough—nor would it be sufficient. Which is why FMC has a Care Committee—so that congregational care is collaborative, is a shared ministry. For a biblical model, see Acts 6:1-7, having the sub-title or caption "Seven Chosen to Serve." In the early church, as it continued to grow, the original twelve disciples could not keep up with the ministries of that fledgling church, including "the daily distribution of food." They gathered the "whole community," and together they decided to appoint seven men to attend to such needs, freeing up the twelve to focus on devoting themselves to "prayer and to serving the word." This was the beginning of the concept of "church deacons." It is a matter of shared ministry, of dividing important tasks among multiple people.

But this is not just because I (or any pastor) could never do it all on my own. It is because I shouldn't do it all on my own. I'm not supposed to do it all on my own. One of the very purposes of the "church" (in Greek, *ekklesia*, the "called" people of God), is quite simply to care for one another. Congregational care

is not only a matter of expediency (as important as it is for care to be as expedient as possible). People of faith are called to care for one another. The church, as the body of Christ, is called to care for one another (scriptural references are too numerous to mention, but we could start with “love your neighbor as yourself.”) We are supposed to ask one another “How are you doing?” and then listen to the answer. We are supposed to respond, often in concrete ways, whether that is “the distribution of food,” or offering a ride to the doctor. We are supposed to do these things for at least two reasons: not only to fulfill a whole range of needs within a congregation, but also as a sign to the “watching world” of what God is like, and thus what God’s people are like. God wanted the people of Israel to be a beacon of light to the nations, and to that end gave them the Torah. Which happens to include instructions for how they were to care for one another.

In other words, congregational care is everyone’s job!

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Annual Meeting:** A reminder of our annual meeting this Sunday in the fellowship hall after the morning worship service. Because of Covid concerns, there will likely not be a carry-in meal as originally announced. More specific information will be coming on Friday morning. FMC members are especially encouraged to attend and participate in the meeting, but regular attenders are also welcome. Printed copies of our annual report will be in your mailbox soon. Also, review the proposed budget that was distributed recently. Let’s prepare prayerfully for this time together.
Doug Miller
- ☞ **Wednesdays at FMC.** Plans for Wednesdays at FMC this winter and spring and a starting date will be announced soon. In the meantime, Pastor Tom will be offering a sermon discussion class via Zoom at the link in the body of the email.
- ☞ **Buhler Mennonite Church’s ANNUAL CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP SUPPER is just a few weeks away on Wednesday, February 9.** While we will not have a dine-in experience in our church basement, we will be offering a carry-out featuring noodle soup, pie and bread. ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED THROUGH JANUARY 26. Call or text 620-664-7699 or 620-727-5128 to let us know how many orders you want. Pick up will be at the north entrance of the church from 4:00-6:30 on Wednesday, February 9. ENTER FROM THE SOUTH SIDE PARKING LOT ON B STREET. This is a free will offering with all proceeds going to outreach meals. Checks may be made out to Buhler Mennonite Church – cash donations will also be accepted that evening.
Buhler Mennonite Church – 220 W Ave B, Buhler, KS 67522
- ☞ **Hesston College invites you to enjoy a production of *Freedom Riders*** by the Mad River Theater Works Friday, Jan. 28 at 7:30 p.m. at Hesston Mennonite Church. The performance is offered as part of the 2021-2022 Sunflower Performing Arts season.
“This original play with live music looks at the work of the Freedom Riders – people, both black and white, who rode together on buses that crossed state lines in order to protest the illegal segregation practices still in use in the early 1960s. The play emphasizes the importance of working together and the value of non-violent protest. At this time when our nation, our world, is

engulfed in divisiveness and distrust, we need to examine these important ideas – collaboration, peace and trusting others – and this play will help us do so.”

- ☞ **Experience the Kauffman Museum’s annual Kansas Day event, “Famous Kansans,” Saturday, Jan. 29 from noon - 4 p.m., museum parking lot and grounds.** For more information, see the Kauffman Museum Facebook page or kauffmanmuseum.org

Other Announcements

- ☞ **As Western District Conference comes to the end of our fiscal year on January 31**, we invite you to share a gift with WDC during this season. We are grateful to many who have given their time and resources to WDC in 2021 to help our congregations **Witness & invite others to faith in Jesus Christ, Dwell in just & loving relationships, and Connect to God’s mission in the world.** As of December 31, contributions and other income are \$331,300. This leaves a gap of \$94,000 to meet our expenses year to date, so your generous gifts are invited to help close the gap towards WDC’s 2021 budget goal! You may make an online contribution [here](#) or send a check to Western District Conference, PO Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117. Thank you for your generosity!
- ☞ **WANTED** for the Kansas MCC Sale General Auction: Cars, Trucks, Tractors, Motorcycles, Campers, etc. Call Jerry Toews, 620-367-8257, for details and pickup NOW so we have time to get them cleaned up and ready for the sale in April. ALL proceeds go to MCC. We usually get GOOD prices for your donations. Help make a difference in the lives of those struggling around the world through MCC. Thank you!
- ☞ **Volunteering opportunities continue through the winter months!** The wish list is full of both items and volunteer projects for every group size, skill set and length of project. These items and projects help with the faith formation that happens at Camp Mennoscah. The list has more wishes and there are more projects to do. Email office@campmennoscah.org or call 620-2973290 to volunteer. See the [Wish List](#) for other ways to support Camp Mennoscah!

Verse of the Week

“But Jesus called for them and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’”–Luke 18:16-17 (NRSV)