

# Menno-Life



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**On October 4, we installed Wanda Stopher as our new lead pastor. At left, Lois Johns Kaufmann, CDC conference minister, welcomes Wanda and Bret.**

## Earthy Faith

I've been thinking about my grandma a lot lately. Her name was Dorothy, and most of us grandchildren called her Granny. I called her Gran. She had her own business raising chickens, some as layers and others for meat. As a child, it was great fun when Gran got new chicks, and the entire front coop was swarming with little yellow fluff. It was not so much fun when the extended family gathered for butchering day. I volunteered, in the car on the way to the farm, to watch the little cousins while the others worked outside.

Gran lived her entire life about two miles from where she was born on a farm that bordered Bean Creek on one side. When she married Grandpa, she moved those two miles to the house where he had been raised. Grandpa, an electrician by trade, loved woodworking and the two of them made Christmas presents for all fifteen grandchildren each year. During those years, she often teased that she had to do all the sanding. However, after Grandpa died, she kept making wood projects all on her own. Gran also pieced and quilted many quilts and blankets. She was for many years in charge of the kitchen at church, arranging meals for hundreds of people. She was a woman of earthy faith, tied as she was to the land and her people.

She lived for five years after we moved to Archbold from London, OH. During those five years, I was home with our three little children and so we became good friends, often making up reasons to take a short trip to go shopping or explore some greenhouse, or to spend a day at the auction in Shipshewana. In addition she taught Bret and me to cane chairs, and helped us refinish the woodwork in our old Victorian home. She taught me to garden, crochet, and tat.

I dragged the cacti with me to Bluffton, which came from a plant she had raised for sixty years. I've now cared for them some thirty years. The cacti, it's many offshoots, several agaves, and two large bulbs that are brought inside to winter over every year, are physical reminders that on multiple levels, I carry Gran with me wherever I go. My great-aunts, her younger sisters, sometimes see her when I laugh or smile.

I'm reminded that I also carry with me many others: grandparents, friends, parents, spouse, children, siblings, teachers, pastors, and neighbors, who have significantly shaped who I am and who I'm becoming. November 1 is All Saints Day, when we remember and give thanks for all the saints. I will remember and give thanks for those who died since last November 1, and all those whom I carry in heart.

-- Wanda Stopher

### **First Mennonite welcomes new pastor**

On October 4, Wanda Stopher was installed as our new lead pastor during the morning worship service. Lois Johns Kaufmann, Central District pastor, was our guest preacher. The celebration continued after church with a potluck in the fellowship hall.

Wanda and her husband, Bret, moved to Bluffton in September and she began working in the FMC office on October 1. To get to know each of us better, Wanda shared this request:

*Let's get acquainted! Seriously! My overarching goal for my first year as pastor of First Mennonite Church is for us to learn to know one another. I look forward to learning to know you as individuals, as families, as a faith community and as part of the larger Bluffton community. One of the best ways I know to start is to meet and swap some stories over coffee or a meal, or just in my office. Give me a call to make sure I'll be free. If you'd like Bret to join us, we'll schedule it when he's available, too. Hope to see you soon!*

-- Wanda (419) 551-1079

### **Among our neighbors and friends**

#### **Happy birthday to:**

Royce Engle, 97, Nov. 2

Maurice Kaufmann, 86, Nov. 11

Clarence Kooker, 87, Nov. 14

Paul Klassen, 91, Nov. 22

Lois Jean Andreas, 90, Nov. 22

Treva Suter, 97, Nov. 27

Harvey Bauman, 95, Nov. 27

#### **Happy anniversary to:**

Esther and Keith Brauen, 68, Nov. 6

#### **Deaths**

**We offer prayers of** comfort and support to Alice and Ron Lora. Alice's brother and only sibling, Ronald E. Chumbley, died October 13 in Paris, Kentucky. A funeral was held Oct. 17.

**We extend our sympathy** to Judy and Glenn Buller, and their family. Judy's father, Wilford Steiner, died October 16 in Kidron. A memorial service was held October 23 at Kidron Mennonite Church.

**We offer our sympathy** to the family of Mary Lou Vercler, who died October 27 at Mennonite Memorial Home. A funeral service will be held at 2 p.m. Nov. 1 in the sanctuary. All are invited to attend a time of sharing and refreshments in the fellowship hall immediately following the service. A private burial will be held Monday, Nov. 2.

#### **Congratulations**

**Congratulations to Lauren Paul and Joe Roberts**, who were married Oct. 10 at the Schumacher Homestead of the Swiss Historical Society, followed by a reception in FMC's fellowship hall. Lauren is the daughter of Janine and Chad Paul and granddaughter of Ron and Phyllis Friesen.

**Congratulations to Lauren LoBianco and Kevin Brenneman**, who were married October 10 at Salem Mennonite Church, Elida. Lauren is the daughter of Joan and Jerry LoBianco and granddaughter of Ernie Porzelius, and Kevin is the son of Sue and Byron Brenneman.

**Congratulations to Kristi Geiser and Jesse Owsley**, who were married October 17 at First Mennonite. Kristi is the daughter of Michele and Deron Geiser.

**Congratulations to Abigail Schaaf and Stephen Helfenbein**, on the birth of their daughter, Lydia Mabel Helfenbein, on October 5 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her grandparents are Sue and Tom Schaaf and her great-grandparents were the late Emerson and Ruth Miller.

### **New FMC website now live**

**First Mennonite** now has a new website. The address remains the same: [www.fmcbluffton.edu](http://www.fmcbluffton.edu). Bluffton University senior Josh Burkholder has been working very diligently with Mary Steiner to create the new site. We continue to make changes, add new features, discover – and correct -- errors, and encourage your feedback as you explore the site. Also, note that the shared items page requires a password. Please request that password from Mary Pannabecker Steiner at 419.358.5766 or [fmc@bluffton.edu](mailto:fmc@bluffton.edu).

### **Senior High/Junior High Fellowship**

*From Shannon Thiebeau, youth ministry director*

**October has been** an exciting month for the Junior and Senior high school fellowships! We've been to Suter's Corn Maze, the Friedenswald campfire in Village Park, enjoyed each other's company, and on October 25, the SHYF finished the month with a spaghetti lunch fundraiser to raise money for our summer service trip. We raised about \$950. Thanks a ton to everyone who contributed! During the meal, we announced that SHYF will be traveling to Harlan, Kentucky to work with Sharing with Appalachian People (SWAP.) Just as a reminder, SHYF meets on the first and third Sundays of the month from 7-8 p.m. and JHYF meets on the second and fourth Sundays from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

### **Brighten up your Tuesday mornings**

**Looking for a way** to regularly deepen your spiritual life? Each Tuesday at 7 a.m. First Mennonite has a service of "Lectio Divina," an ancient prayer practice that involves listening to the reading of the lectionary text for that week, and then listening for four or five minutes in silence for God to speak. The 30-minute service takes place in the darkened sanctuary and ends with a pastoral prayer and the Lord's Prayer said in unison. Following the benediction there is a light breakfast and lots of conversation around the table in the fellowship hall.

### **Letter addresses State of Ohio death penalty**

**At the beginning of 2014**, Governor Kasich put a hold on executions of all prisoners on death row in the State of Ohio. His stated reason was that the drugs used in the lethal injection of prisoners became unavailable, and the substitution drugs were ineffective and caused pain and suffering. In January 2016 this hold on executions will expire. Meanwhile there is still no resolution to the drug question but the executions are scheduled to begin in January. As Christians, we must all write to Governor Kasich's office to voice our objection to the state's use of the death penalty in our Justice System. It is certainly not a part of the teachings of Jesus by which we live our lives. *Let us put a permanent hold on the use of the death penalty.*

In 2007, the State of Ohio was judged to be "falling short of 93% of the American Bar Association standards for a fair and accurate application of the death penalty system." Nothing happened to correct this situation until 2011, when the Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice created a task force to review the administration of Ohio's death penalty in response to the American Bar Association report. The task force consisted of judges, legislators, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and academics. After two years of work the Task Force reported its findings and made them public in April 2014.

The Group recommended 56 changes be made to the Justice System. There are presently 6 of these recommendations in an Ohio House committee. If allowed out, they will be sent to the floor of the House for a vote.

Our lawmakers act on the public desires, so I urge everyone to contact your representative, Rep. Robert Cupp (Allen County) or Robert McColley (Putnam County) to support the passage of these bills. The only recommendation to come out of committee is the one that eliminates the death penalty for people who are mentally ill. This seems like a no-brainer, but the elimination of the death penalty for everyone, and a complete examination of the inequalities of our justice system will only be corrected by lawmakers one step at a time. We must keep continuous contact with our representatives in the Ohio House on this very important issue.

Go to the following web site to view the 56 recommendations of the Task Force: [otse.org](http://otse.org)  
To contact Governor Kasich: [governor.ohio.gov](http://governor.ohio.gov) or write: Governor John Kasich, Riffe Center, 30<sup>th</sup> floor, 77 South High St. Columbus, OH 43215-6117.

To contact our district's representative: (Allen Co.) State Rep. Robert R. Cupp, 4<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District, 77 South High St. 13<sup>th</sup> Floor, Columbus, OH 43215 or [ohiohouse.gov/robert-r-cupp](http://ohiohouse.gov/robert-r-cupp);  
(Putnam Co.) State Rep. Robert McColley, 81<sup>st</sup> Ohio House District, 77 South High St. 13<sup>th</sup> Floor, Columbus, OH. 43215 or [ohiohouse.gov/robert-mccolley](http://ohiohouse.gov/robert-mccolley).

*-- John Rich, Mission Peace and Service Commission*

## **Update from David Hooley, serving with MCC/SALT in Songhor, Kenya**

**"I have been able** to begin some work related activities at a place called the Resource Center. The Resource Center is a building with 4 computers and a healthy amount of educational resources for students and community members to access. I have been teaching some computer skills to 4 other staff members as well as helping local high school students with Math and Science topics.



**David Hooley eating sugar cane with his host brothers and friend Wycliff (far right)**

I have been extremely blessed to be hosted by such a wonderful family. I live in a compound where three main houses are still used. I live in the house of the grandmother (Granny) and two of her sons live in the other houses. They are married and 5 of the grandchildren still live here at the compound. I have spent many hours playing soccer, playing cards, watching movies, exploring, and laughing with them. One daughter-in-law of Granny who is called Mama Jeff (her eldest son is named Jeff) does a majority of the cooking. I am very extremely thankful for her amazing food and hospitality!

I have also had the opportunity to explore the area around Songhor with the help of a new friend named Wycliff and some of the youngsters in my family. Twice now we have hiked up a nearby hill to the 'booster,' which is the closest cell tower to the village. It has provided some great exercise and some great views from the top. One weekend I was able to visit Diguna, a German organization with a large piece of land about 20km from Songhor. The organization runs a home for 200 children, a polytechnic school, a primary school, and many farming activities. They also have an impressive amount of sustainability projects. 100% of their electricity is created by a water turbine, they make their own cement blocks for building, have carpentry and mechanic shops, use manure to produce natural gas, and farm a lot of their own food. I was led on an enjoyable hike around the property that included a waterfall and some beautiful views.

The transition into life in Songhor has not come without its challenges. At first it was mentally exhausting to adjust to the new food, culture, and environment of this region. However, by building relationships and slowly learning the local language (Luo), I have been able to feel more comfortable and find a sense of belonging. I am very grateful for all the people that have been so welcoming and helped in this transition.”

**Note:** David's birthday is November 17 and would enjoy email birthday greetings through the address: [david.hooley@emu.edu](mailto:david.hooley@emu.edu). Find more photos and news at his blog: [davidhooleykenya.wordpress.com](http://davidhooleykenya.wordpress.com).

## **From our Mission Partners**

**We recently received** a letter from Neil and Janie Blough, our mission partners serving at the Centre Mennonite de Paris with Mennonite Mission Network.

*From Neal: Many of you have followed the building project of the Chatenay-Malabry congregation of which we are members. The first worship service in the new facility took place on October 11, and the congregation is now entering a learning process of occupying a new and bigger space.”*

To see photos of the new facility and more, read Neal's letter, which is posted on the MPS pillar in the fellowship hall.

## **Mennonite Women**

**November is project month** for Mennonite Women. On Monday, Nov. 9, at 7 p.m., comforters will be set up in the fellowship hall for knotting. Linda Suter's devotional will focus on the theme, "There is Nothing More Truly Artistic than to Love People." Refreshments that evening will be prepared by Elysia Bush and Jan Wiebe. On Tuesday, Nov. 10, from 8 a.m.-noon, knotting of comforters will continue, followed by lunch together at noon. Please bring a salad or dessert. Soup, bread and beverages will be provided.

## **FMC completes 255 school kits**

**The outpouring of generosity** from our church members has provided amply for our school kits mission with MCC. We have completed 255 kits. We did not have all the supplies on the list to complete additional kits so will be donating approximately 200 pencils, 75 erasers, 50 rulers and 13

boxes of colored pencils to MCC to be used to complete additional school kits. Many thanks to all who made kits, donated money or supplies or sewed bags. -- *Ginger and Heather Theis*

## **From other organizations**

### **Brazo en Brazo update**

**The adoración** (worship service) in the Spanish language is like a hidden treasure to be discovered. Students studying Spanish language, individuals returned from a study or service term, and persons and congregations with interest in local mission opportunities, may well discover a special blessing learning to worship in the Spanish language. We welcome you any Sunday at 5 p.m. at Lima Mennonite Church.

The Board of Directors is meeting at 7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 1 at Lima Mennonite Church. Your questions, and suggestions may be directed to your congregational representative, Judy Kingsley.

### **Mennonite Disaster Service**

**The annual meeting** of the Western Ohio Unit of Mennonite Disaster Service will be held on Saturday, November 21, at the Bentwood Solutions plant, Millersburg. The plant is Amish owned and operated. A tour will begin at 12:30 p.m.

A joint meeting with the Eastern Ohio Unit will begin at 2 p.m. with registration and refreshments at 1:30. There will be updates from Kevin King and Larry Stoner (binational office), from Region 2, from Detroit, and from the WOU. Brief separate business meetings will be held by both units. The WOU meeting will include election of new officers, a financial report, and a report on current and upcoming projects.

The annual meeting is open to everyone, whether active in MDS or not. Please RSVP to Lawrence Matthews at [matthewsL@bluffton.edu](mailto:matthewsL@bluffton.edu) or 419.303.8056 by Monday, November 16.

### **Dwight Kauffman nominated as Region 2 director of MDS**

**Dwight Kauffman** has been nominated to serve as Region 2 Director of MDS for the next year commencing with the Region 2 annual meeting in Michigan on October 23-24. This is a very important role and much conversation and prayer has gone into this process. Region 2 covers states from WI/MI in the north to the gulf coast. Please keep Dwight and Trella in your thoughts and prayers. -- *Lawrence Matthews*

### **Mennonite Youth Choir Festival**

**The Mennonite Youth Choir Festival** will be held March 5-6 at Goshen College. Brent Hyman, director of music and worship coordinator at First Mennonite Church, Berne, IN, is conductor. Children in grades three through nine may register for the festival. Participants prepare for the festival by listening to and learning music sent to them. Practice will be held on Saturday, March 5, and the concert will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 6. Register online at <http://mennoniteyouthchoir.com>.

### **Grace Mennonite book sale/breakfast Nov. 20-21**

**Grace Mennonite Church**, Pandora, will hold its annual book sale, bake sale and breakfast November 20-21. If you wish to order materials or books in advance, contact Jilaine Graber at Faith and Life Bookstore at [info@faithandlifebooks.com](mailto:info@faithandlifebooks.com) or 260-589-2135. The book sale and bake sale will be held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Nov. 20 and 8:30-11 a.m. Nov. 21. The pancake and sausage breakfast will be held from 8-10 a.m. Nov. 21. Donations will be accepted for breakfast and profits will benefit Pastor Max Villatoro. An Iowa Mennonite pastor, Villatoro was deported to his native Honduras in March, despite efforts by clergy members and immigrant advocates to keep him in the U.S. with his wife and four children.