

Menno-Life



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Jessica Smith (center), Adriel's director of foster care and adoption, recently met in the FMC parlor with two Adriel employees. Adriel staff regularly meet at FMC because we're a central location for their multiple locations.

Sharing our resources: Learning a classic *Llama Llama* lesson

Build a tower. Make a moat.

Nelly's dolly sails a boat.

What can Llama Llama add?

Maybe sharing's not so bad.

In Anna Dewdney's children's book, "Llama, llama, Time to Share," Nelly Gnu comes to Llama's house for a play date. Llama isn't sure he wants to share ALL of his toys. When Nelly takes his Fuzzy Llama, the two fight over the toy and it is ripped in half. Mama fixes Fuzzy but sets him on the stairs, telling Llama he may have it back when he is "sure that you can share."

It's a classic children's story of learning to share, but also a lesson for all ages. Like Llama, it isn't always easy to allow "strangers" to use our "things" and we're not always happy when something is broken or used carelessly. But then we remember how the innkeeper made room for Mary and Joseph or how Jesus shared bread with the thousands, and the whole concept of sharing takes on real meaning.

Some days at First Mennonite are busier and louder than others and some days require more clean-up than others. Like Llama, we sometimes have to regain our perspective on sharing and remembering that in that, we find satisfaction.

Sharing our resources can mean helping out when money is tight or giving a sack of food to the local food pantry. But we also share one of our most valuable resources – our church building. While many local churches are locked and stand empty and silent during the week, FMC sometimes fairly sings with the sounds from the various groups using our space.

During the school year, we provide a meeting place for the Bluffton Weekday Christian Ed classes. Several days a week, we hear children's excited voices as they file in and out on their way to and from the elementary school. After school, Bluffton University students tutor elementary children as a part of Karl's Club, a tutoring program funded by money provided by the late Karl and Ada Gierman.

Wondering what other groups share our facility?

- Moms in Prayer, an international organization with a local chapter, meets once a week during the school year. When the Ohio state director heard about the local group meeting here, she requested use of the church to hold an organizational meeting with another woman planning to begin another chapter in Ohio.
- Twice a year, the American Red Cross holds a community blood drive in the fellowship hall. We provide not just the facility but also soup, sandwiches and dessert for blood donors. (We've heard from a former Red Cross employee that FMC's blood drive numbers are higher than some of the other area drives because our food is so much better and more generous.)
- Once a month, some employees of Adriel, which provides foster and residential care, as well as arranging adoptions for children, meet at FMC because we're a central location for their various offices. They often express their thanks for FMC's generosity.
- The Et Cetera board (overseers of Et Cetera, Ten Thousand Villages and Book Reviews, meets one night a month.
- Bluffton University's nutrition association holds its annual November fundraiser meal in the fellowship hall, drawing attendees from the community, as well as the church.
- When the Bluffton Farmers' Market is open, FMC offers the use of its downstairs restrooms to vendors at the market.

Some may wonder what First Mennonite "gets" out of all of our sharing. We're developing relationships and building community and, as Llama Llama learned, there is great satisfaction in sharing.

-- Mary Pannabecker Steiner

Happy birthday to:

Margaret Weaver, 95, Jan. 8

Glennys Henry, 92, Jan. 11

Paul Dyck, 91, Jan. 14

Mary Amstutz, 86, Jan. 14

Mary Anne Moser, 84, Jan. 19

Evelyn Luginbuhl, 94, Jan. 25

We offer prayers for:

Phyllis Friesen and her children, Janine Paul, Jon Friesen and Julie Friesen. Phyllis' husband, Ron, died December 3 at home. A private graveside service was held in December.

Marilyn Diller, who continues to recuperate after a short hospitalization at St. Rita's Medical Center. Cards may be sent to her c/o Larry Diller, 11575 Bentley Road, Bluffton, OH 45817.

Mennonite Women to discuss “Mentoring Others”

“Mentoring Others” is the theme for Mennonite Women, Monday, Jan. 9, at 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Marlene Kropf, author “Faith Travels,” summarizes mentoring or spiritual direction as “Soul friends and spiritual friends are people who listen deeply to each other’s spiritual journey and offer companionship along the way. They do not solve each other’s problems. Instead, by patient listening and asking good questions, they assist their friends to discover how God is at work and how God might be calling them. Such companionship is especially valuable during times of transition.” Ruth Naylor, presenter for the evening, has strong experience in spiritual direction. Devotions will be led by Laurel Neufeld Weaver. Judy Diller and Jane Weaver will provide refreshments.

Mentor/mentee breakfast January 15

A breakfast for mentors is planned for Sunday, Jan. 15 from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. This is a resourcing time for those who serve as mentors to youth at FMC.

-- Carol Welty, mentor coordinator

MCC Great Lakes alumni event January 21

MCC Great Lakes will hold an alumni event Saturday, Jan. 21 at First Mennonite. Those in this area who have served with MCC Great Lakes are invited to attend a dinner and program that evening. Additional details will be forthcoming.

Getting to know the congregation

Editor’s note: In September, we began a series in which we briefly profile those among us, focusing on the work they do now or have done in the past. We’ll touch all ages and all areas of work. Jesus told us that all work is honorable if done honestly and well; it’s important to recognize that all of us work in different ways.

This month we’re getting reacquainted with some of our young adults in voluntary service.

Ashton Cluts

While serving one year with SALT(MCC), I live and work at Camp El Olam in the middle of Kwa-Zulu Natal South Africa. The closest cities are Pietermaritzburg (Inland) and Durban (Coast).

I spend some days doing administrative tasks including emailing, phone calls, and bookings. My main responsibility is to help with programs, leadership, team building or Bible education for the youth groups and school groups that visit. I help facilitate activities, run and serve meals, and whatever else needs done to keep the camp running. I really enjoy getting to work with so many different people.



I live on the farm with the teachers at the farm school on the farm, as well. I love them all and they have become great friends. I also spend a lot of time with the managers of the camp, Rae and Garth Hawyes, and their daughters, Olivia and Shauna. They have become my second family while I am here. I spend my free time reading, swimming, riding horses (and trying not to fall off) and spending time with the Hawyes family.

Thank you to everyone back home who is continually sending me emails, thoughts, prayers, and care packages!

Halle Steingass

I am serving one year with Mennonite Voluntary Service in Seattle and working with a daycare/preschool in Capitol Hill, the neighborhood in which I reside. This school is called the Beginnings School, and I am a "floater" teacher. This means I float to the four different classrooms: infant, toddler, preschool 1 and 2, as needed.



I live with six other people, three of whom are Mennonite volunteers. The other three are associates who work or are in graduate school in Seattle.

This year started out very rocky. I switched placements and had very little support from my support committee because of unforeseen circumstances. This required me to find work by myself, which created a lot of stress and feeling very alone. However, since starting at my current placement, I have found routine, new friends, and started to create more of a community.

I have learned that I am more resilient than I thought, and that it truly rains here a lot.

I am most enjoying the mountains and my weekly hot yoga class. I am also enjoying being much more mobile than I have ever been since having my hips replaced. This has allowed me to hike and participate in more intense physical activities.

During my spare time I sleep, play piano, go to the park, have dance parties with some of my housemates, knit, explore Seattle, broaden my cooking skills, enjoy the outdoors, and get to know my housemates better.

Lucas Harnish

I'm serving one year with Mennonite Voluntary Service in Tucson, AZ. I've been able to do a wide variety of things such as fixing coolers, roof leaks, electrical work, toilets, and some welding. But the majority of what I do is still pretty low key and doesn't take too long to complete.

I've also been able to use my Spanish some when I go to get paperwork from Hispanic clients or fill out applications for clients. I work about 3- 5 hours a day depending on how I feel, which has been overall better -- a good amount I'd attribute to the fact that I've been a lot more disciplined with my eating, sleeping, and resting schedules which gives me more energy and regularity. It's been really nice to feel like I have a purpose and a



regular job where I can feel useful.

My house mates are awesome...we get along really well and have decently similar interests. So we are starting a board game collection and have a bucket list of fun things we hope to do before the end of the year. For example, we are planning on taking some of the younger youth to Chuck E. Cheese's in a couple weeks as a house activity.

Cassidy Bush

Service Adventure in Anchorage, Alaska, so far has been fun yet challenging. I live with five other kids my age, all of who are in Service Adventure. As a unit, we get along pretty well.

Two days a week, I work at Parachutes Teen Club and Resource Center, a place for teens to play pool, basketball, ping pong, Wii, Xbox, and board games, and eat snacks that I fix in the cafe. There are usually 10 - 40 kids in this space at a time, which is open after school until 8 p.m. In the mornings, I'm administrative assistant, entering data and typing up documents.



My other placement is at the Children's Lunchbox, a branch of the Beans Cafe soup kitchen. I help make 70- 250 meals for different organizations, such as Alaska Native Heritage Center and the Salvation Army. I'm also dishwasher and help deliver donated food to schools for their weekend food program. They also have a pretty steady stream of volunteers at the Children's Lunchbox. The work varies, which is nice, the people are very unique, and I get tons of free food working there!

The best part of living in Anchorage (besides having family here and the great Alaskan outdoors) is Prince of Peace Mennonite Church. The church is very small – about 30 individuals -- so we all know each other really well. On our first Sunday here, they had a progressive dinner for us. Since we're so small, we're able to have a more casual, welcoming service.

Life in the unit is good. I like the pattern we've established; the people in my unit and I are starting to feel like siblings. We also have activities, such as learning components, worship nights and simple living challenges. Learning components are new things we learn each week. We take turns leading and can either ask people from the church to come in and teach us something or actually teach the thing ourselves. For instance, my first learning component was to watch the second presidential debate and discuss it. Others have taught us about planes and how to bake pies. We have worship nights every Monday and take turns leading them. I took the unit to a worship service at Eagle River Presbyterian Church where my Aunt Piper preaches.

Simple living challenges require us to choose a challenge such as avoiding processed food while at home, not using the dishwasher or overhead lights or the internet. The point is to remind us that not all people in the world are as lucky as we are and to reduce our carbon footprint.

Hannah Chappell-Dick

I work with Back on My Feet Atlanta, serving as the program coordinator intern. Back on my Feet is an organization that uses running as a tool of empowerment for people experiencing homelessness. We connect people to essential housing, training, and employment resources.

We have been very understaffed, so my jobs change day-to-day, based on the needs of the organization. On a typical day, I wake up at 5:15 and jog to the place where we meet for the morning run with the guys. We do some warmups, circle up, do the serenity prayer and

announcements and a cheer, and then run as a group. Afterwards, I jog home to shower and take a nap. I wake up around 9:30 or 10, eat brunch, and ride the bus to the office. I usually stay in the office until late afternoon, doing paperwork, planning fundraisers, and contacting race directors. Then, I head home to do a second run or make dinner for my housemates. We eat as a group four

days a week. Finally, I go to my room and read before heading to bed around 9 p.m.

On Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday, I have practice from 7 a.m.-noon or so. In the afternoons on these days, I either go to work for a few hours or see the massage therapist or chiropractor.

I have learned that I LOVE living in the city and in the warm South. There's so much to see and do, and I'm realizing how much the world has to offer. Each year of my



life, I feel like I have gotten happier and better equipped. Right now, I feel like I'm in a watershed moment in my life as I discern where I'm feeling called/led.

I love running post-collegiately! My teammates are wonderful; I feel like I have older sisters. The experience has been incredibly hard so far. I'm realizing that the people who toe the line at the Olympics aren't just talented -- they work REALLY, really hard and dedicate their minds, bodies, and souls to the sport. All my life I've been taught moderation: to stay well rounded and make sure not to put too much stock in any one pursuit. But in Atlanta, I'm being asked to put more of myself into this sport than ever before, and I'm still in the process of making that choice. Training at this level is completely immersive. It takes every ounce of physical energy that I have. It's a greater sacrifice than I ever realized. It's life-giving in my soul, but physically and emotionally exhausting. I love it, almost always.

Youth activity schedule a busy one

Oh, December. What a whirlwind of a month! The SHYF began December with an Advent pancake breakfast fundraiser, complete with seasonal flavors and live music. Those who attended the breakfast enjoyed fellowship, a complete breakfast (including snowman pancakes) and instrumental Christmas music performed by our talented youth. Thanks to all who came out to support us; with your help we raised \$655 to put towards our convention costs!



Both of the youth groups also celebrated Christmas by having some fellowship time watching Christmas movies, playing games, and catching up with our friends who are home over the break. We also carried out our annual tradition of decorating the sanctuary for Christmas.

Now we're looking forward to the winter retreats in January at Camp Friedenswald! We would appreciate your prayers for snow so we can go sledding and use the tube run.

-- Shannon Thiebeau, youth ministry director