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What gifts can we bring?

The last question we ask a person before baptism is this: Are you ready to participate in the mission of the church? When you sign on with Jesus, you sign up for service in God's kingdom. And God provides the gifts needed in the church. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

Our new governance structure takes effect January 1, 2021. It is dependent on these understandings of the place of mission, gifts and service in our shared life together. These three, mission, gifts, and service are not periphery parts of this new structure. They are integral!

I learned long ago that the questions we ask determine the answers and often the direction we go. As we transition from one governance structure to another, we will naturally ask new questions. Instead of asking "Who can we get to fill a position?" we will ask:

- What gifts is God calling out among us?
- How can we support with our shared resources, the expression of the gifts God has given God's people at FMC?
- How do these gifts help us accomplish our mission and address our 5 Priorities?

I'm here to bear witness that this transition has already begun! It was at the heart of the process of discernment the Governance Task Force led to create a slate for the congregation to consider to begin in January 2021. That discernment began with identifying the gifts needed for the positions needing to be filled. It was then amazing to discover that as we came together with names of people who have those gifts, our lists contained remarkable overlap. And as individuals were asked to consider serving, it was based upon the observation of their gifts, strengths, and experience. It was an act of calling out those gifts for this time in our congregational life together. These were indeed holy conversations.

At this time of year, I can't help but remember the story of the Magi. "On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then,

opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11b) The questions we will be asking and answering in this new year will shape our life together as much as a new governance structure itself. What gifts do I bring? What gifts is God calling out to accomplish our mission at this moment in time? And what gifts do we bring collectively? How will the very exercising of these gifts be an experience of receiving the gift of God with us?

~ Wanda Stopher

Lima Area Habitat and FMC share rich history

By Mark Suderman

First Mennonite Church and the Lima Area Habitat for Humanity have a long and rich history together. As I retire from my 3+ years of working there, I want to say a huge thank you to this congregation. FMC has been vitally important in the development and support of this Habitat affiliate, much more than I realized when starting my position as volunteer coordinator. My prayer is this support will continue for many years to come.

I would like to first share a little history and description of Habitat for Humanity, as well as some specifics about the Lima Area affiliate. Habitat for Humanity began in 1976 and its mission statement is “Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.” As a Christian, non-profit organization, our connection with churches is especially important. In 1976, founders Millard and Linda Fuller were inspired to create Habitat after their involvement with Koinonia Farm and its founder Clarence Jordan, who utilized the idea of partnership housing in a racially-diverse community in the 60s. (On a side note, Habitat’s most famous volunteers, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, are NOT the founders of organization, but they helped to bring it into more mainstream media.)



One myth about Habitat is that we give away houses. Our Habitat homeowners pay a regular mortgage like anyone else. What we do offer is help for those who would not normally be



approved for a home mortgage loan. Because of the lower cost of the home (through volunteer help and sponsor support) and a zero percent interest mortgage, we are able to offer a “hand up”, not a “hand out.” We make sure that the mortgage is no more than 30% of the family’s income. The Lima area affiliate was founded in 1991. We are one of nearly 1,400 affiliates across the United States, in all 50 states, and in approximately 70 countries around the world.

Our offices and our ReStore are located at 550

W. Elm in Lima. Our last completed house, #55, was in Elida. This house is part of a continued area need for quality affordable housing. We have also built houses in Lima, Spencerville, and Delphos. Our current build is in Delphos; if you are interest in helping, please visit our website.

The reality is that health and education suffer and job opportunities diminish if affordable housing is not available. The United Nations estimates that more than one billion people around the world live in substandard housing – including millions in the United States. And many of the housing issues in the U.S. were created because of racial inequality, something that Habitat continues to address.

There are many ways to volunteer. Not all of us are skilled at swinging a hammer. Some of us are thinkers, which makes for good board and committee members. Some of us like to assist others, which is great for volunteering at the ReStore. Some of us have other unique skills that can be utilized by the Lima Area Affiliate. To see how you might get involved, visit the Lima Habitat website (www.habitatlima.org) or talk with me. I may soon be retired, but I will always be happy to talk about opportunities to make this world a better place.

On a personal note, as *All Saints Day* came and went, I was reminded of the “saints” from FMC who have been a part of the Lima Area Habitat for Humanity. Naming names is always dangerous, as many people get left out, but I must list at least a few (and remember that not all saints have passed away). I think of Lavon Welty, a former member of FMC, who was the executive director of the Lima affiliate for many years. He continues to work part time for the affiliate as the accountant. Claude Boyer also comes to mind. I remember his energy and enthusiasm to drum up support for giving to the affiliate. My final saint to mention is Bill Croft. Bill was the liaison for us at FMC for many years: coordinating fundraising, serving on many Habitat committees and as the President of the Board of Directors, as well as giving generously in time and resources. While these three are named, many more from our church have been involved through giving generous donations, helping on builds, volunteering at the ReStore, or serving on committees. I went through the church directory and counted at least 60 individuals who have been involved in the work of Habitat Lima. Thank you!



For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other. Everyone – all of us, every last person on God’s earth – deserves decent shelter.

~ Millard Fuller, co-founder of Habitat for Humanity

FMC first-year students reflect on first semester

Most of this year’s first-year traditional college students ended their senior year of high school without many of the usual traditions -- graduation, award ceremonies, prom – and began their college years amid the chaos of Covid-19. Several of FMC’s recent high school grads responded to a request for an update on their first semester of college.

Sophia Gott, Eastern Mennonite University

Have you declared a major? Is that different from what you would have said last year as a senior?

Music and Social Work! It's what I went in planning on doing!

What extracurricular activities have you participated in? What are you looking forward to doing differently in your next semester?

I've been in lots of ensembles and a couple of clubs, mostly hanging out with friends. I want to be more active in my clubs, but I'll also have more classes so we'll see if that happens.

How's the food? Pretty good!

Sandwiches are also an option if the main meal doesn't sound good (or if you just want a sandwich.)



What do you miss about home? Do you communicate with your high school friends?

I of course miss my friends and family and still keep up with them, but generally am loving being away.

What has surprised you most about college?

I expected to get more homesick, and I haven't really at all. I was also expecting my group of friends to be mostly other music people and it's mostly not.

Are you and your roommate a good match? Why or why not?

Yes!! We complement each other really nicely and have a similar sense of humor. We're more different than either of us initially thought but those differences have actually made us a better match in some ways.

What restrictions/protocol are in place regarding Covid? Are those hard to adhere to?

Masks EVERYWHERE, no going into other floors/dorms, there's a lot of things for music stuff. For the most part they're not super hard to adhere to, but they definitely make things, specifically music rehearsals and socializing, harder to do. However, because of the restrictions, I've gotten closer with girls on my hall than I maybe would have otherwise and we had a couple opportunities to do fun things with music that we wouldn't normally do.

How is the psychological stress that college students face this year? Have you talked with any older students (not first-year) about how this year is different? How does the school help students cope with any concerns about Covid?

I've been okay since I had a really light class load this semester, however I know a lot of my friends are feeling burnt out. I know older students are also feeling that way. Differences

haven't come up very often, but there are definitely things that people are missing. But even with that I haven't felt like I'm missing a lot. Professors have been pretty understanding about the toll the pandemic is taking on us.

What is your overall impression of your freshman college experience so far? Has it changed your perception of a college education?

I'm loving it! I'm honestly loving being away from home and being my own person and I've found a group that has a similar sense of humor as me and gets my weirdness. I feel like I can be totally unfiltered and myself. I don't think my perception has changed much, so far classes have been easier than I expected, however I may eat my words with my much heavier class load next semester.

Patrick Estell, The College of Wooster

Have you declared a major? Is that different from what you would have said last year as a senior?

I have not officially declared a major, but I still plan on pursuing Biology.

What extracurricular activities have you participated in? What are you looking forward to doing differently in your next semester?



I played trumpet in our college marching band, but we were not able to really perform this year due to Covid shutdowns on campus. I also participated in The Leftist Club on campus which is the left political group on campus; we met on Zoom for our meetings and it was great to meet more people that have my political ideology. I also was in WOODS, which is our outdoor group on campus; I did some small hikes and some trail clean up with the group. Next semester I am hoping to go on some socially distant hikes.

How's the food?

The food was good when it is hot. I ate more pizza than I can remember.

What do you miss about home? Do you communicate with your high school friends?

I missed being around family and going outside my room without a mask. I communicated a bit

with my high school friends but mostly hung out with my college friends. I did hang out with Jacob Mast a good amount of time online to play some games to pass the time.

What has surprised you most about college?

The amount of free time you can have in a day. Some days after class there would be long passes of time I would have literally nothing to do.

Are you and your roommate a good match? Why or why not?

I was originally going to have a roommate from South Korea, but he decided to stay there due to the pandemic in the U.S. So, I had a room to myself this semester.

What restrictions/protocol are in place regarding Covid? Are those hard to adhere to?

In the beginning, we had two weeks of quarantine and then a few weeks of online school. Then we were limited to groups of only 10 or fewer people, which people sometimes did not adhere to. We then had groups limited to only 4 people and a return to online classes as cases went up.

How is the psychological stress that college students face this year? Have you talked with any older students (not first-year) about how this year is different? How does the school help students cope with any concerns about Covid?

The atmosphere was very stressful at times, I personally dealt with stress while isolating for a period. A bummer in the marching band as the seniors did not have their last marching band as they would have liked it to be.

What is your overall impression of your freshman college experience so far? Has it changed your perception of a college education?

My freshmen year has been negative in many ways, but there have been many positives by finding new friends and hanging out and getting to know people.

Ana Neufeld Weaver, Goshen College

Have you declared a major? Is that different from what you would have said last year as a senior?

I have declared a Music Education major with a Spanish minor. This hasn't changed from what I said as a senior.

What extracurricular activities have you participated in? What are you looking forward to doing differently in your next semester?

I was in the Voices of the Earth choir and the orchestra. Both were great experiences! I also went to events for a number of different clubs. Next semester I am hoping to be involved in



some way in theatre, as I did not participate in that this semester.

How's the food?

The food is all right. Some food is really good, such as the cookies, quiche, falafel, and sweet potato fries. I am really enjoying eating home-cooked food again though while I'm back in Bluffton.

What do you miss about home? Do you communicate with your high school friends?

I miss my family, friends, and the food. I also really missed the fall festivities of Bluffton. I still keep in close contact with the friends I saw outside of school, but I haven't had a lot of communication with others.

What has surprised you most about college?

I've been surprised by how comfortable I feel there. I thought it would take a lot longer to feel comfortable being independent and to find good friends than it did.

Are you and your roommate a good match? Why or why not?

We are a great match! She also is a Music Education major and plays piano as well. I had actually met her before we became roommates because she also went to Camp Friedenswald. With all these common interests, we have a lot to talk about and bond over.

What restrictions/protocol are in place regarding Covid? Are those hard to adhere to?

There are a lot of restrictions in place. We must wear a mask at all times outside of our room unless we are eating. We are also supposed to stay 6 ft. away from all people other than 1 or 2 close friends. The dining experience is different and most of my meals were eaten outside all semester. The rules are sometimes hard to adhere to, but I've found ways to connect with people and have fun even while staying distant and wearing a mask.

How is the psychological stress that college students face this year? Have you talked with any older students about how this year is different?

I think students are facing a lot more stress this year. The older students I have talked to mostly focus on how the social aspect of college is different. Some have told me that it was a lot easier for them to get to know many different people during their first weeks of college, while it seems that this year the freshman quickly found a group of friends and stuck with just those people. The older students also feel a loss of community and feel more isolated. Goshen helps with this by providing students with multiple free counseling sessions.

What is your overall impression of your freshman college experience so far? Has it changed your perception of a college education?

My college experience has been really great so far! I realize I'm missing out on some things due to COVID-19 but I still feel like I have had most of the typical college experiences. It hasn't really changed my perception of a college education. I think the biggest difference is the social aspect of college, which I didn't quite understand before I experienced it.

Getting to know Lynn Miller

By Ruth Naylor

Both Lynn and Linda Miller have been very generous with their time in helping Menno-Life readers get better acquainted with them. As with this article, I only edited Linda's first-person story in the October issue. In that piece, you read about their moving to Elkhart for and Lynn's seminary training and where he subsequently pastored. More of Lynn's story that follows here has been edited for length, but I want you to get a lot of his story in his own voice. (The full version of Lynn's biography is available in the library for those who would like to read it.)

Lynn was born in Peoria, IL, in 1941 and grew up in a family that moved a lot. In the 17 years that he lived with his family of origin he does not remember having Christmas in the same house twice. Lynn has a wealth of memories about his childhood, including the fact that he and Joan Baez were in the same first-grade class. While living in the Lake Arrowhead area he skied off the porch roof and Charles Adams, a famous cartoonist, lived across the street.

He has moved 37 different times and lived in 34 different towns, a total of 8 years in 4 different countries. He has travelled to (not just through) 48 different countries. It is little wonder that he says, "The place in which I feel most at home is in the departure lounge of an international airport." He confesses to feeling a bit lost: "not feeling like an American," but "not sure where he belongs." His sister shares the same struggle and both have gained personal understanding from the book *Third Culture Kids*. He's currently reading *Belonging Nowhere* by Lois Bushong, a book about people who, during their developmental years (up to 18), lived in a different culture than the one their parents came from. ~ Ruth Naylor



RE: Parents: "My father had a temper and threw things at us when he got mad. I left home at 17 when we were living in France because I won the last fight. I threw a sugar bowl at him and knocked him out." (*That resulted in Lynn's joining the Navy.*) "When we lived in Japan from 1954 to 1958, my mother learned to read and write Japanese Kanji and took us to temples and historical sites all the time. My father would never buy a car with a radio, air conditioning, or automatic transmission. He died at 8 a.m. (I was there), my brother took Mom to breakfast; she then drove over the mountain to San Jose and bought a new modem for her computer, and then at 2 p.m. she bought a red Mazda with a radio, air conditioning, and automatic transmission!"

Pacifism? "Am I a pacifist/non-violent? I never answer 'yes' to that question because most of the time the person asking has a ready argument against pacifism. And because the word has too broad a meaning, my answer is, 'No, I am not a pacifist. It is much worse than that. I am an enemy loving follower of Jesus.' After being held up at gun point in Chicago and dealing with thievery there also, I now believe that defense usually leads to greater conflict, whereas generosity can lead to peace. Always? Probably not, but generosity is my first response to violence. At the same time, having served as a prison chaplain for several years in Illinois, I know that there are violent individuals who have no control over themselves and need to be restrained."

Voluntary Service? "Since my marriage I have been on 25 different VS projects, most of the time with Linda, some by myself. The shortest were one-week MDS projects, the

longest 3 years in Botswana with MCC and in Chicago with MVS." They've served in Alaska, California, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Missouri, Mississippi, Kentucky, Florida, West Virginia, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois. Countries: US, Spain, Portugal.

Spirituality? The story of Lynn's conversion is in chapter 12 of Ted Koontz's book, *Godward*. Other significant spiritual experiences have included learning Lectio Divina at seminary and in

silent retreats at several different settings. "I began walking on the Camino de Santiago because in 2014 I had two preaching assignments in Europe, the first in Lisbon, Portugal, and then two weeks later one in Burgos, Spain. I had heard about the Portuguese route of the Camino. So, since I had two weeks to kill, I took the train north to Porto and began walking. Eleven days and 180 miles later I was in Santiago de Compostela. I have made four more trips to the Camino in Portugal, some walking, some working as a volunteer host at pilgrim guest houses, and some just to soak in the hospitality and strong and visible spirituality of Portugal. If anyone tells you about 'post-Christian Europe,' they aren't talking about Portugal. My one visit to Fatima convinced me of the reality of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary there in 1917. Now I go to Mass once in a while just to remind myself what 'adoration and devotion' are, and the best thing I like about the Catholic Mass is that they don't care if I like it. It's not about pleasing me."

Hobbies? "It used to be boat building, but now mostly making wine."

Favorite Quotation? "The goal of life is not to end up at the pearly gates well rested with pockets full of money, but to slide in sideways, worn out, broke, and shouting, 'Whoa, what a ride!' I am not sure where I saw it first, but it's mine now."

Advice for family and friends? "If you can see God in it, just say 'YES!'"