

Menno-Life



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**Early morning
baptism, Easter
Sunday**

Right, Wanda Stopher,
Seth Andreas, George
O'Reilly

Below left, Wanda
Stopher, Annalise Nisly

Below right, Patrick and
Melinda Estell



Baptism helps us remember our promises

Whenever we observe special acts of the church: baptisms, communion, parent-child dedications, weddings, it serves to remind us of promises we ourselves have previously made. When I'm present at a baptism, I'm reminded of promises made at my baptism. When I attend a wedding, I remember promises I made at my wedding.

This year, however, listening to their faith statements on Maundy Thursday and receiving the nine youth into membership through their baptisms, it wasn't so much my baptism that the experience called to mind, but the promises made by God's people to these youth when they were children, in services of parent-child dedications. In parent-child dedication, we promise as parents, family, and church family, to teach and nurture our children in faith as they test and question and grow in their understandings of who Jesus is. We promise to pray for them and play with them, to support them and remember always that they are born of God. Several youth noted that the step of baptism seemed like a natural "next step" in their life of faith.

In this way, I believe that their baptisms are also a testimony to promises made and kept to them over the course of many years. These promises have been kept in various ways, through nursery care, by Sunday school teachers, Venture Club leaders, youth sponsors, mentors, through friendships with peers and across generations, in small groups, through financial support of youth programs and activities, and through many, many prayers offered on their behalf. Our words of reception of these youth following baptism anticipate that the congregation will continue to keep these promises, as the youth become adults, choose service around the world, marry, begin families of their own, experience loss and celebrate accomplishments.

Our words of reception, written by Victoria Woods-Yee, also call to mind the promises we make to be a community of support for each other: "*The skies stand as a pledge between God and us as we receive you into the body of Christ. In sunshine and storms we are with you: to celebrate graduations and marriages. To bury and mourn your dead. To rejoice in and dedicate your children. Both to laugh with you and to wipe away your tears. We all are the family of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit. Here to love and serve one another with compassion, forgiveness, and thanksgiving. We welcome you with open arms and hearts. Let us live the Mystery together anew.*"

May the reverberations of our promises continue to shape us into Christ-likeness and to give form to the living breathing Spirit of Christ present in this community of faith.

-- Wanda Stopher

Events/dates to remember

- May 5-6 – Bluffton University musical, 7:30 p.m.
- May 7 – Bluffton University commencement, 2 p.m.
- May 8 – Mennonite Women, 7 p.m.
- May 8 – Palestinian and Jewish Voices for Peace, 7 p.m., Lima Mennonite
- May 14 – Youth Sunday
- May 14 – Youth cupcake sale
- May 14 – Conclusion of youth auction
- May 19 – Menno-Life deadline
- May 21 – Mentor breakfast
- May 27 – Bluffton High School commencement, 7 p.m.

Saying farewell...

Lucia Unrau and Peter Terry

Lucia will be joining the faculty at Murray State University, KY, as Professor of Music and Music Department Chair. The Racer music department is one of the oldest accredited music programs in the country with 24 full-time faculty and approximately 175 music majors. Peter will continue his work as a composer and conductor, with some adjunct employment at the university. Our address will be: 1326 Duiguid Dr., Murray, KY 42071. (It is pronounced "do good" -- I know you were wondering!) We very much appreciate how FMC has embraced our family for the past 23 years. We both feel privileged to be able to serve and worship with you. We will miss you, but remember, we can always see you on video!

Lavon and Carol Welty

In 2002, Dorothy Nickel Friesen invited us to attend FMC until our plans clarified for our next steps. Now after 15 wonderful years as members of FMC those plans have clarified; we've moved to Goshen, IN. Our new address is 1417 Hampton Circle, Goshen, IN 46526. Our cell phone numbers will remain the same (we are dropping land line service.) Our new bedroom and bath in our basement is ready for hosting any who need a place to stay while in Goshen. We wish God's blessings on FMC as it moves forward and we look forward to occasional visits back to Allen County and FMC.

Linda and Ron Headings

Ron Headings has accepted an interim position at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah. Ron begins this new role May 1 and Linda will be joining him soon after the school year ends. Their son, Jake, begins an internship May 15 in Urbana, IL, as part of his graduate program at the University of Illinois. Their son, Luke, will complete his senior year at Manchester University in Indiana next year. The Headings plan to return to Bluffton in one to two years.

Summer Music: Pianists, organists, song leaders, musicians needed

There are again opportunities for offering your musical gifts during the worship services this summer.

Opportunities include:

- Lead the singing for our opening songs
- Play piano or organ
- Provide special music during the service, vocally or instrumentally, as a soloist or in an ensemble

Please contact our Director of Music, Mark Suderman, at 419.230.5368 or at sudermanme@bluffton.edu. If you have some specific dates in mind when you could offer your musical gifts, please let Mark know. Thank you!

Mennonite Women to hear panel on life transitions

Mennonite Women will meet Monday, May 8, at 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall for the final program of the 2016-2017 year. A panel of five women will discuss various life transitions they have experienced – parenting, career transition/retirement, going to and from service, empty nest and widowhood. Elfrieda Ramseyer will lead devotions, “New Beginning.” Marlene Kropf writes in her final devotional chapter, “New beginnings provide potential opportunities for vibrant spiritual growth. Though it may be more comfortable to remain settled in familiar places, God often calls us to leave our securities, cross a threshold, and receive a new identity.” Ask yourself how new beginnings have spiritually transformed our lives. Special Celtic music will be provided by Joyce Hostetler’s dulcimer group. Refreshments will be prepared and served by Lisa Shelly and Mary Edmiston.

We have a kitchen committee!

A new kitchen committee is now in place. With Mary Edmiston as contact person, along with Sue Schaaf and Mary Ann Suter, this group plans to oversee operations for both kitchens. Please be aware of any new signage or other changes as they develop. We appreciate their willingness to serve the church in this way.

-- Nurture Commission

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 connecting with Jacob and Stephanie Litwiller

Stephanie:

Where do you work?

I teach second grade at St. Gerard (elementary school in Lima.)

Describe your job.

I teach kids all subject areas as well as religion. Right now my students are excited for their First Communion at the end of April.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy hearing the kids' stories and jokes. I also enjoy the moment when a struggling student understands a concept.

What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work?

I enjoy reading but right now work keeps me busy so there is not a lot of time to read.

Who are your family members at FMC?

Jacob

Jacob:

Where do you work?

I am the band director at Kalida Schools. From 2012 to 2016, I was the band and choir director at Lima Catholic Schools.

Describe your job.

As the band director, I see grades 5-12 throughout the day. In addition to band classes, I direct the marching band and pep band. Since we don't have a football team, our marching band is a competition band competing across Ohio. Part of my job is to also teach fourth through sixth grade general music classes.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Getting to make music every day and giving my students an opportunity to be successful at something that they can take with them the rest of their lives.

What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work?

If I'm not at school I'm probably out for a run. I'm running my fourth marathon in May. I'm also a big Columbus Crew fan. You can find me at most of their home games.

Who are your family members at FMC?

Stephanie

Chalk testimonies reveal thoughts about baptism

In addition to their faith statements presented on Maundy Thursday, the catechism class members presented chalk testimonies at their baptisms, indicating the various ways they were thinking about baptism and the difference this would make for their lives. Brief messages of a word or phrase were written on one side. They turned the poster board over to reveal the new message, as shown below. The first side message is listed first, followed by an ellipsis and the new message.

Seth Andreas, son of Jan Wiebe and Jonathan Andreas

Mentor: Bruce Steingass

Chalk testimony: confined...free

Anna Biesecker-Mast, daughter of Gerald and Carrie Mast, Sue and Bill Trollinger

Mentor: Karen McCullough

Chalk testimony: searching...finding hope

Jacob Biesecker-Mast, son of Gerald and Carrie Mast, Sue and Bill Trollinger

Mentor: Steve Harnish

Chalk testimony: confused...on the path

Patrick Estell, son of Melinda and John Estell

Mentor: Doug Luginbill

Chalk testimony: I was trapped in the labyrinth...but I found the Golden Rope

Sophia Gott, daughter of Liana and Chris Gott

Mentor: Lois Wetherill

Chalk testimony: broken...renewing

Annalise Nisly, daughter of Lamar and Deborah Nisly

Mentor: Beth Raeburn

Chalk testimony: I searched for God in the answers...I found God in the questions

Danielle Novak, daughter of Jeanne and Mark Novak

Chalk testimony: asleep...awake

Grace Paquin, daughter of Rhonda Winstead and Walt Paquin

Mentor: LuAnn Stuckey

Chalk testimony: I once was lost...but now I'm found

Ana Neufeld Weaver, daughter of Laurel and Paul Neufeld Weaver

Mentor: Carmen Moser

Chalk testimony: I was one voice...now I sing in harmony with God

Summer plans for youth

The youth groups will lead the annual youth worship service on Sunday, May 14. A cupcake sale and conclusion of the silent auction fundraiser will follow the service. This summer, the SHYF has their sights on the MCUSA Youth Convention in Orlando, FL, from July 4-8. We will spend the weeks leading up to convention preparing through Bible study. We are excited to attend and can't wait to share with you what we have learned when we return. After convention, summer is a time of

Sabbath and slowing down for the youth as summer camps, family vacation, and summer sports and band practice take off. We will still meet occasionally during the summer for relational time.

-- Shannon Thiebeau

Central District Conference annual meeting June 22-24

First Mennonite joins other congregations in our region (Grace Mennonite, Lima Mennonite, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, Emmaus Road Fellowship, and Shalom Community) to serve as host congregations for the Central District Conference annual meeting June 22 – 24. All activities will be held on the campus of Bluffton University. The weekend will open with a golf outing and RAWTools event (*see more information below.*) RAWTools will lead worship in Founders Hall on Thursday evening. Volunteers will be needed for many tasks. Watch the bulletin for announcements with invitations to serve as host homes for those who prefer that option to staying on campus or in hotels. We will need help to provide childcare for nursery- and preschool-age children throughout the weekend. Hosts may also be needed to help with a variety of other services, such as set up/clean up for snack times during business sessions, serving as ushers in worship, assisting guests with mobility concerns as we move between different buildings and other needs as they arise. Contact Lori Nester if you are interested in learning more about ways to become involved!

RAWtools will be holding an event on Thursday, June 22. If you know someone willing to donate a gun for the blacksmith demonstration which will transform weapons into garden tools, please contact RAWtoolEvent@gmail.com. RAWtools is a work of performance art, replacing narratives of violence with narratives of creation. Throughout the afternoon on Thursday, folks will be able to watch a blacksmith as guns are forged into garden tools. By the event's end, a physical representation of the Bible's prophecy of "beating your swords into plowshares" from Isaiah and Micah is created in actuality. People will experience opportunities for healing, purpose, and a reinvigoration of imagination as a new reality is encountered in this physical representation of "forging peace." Learn more about RAWtools at <http://rawtools.org/>.

Everyone is invited to "Peacemaker," the CDC worship service Thursday, June 22 at 7:30 p.m. in Founders Hall. The service will include songs, art, stories, scripture, and a gun will be transformed into a gardening hoe.

Outside First Mennonite...

The Jewish and Palestinian Voices for Peace Tour will be at Lima Mennonite on Monday, May 8, at 7 p.m. Amy Schuster, of Jewish Voice for Peace Central Ohio, and Jonathan Kuttab, a Mennonite and Palestinian human rights attorney, will discuss diverse perspectives on Israel-Palestine and prospects for peace in the current political climate. The tour is one effort to implement the Mennonite Church USA "Israel/Palestine Partners in Peacemaking" resolution, which was adopted in 2015. A separate resolution on Israel/Palestine that was tabled at the 2015 Convention is coming back to delegates this summer following further study and revision. For more information, see the poster on the Upcoming Events bulletin board.

Rally Point Youth Center is an afterschool ministry for youth in Lima supported by area Mennonite churches. Volunteers from FMC provide afterschool snacks several times each month. You are invited to support Rally Point on Sunday, May 7, at a chicken barbecue held at St. John Mennonite Church, 15988 Road 4, Pandora. Tickets for carry out or dine in meals are available for \$8 from Louise Matthews at 419.303.8057 or matthewsa@bluffton.edu. See poster on the bulletin board for additional information.

Bluffton University will present "Sondheim on Sondheim," a musical revue, May 5-6 at 7:30 p.m. at Yoder Recital Hall. Dr. Melissa Friesen, professor of theatre and communication, is director, and Dr. Crystal Sellers Battle, associate professor of music, is musical director. The musical revue features songs of Stephen Sondheim from various musicals. Tickets at \$15 for reserved seats and \$5 for university students are available at <http://tickets.bluffton.edu> or at Marbeck Center Information Desk.