

Menno-Life



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Enjoying good food and conversation during FMC's university student potluck are from left, Jim Harder, Mary Anne Moser and Emily Huxman, a senior at Bluffton University.



Leaning into fall

For many years, everyone in our household went to school from September through May...and had summers off. Everyone that is, but me. Bret taught school and the children attended school. I was happy for them when June rolled around, but I was also a bit grouchy. I didn't like thinking I might miss out on some adventure they might be having! When September came, I was glad for everyone to be in their places. Even before we had children and when I was teaching, I found it somehow deeply satisfying to return to order and schedule.

October 1 marks one year since I began ministry at First Mennonite Church. I'm celebrating being with you nearly through a whole year-long cycle of seasons. It obviously has not been a typical year. Yet, there are natural rhythms that I've now experienced once. I'm grateful. I appreciate everyone's patience and the rich welcome Bret and I have felt from you all. I think fall is naturally a time to both review the past and look forward to the future.

Thinking back over the year, it is divided into three four-month periods almost to the day. I'm grateful for four months that I was able to serve alongside Steve. I appreciated his history and experience in the congregation as well as his gifts of listening well, his wisdom and his caring deeply for people. The next four months were defined by Steve's hospitalization at Cleveland Clinic. During that time we put into place a Temporary Coverage Plan that was to provide time for Steve's health situation to unfold and for pastoral coverage and support in his absence. The plan was in effect from February through the end of May. The good gifts of the congregation made the temporary plan work.

Toward the end of the four months, in April, Council approved a proposal shaped by Vision Task Force, to speak to the question, "How will we steward this experience?" That proposal suggested two actions: First, that the congregation engage a 12-18 month pastoral associate. As a result, Pastor George arrived and began serving as pastoral associate here on June 15 (2016.)

Second, was that the congregation participate in a process of discovery that will include "self-discovery, visioning and refocusing and will engage the entire congregation. Although I had hoped we would be well into that process by now, Steve's death required that we all take a step back, catch our breath, reflect, and grieve. The past four months have been a necessary part of our journey. Like all grief, it was at times disorienting, filled with a deep sense of loss, and lots of questions.

Although our journey of grief has not ended, the end of the summer and return to fall has brought with it a sense of new energy and hope. I'm delighted now, to announce the names of the discovery team who will provide leadership to the coming year of discovery: Rich Bucher, Laura Hartzler (representative of Vision Task Force,) Chris Moser, Rhonda Winstead, George O'Reilly, and Wanda Stopher.

Again, our original purpose for this two-part proposal was in response to the question, "How shall we steward this experience?" Today we understand in new ways the reality that the next chapter in the life of our faith community will be different than we had hoped. Instead of finding our way together with Pastor Steve, part of our work in this coming year will need to focus on preparing for new settled pastoral leadership.

As I've noted several times before, I'm experiencing all this as God's care for us. First, Pastor George's arrival has provided welcome assistance and pastoral support. His pastoral experience and good gifts have blessed us as a congregation. Second, the process of discovery will draw on both past and present realities in order to give direction to the search for new pastoral leadership in the near future. There will be more information available soon, as the discovery team met for the first time on September 20, 2016, and will meet again soon. As we as a congregation lean into this new chapter of fellowship and ministry, I expect there may be both, other disappointments and other joys ahead. We lean in with confidence that God who has brought us to this place, will complete the work that has begun. May it be so.

-- Pastor Wanda Stopher

Happy birthday to:

Mary Yoder, 93, Oct. 4
Joan Bauman, 84, Oct. 8

Elizabeth Shelly, 83, Oct. 10
Doris Hamman, 93, Oct. 27

Happy anniversary to:

Corrinne and Dick Boehr, 65, Oct. 28

In our prayers:

We offer prayers and support to the family of Gregg Luginbuhl, who died September 26 at St. Rita's Inpatient Hospice Center. A memorial service was held October 1 at FMC. Gregg's family includes his wife, Karen, their children, Alison (Kevin) King, Ben (Alex Roth) Luginbuhl, Ashley, Kristen and Kat Luginbuhl; his mother, Evelyn Luginbuhl; his brother, Bill Luginbuhl; and granddaughters, Milena and Madelyn King.

Please pray for Adan Ortiz, who continues facing serious health issues, and needs ongoing transportation to various appointments and treatments. Those able to transport Adan should contact him at 419.358.0955.

Please remember Ron and Phyllis Friesen in your prayers as Ron has been diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer.

Needed: More volunteers to be entertained by our youngest congregants

On the up side, we've had a wonderful influx of babies over the past few years, which has resulted in a much busier nursery on Sunday morning. Sadly, unless more volunteers sign up to spend time with the youngest children in the church, there will be no nursery coverage during the Sunday school hour from November 13 through December, according to Jen Benroth, nursery coordinator, and Judy Steiner, CE commission member.

Who's willing to help out? Individuals willing to read books, play games, build towers, cuddle babies during the Sunday school hour – even just once per quarter -- are encouraged to contact Jen at jesommer2000@yahoo.com or 419-230-3945.



Christmas Eve cuddling ↗

Photo credit: Fred Steiner

Membership class meeting in October

Are you new to First Mennonite Church? Do you want to know more about the church? Are you interested in exploring or refreshing your memory regarding what it means to be a member of this congregation? If so, you're invited to attend a membership class that will be held during the Sunday school hour at 9 a.m., October 9, 16, 23, and 30. Contact Pastor Wanda or Pastor George if you are interested.

October Mennonite Women meeting to highlight "Paths not chosen"

"Paths not chosen" will be the focus for Mennonite Women, Monday Oct. 10 at 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Marlene Kropf writes in the devotional, "Not all transitions are chosen or expected. Sometimes we are propelled into an unknown future without opportunity to choose or prepare." Elizabeth Kelly, our presenter, will guide us in navigating those "paths not chosen." Linda Suter will lead devotions. Refreshments will be shared by Trella Kauffman and Carolyn Rich. In case you missed the first meeting in September, be sure to check out the Mennonite Women pillar by the kitchen for a written summary and photos.

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.

We're hoping you'll all help with this, so if we don't approach you with these questions and you're willing to be included, please let us know at fmc@bluffton.edu.

Let's get acquainted with...

Mary Ina Hooley

Where do/did you work?

BC, before children, I worked as a nurse in Blacksburg, VA, Halstead, KS, Jos Nigeria and Iowa City, IA. I was then a stay-at-home mom with the children until 2001 when I began teaching Release Time/Weekday Christian Education part time. I began with four classes of third grade and then added four classes of second grade, which I am presently teaching. The year we spent during Don's sabbatical in Honduras, I assisted in the three first grade classes at Los Pinares.

Describe your job (current, past, volunteer).

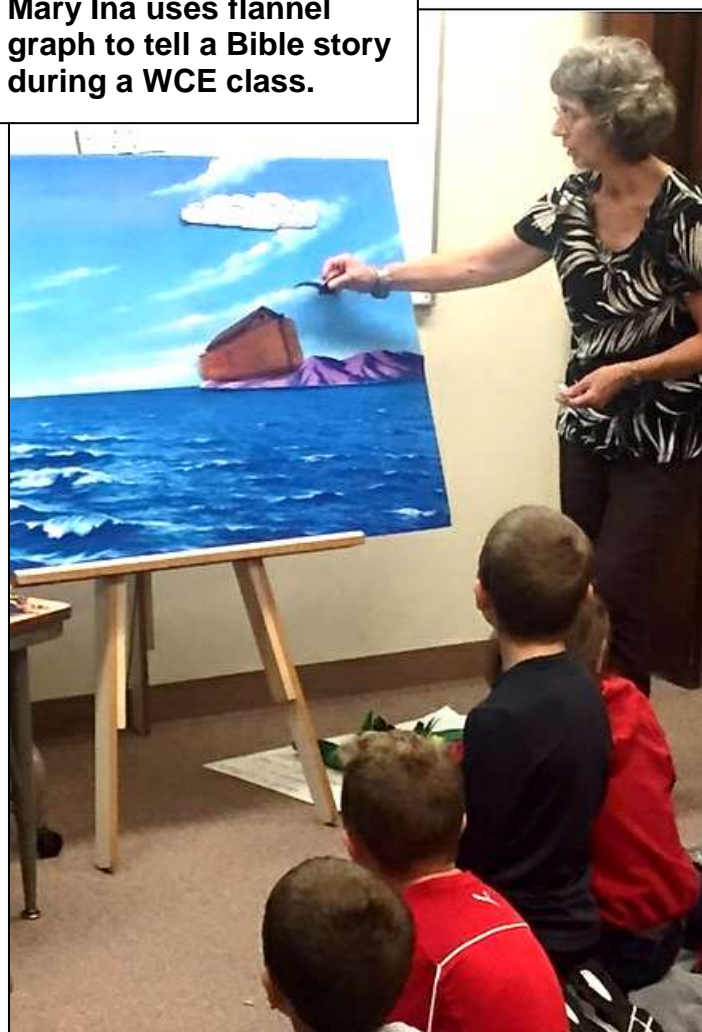
In Blacksburg, my first nursing job out of school, I worked the night shift for two years on a general surgical floor. After moving to Kansas, I worked in the operating room two years, both as a scrub and circulating nurse. During that time Bill Swartley also worked in the same OR, as a nurse anesthetist. In the three years that we volunteered with MCC in Nigeria I again worked in the OR at the mission hospital. At the University of Iowa Hospitals and clinics I worked part time on various floors -- oncology, kidney transplant, general surgery and also in the outpatient surgical clinic.

Teaching Christian Education began for me during college when I travelled with a group of students to a W.VA mountain church each Sunday for two years. Since then I have frequently taught SS classes, always at the elementary level. So it seemed natural to accept the WCE teaching responsibility when there was an opening and I am now in my 14th year of teaching the WCE classes. I continue to teach Sunday school classes. I also enjoy volunteering, and have helped at the Et Cetera Shop, Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen and in the elementary school in the Special Ed. classroom and fifth grade.

What do/did you like most about your job?

I love the joy that young children bring to each WCE class. I love their insights, questioning minds and eagerness to learn.

Mary Ina uses flannel graph to tell a Bible story during a WCE class.



What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work (i.e. hobby, volunteer)?

One of my favorite hobbies is traveling -- visiting friends/family, learning to know another country, hiking and spending time in the mountains. I enjoy gardening -- canning, freezing or drying the produce. I also enjoy organizing, which I do a lot of for WCE and as my high school class secretary.

Who are your family members at FMC?

Husband, Don, and daughter, Sunita.

FIRST Night is back!

FIRST Night resumed September 27 with dinner and a short program. Moving forward, we will gather on the last **Tuesday** of October 2016, January, February, and March 2017. Meals begin at 6 p.m. and programs at 6:30. The price per meal is \$4 per person or \$12 per family. Tickets will be sold for just one event at a time. Reservations and payments must be made by noon on the Monday before each dinner. **Please note: All participants must provide their own table service – including cups and silverware. Thanks to Susie Gratz for her hard work in organizing this!**

Capital Campaign contributions still needed to meet goal

The Capital Campaign officially ended earlier this year, but contributions to meet our goal are still possible. Presently the campaign is \$9,800 short of meeting expenses. In consideration of this shortfall, the Stewardship Commission is asking that people who still wish to support this effort may make donations before the end of October.

This campaign has been a success and your giving has been appreciated. The very hard working Trustees have done well.
-- **The Stewardship Commission**

JHYF/SHYF

September was a great start for the youth groups. We had our annual kick-off where we played new games and got to know Pastor George.

We also attended the Brazo en Brazo Fiesta Familiar at Lima Mennonite to listen to the Neufeld Weavers play music, to plant trees and play games with the children at the event.

The youth groups are eager to dive into their Bible studies: The SHYF will be learning about apocalyptic Bible texts and the JHYF will be learning about racism while working on an ongoing art project. We hope to display it to the congregation when we are finished!

We are still looking for committed sponsors for both SHYF and JHYF. If you can commit 2-4 hours a month, are interested in learning, teaching, and having a TON of fun, please contact Shannon Thiebeau (fmc.shannon@bluffton.edu).



Annelise Nisly and her teammate collaborate on tying a Twizzler in a knot. They won first place in the Twizzler-tying contest.

SHYF and JHYF deep-clean nursery

Kudos to the senior and junior high youth for spending part of a Sunday afternoon deep-cleaning the nursery! With assistance from nursery coordinator, Jen Benroth, Shannon Thiebeau and Carrie Mast, they scrubbed and sanitized surfaces, furniture and toys. Now the nursery smells clean and is ready for all of the children and their caregivers!



Junior high youth cleaning toys in the nursery are (from left) Jacob Suter, Elam Suter and Allison Diller, assisted by Jen Benroth and Carrie Mast.

Senior high youth involved in the nursery cleaning project included (from left) Anna Biesecker-Mast, Isaac Andreas, Tad Steiner and Christopher Harnish.



Photo credit: Shannon Thiebeau