

# Menno-Life



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As part of our summer series on “Bridges Among Us,” we’ve created an intergenerational Children’s Time. Above, Wanda Stopher reads “Let’s Talk About Race” by Julius Lester.

*Note: This is part II of a two-part article. Part I was printed in the July Menno-Life and considered the question, “Why Sing Old Songs?”*

## Why Sing New Songs?

*Psalm 98:1a “Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things;”*

In the Bible God is often praised as Creator of all! What’s more, the image of God the Creator is often linked closely with the image of God the Redeemer. This pairing is at the heart of our understanding of God who transforms death into life. In redemption, God continues God’s work of creation. In praise of a constantly re-creating God, one who is ever active, surprising us, birthing newness, we sing new songs because God’s faithfulness is ever new in the world. Testifying to this God of newness compels us to respond with new songs.

The world is ever changing, and the church of every age is called upon to make application of the Word of God to its particular place and time. The church is called upon to speak the good news of Christ in a way that the message is relevant and meaningful to the world. The message itself is

timeless, but the presentation must speak to a particular context. So new songs testify in a way that the message can be heard and received by people living here and now.

Singing new songs can help us express hospitality to the stranger. It helps us remember what it's like to be in a new situation, and therefore, to welcome others with humility and grace. As we learn new songs from other countries and cultures, even singing in unfamiliar languages, we remember that Christ, not our particular language or culture, is the center of our faith. As we learn new songs of faith we realize that we have much to learn from the faith of our sisters and brothers in the many other parts of the world. When we sing new songs, we remember what it's like to be on the margins, living with uncertainty, and embracing others in humility.

We are a changing and growing people of God. We continue to develop, to move and change along the way as we seek to be faithful disciples of Christ. We experience growth both as individuals and as a congregation. We can't help but respond with new songs as we grow and mature and experience new depths of faith. Singing new songs can be both a vehicle to growth in our lives with Christ, as well as an expression of growth.

It is our privilege to learn the new song of salvation that comes to us through Christ Jesus. It will be our eternal joy to sing and worship with God's people. Revelation 14:2-3 paints a picture of worship in God's eternal dwelling place this way: *"And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth."* In preparation for our eternal worship, we sing new songs with great joy and anticipation.

-- Wanda Stopher

### **Dates to remember**

August 6 – Commission/committee annual reports due to church office

August 13 – Charles Buller, Leonard and Antoinette Kiswangi, presentation on crisis in Congo, 5 p.m., FH

August 16 – Janie and Neal Blough, mission partners with Mennonite Mission Network in Paris, France, 7 p.m., FH

August 20 – Congregational meeting, 9:15 a.m., FH

August 20 – Communion during worship

August 25 – Menno-Life deadline

August 26 – Commission Reorganization, Village Park, 1-5 p.m.

August 27 – Church picnic, Village Park, noon

### **Two missionary presentations scheduled during August**

You are invited to join **Charles Buller**, a non-resident missionary with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, and **Leonard and Antoinette Kiswangi** to learn the latest on the unfolding crises in the Congo on Sunday, August 13, at 5 p.m. at FMC. They'll discuss unprecedented opportunities for grace to bring healing to this beleaguered nation. The Kiswangis lead Africa Enterprise RDC which works at conflict resolution, leadership development, and evangelization across Africa. They are also instrumental partners in the Congo Leadership Coaching Network (Charles' ministry in association with AIMM.)

**Janie and Neil Blough**, our mission partners currently serving with Mennonite Mission Network in Paris, France, will report on their work in France, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 16 in the fellowship hall. The Bloughs teach in a variety of settings and provide leadership as serve as worship leaders and preachers at the Mennonite congregation in Châtenay-Malabry, as well as for other French-Mennonite congregations. They serve on the staff of the Paris Mennonite Center.

## From the stewardship commission

### Do we need contribution envelopes?

The answer is “No” and “Yes.”

“No” is the answer for e-donations. With the start of e-giving, envelopes are not necessary for those who choose to make automatic e-donations. The feedback regarding e-giving seems to be quite positive. It is a safe method of giving and the need for envelopes is eliminated. Reports are automatically generated for the church and recorded in bank statements.

“Yes” is the answer for traditional givers. Envelopes are so important to the offering counters that every donation is matched to an envelope. If a check is donated without an envelope, one is created for it on Monday morning. For every donation there must be an envelope.

We might also wonder “Why is an envelope so important?” Once a check is deposited in the bank, the envelope is all that our church has for our records as a “paper trail” to each donation. The information is ultimately keyed into the personal contribution records using the envelopes as source documents after the hand work is done. The envelopes are also used for error detection, correction and documentation. The offering counters cross-check the sum of all envelope amounts against the cash and checks received. If there is an inconsistency there is work to do until the error is found. Important notations are recorded on each envelope as needed.

For cash donations, envelopes are most important. Without a name, credit cannot be entered in the contribution record.

All donations are appreciated, with, or without envelopes. The offering counters do not mind writing envelopes. They like their work, especially when the donor writes a legible check, a good date and signature. Legibility is most important, with a clear memo regarding any special instructions. E-donations, however, save envelopes, save time, and prevent errors.

*-- Bill Suter, Stewardship Commission Chair*

### **Time to get started on your School Kits!**

“Back to School” sales start soon. That means the beginning of MCC School Kit collection at FMC. During the sales, kit contents can be purchased for about \$5 or less. Let’s stretch ourselves in filling a large number of kits this year!

Please limit your generosity to the following items for each kit:  
4 spiral or perforated notebooks (8 ½ x 10 ½ in. and 70 sheets)  
8 unsharpened pencils  
1 ruler (flat, flexible plastic; indicating both 30 cm and 12 in.)  
12 colored pencils (in packaging)  
1 large pencil eraser

We also need bag fabric and people to sew bags. (Heavier fabric is ideal for school kits.) Sewing directions are on the kit card in the kit collection area of Fellowship Hall. Some precut bags and cords are also there.

*-- Sue Schaaf and Jean Miller*



## Policy manuals now available

# Three Deacons use their gifts to fulfill need of the church

*How did this project come about? How long have you been working on it?*

In 2015 - 2016 when the Deacons were working on developing a welcoming statement it became clear that FMC did not have a place a member could go to find answers related to FMC policies and guidelines.

In the middle of that, Carrie Mast preached a sermon challenging the congregation to go beyond what traditionally is being asked of us to serve the church. She suggested we should look at what we see the church needs and then trust ourselves enough to offer our gifts to fulfill these needs. I was inspired by her message. FMC clearly needed a policy manual of some sort and I am good at organizing things. I was ready to take on the policy notebook challenge and I knew just who to approach to work with me on it – Shelby Cluts and Lisa Shelly. They agreed to help and we got

Council's blessing to proceed. We started working on the notebook in the spring of 2016 and finished compiling it on July 26, 2017.

*What did it involve?*

In March 2016 we contacted all the chairs of commissions and requested any documents they had that they felt would fit into a policy manual. In the meantime, we poured through all the minutes of the commissions and Council going back as far as the 1990s. We documented any reference we could find about any policy that was discussed or passed by each group. We contacted the chairs with questions about every policy we managed to find trying to discover what current policy and practices are. We also tried to track down specific guidelines and policies mentioned in the minutes, but for which no policy document could be found.

*Did commissions update, write/rewrite policies?*

Yes, absolutely, some did - and many thanks to those commissions! Sometimes it was a simple response of, "Yes, this is exactly what we still do." In other cases commissions spent many hours revising and updating their policies. And, sadly, some commissions did not respond.

*What do the notebooks include?*

Commission secretary and chair responsibilities are included so the notebook can be maintained in the most efficient way. The notebook is organized both by commissions and by topics. Included within each commission section is a list of all the duties/responsibilities of each commission as stated in FMC's constitution. In some cases there is also a list of areas that fall under the direction of the commission where no guidelines were found, so those areas can be addressed in the future. Every guideline/policy found that had been approved by the commission is also included.

Popular topics such as *Facility Use*, *Voluntary Service*, *Weddings*, have a tab of their own for easy access when a member has a question.

*How do you see them being helpful in creating a more efficient organization?*

In a church with seven different commissions, a council, too many committees to count, and several staff members, all who are creating new policies and proceeding according to existing policies, it is helpful to have everyone's policies in one place. The policy notebook will be given to each commission chair, the church moderator, and all the pastors. There will be a copy of the notebook in the church office, which will be continually updated as new policies and guidelines are approved. This will provide easy access to any FMC member who might find himself/herself curious about a church practice. In addition, all notebooks will be updated annually and distributed to the new set of church leaders, to ease transitions into new positions.



**Front row from left, Shannon Thiebeau, Danielle Novak, Anna Biesecker-Mast, Jacob Biesecker-Mast, Patrick Estell, Ana Neufeld Weaver, Alex Harsha and Sophia Gott. Back row from left, Rhonda Winstead, Grace Paquin, Walt Paquin, Christopher Harnish, Seth Andreas, Christian Harsha, Isaac Andreas, Douglas Nester and Tig Intagliata. (Photo by Kathy Lehman Harsha.)**

*To see Sophia Gott's movie trailer of the youth convention experiences, see:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkhkwLfc7JI&feature=youtu.be>

### **SHYF convention report**

After many months of preparation and fundraising, 15 First Mennonite Church youth and sponsors attended MCUSA Convention. During the week, we attended seminars focused on technology, racism and immigration, how we can use the gifts God has given us, politics, and many others. Worship was also a highlight of the week – the worship band was The Walking Roots Band, an Americana folk group from Harrisonburg, VA. We listened to messages from Kim Litwiler, Scott Roth, Melody

Panell, and several others. We also participated in a Servant Project where we painted hallways of a charter school for children with special needs.

We enjoyed hanging out in the exhibit and recreation hall, where we could snag a t-shirt from various Mennonite organizations or play dodgeball. On Thursday night, our group ventured to WonderWorks, an interactive science entertainment center. There, we made giant bubbles in a bubble lab, rested on a bed of nails, played laser tag, navigated a rope challenge course, and much more.

Our week kept us very busy, but we returned with energy and lots of stories to share. We invite you to talk to any of us about our convention experiences.

During the FMC Sunday school hour on July 16, we reported our convention experience to the congregation and offered a light breakfast as a special thank you to the congregation for helping us meet our fundraising goal. We are so grateful for your continued support.

Those attending conference included Isaac Andreas, Seth Andreas, Patrick Estell, Jacob Biesecker-Mast, Anna Biesecker-Mast, Douglas Nester, Christopher Harnish, Sophia Gott, Ana Neufeld Weaver, Grace Paquin, Danielle Novak, Tig Intagliata, Walt Paquin, Rhonda Winstead, and Shannon Thiebeau. Alex and Christian Harsha, the great-niece and -nephew of George and Anita Lehman, also joined our group.

Painting a hallway during their service project were (from bottom up) Jacob Biesecker-Mast, Patrick Estell, Ana Neufeld Weaver, Danielle Novak, Anna Biesecker-Mast and Grace Paquin.

## Reports available from MCUSA Convention

For a look at daily activity at the MCUSA convention, you'll find links to "The Orlando Squeeze," a daily newsletter, on the convention website at <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/>.

The Future Church Summit Outcomes Report is found at <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/future-church-summit-outcomes-report/>.

Additional information is available by reading the blog posts at <http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?e=bde271d66f&u=97f16d9c230780d6354d01572&id=9e755f61b9>.

If you'd like to read some of these reports, but don't have access to the internet, please contact the church office for some print copies.

