

FMC Newsletter

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The mission of First Mennonite Church is to welcome all to know Christ's salvation through worship and works of love, peace and justice in service for God.

Rachel's Reflections

Identity. "Who are you?" This is both a simple and complex question. We can answer with our names - "I am Rachel." But what does that really mean? I am a woman, a pastor, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a Canadian, an Ohioan and the list goes on. Some of these facets of our identity sometimes take precedence or prominence over the others. Some aspects of our identity are only part of us for a while and then change.

Moving to Ohio has involved several changes to my identity. I am no longer a citizen of the place where I reside. This has created some challenges. I no longer have a credit history and was initially rejected for a credit card. I went in to open an HSA and was rejected because I am a "non-resident alien." Yet, for taxes I have resident status. I am so confused - who am I?

Once the initial anger and frustration of the rejection wore off, I settled down, because I know who I am. I am Rachel, child of God. We are all children of God - an identity that cannot be taken away from us, no matter how many changes happen in our lives. Lent is a time to remember this identity. Historically, Lent was a time of preparation for baptism and for those who are baptized, a time to remember and renew our baptismal commitment. May we experience God's presence as we take this journey through Lent.

Lent 2008

Out of the Depths

The theme for worship during Lent this year is Out of the Depths. It comes from the opening verse of Psalm 130, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord." This theme "emphasizes the experience of Lent as a journey from rebellion to grace, from need to satisfaction, from blindness to sight, from death to life, from power to grace. ... The devotional disciplines that arose around Lent in the early church were meant to shake believers out of spiritual complacency and to renew and refresh their identification" as people of God.

We will mark the beginning of Lent with an Ash Wednesday service, February 6 at 7:00pm and will hold weekly Lent prayer services on Wednesday evenings at 7:00pm.

Additionally, the Wadsworth Ministerial Association will be hosting Lenten Lunches at Grace Lutheran Church, from 12:05 - 12:55, starting on February 13.

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The Penny Power Jug is Back!!!

Save your change and bring it to church. This "Water for Life" project, sponsored by MCC, provides funds to create clean drinking water and new wells for communities all over the world.

The Penny Power change will be collected at the Relief Sale in Kidron, August 2, 2008.

The broader church

The following reflection comes from the January issue of *Equipping*, a resource put out by Mennonite Church USA.

Claiming our identity as followers of Jesus

I was in Minneapolis recently to check out the city and its convention center as a possible site for the 2011 churchwide convention.

Two other groups had just visited the city to consider their own meeting for this time – the Irish Dance Teachers of North America and the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

Like us, these groups recognize that meeting together regularly can play a key role in helping to build a common sense of community, identity and mission.

The issue of identity was on the minds of delegates at San José 2007 last summer. Delegates asked the Executive Board to put together a plan to help congregations think about what it means to be faithful followers of Jesus while living in the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world.

One resource for us will be an upcoming summit with Mennonite Church Canada in Winnipeg in July 2008. "At the Crossroads: Promise and Peril" will give us an

opportunity to meet with our Canadian brothers and sisters to discern together what it means to faithfully respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

You'll hear a lot more about this gathering soon, and I hope you'll plan now to attend with other members of your congregation. Mark July 8 to 10 on your calendar.

Our true identity, our foundation, is in Jesus Christ, says 1 Corinthians 3. The vision statement we share with Mennonite Church Canada puts it this way:

"God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."

Now that's an identity worth claiming.

J. Ron Byler is associate executive director of Mennonite Church USA

On the horizon...

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| March 20 | Maundy Thursday Service time TBA |
| March 21 | Good Friday Community Service 12 - 3:30 @ Wadsworth United Methodist Church |
| March 23 | Easter |
| May 11 | Pentecost |
| June 26-28 | Central District Conference meetings in Wheaton IL |

Deadline for the **March** issue of the Newsletter is **February 24**. Please submit contributions, including items for the calendar, to Rachel (via mailbox or email).