

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

Holy Week. This isn't a term I grew up with, well at least not that I remember. It is a relatively new term for me. Passion Week is its other name. Again not a term I'm used to using. Well, it wasn't before I went to seminary. One of the benefits of living at seminary is to live by the church's calendar and not the world's calendar. It is a place where one's days and weeks can be framed and guided by times of corporate prayer and worship – a reminder of whose we are and whose we proclaim to be. Holy Week is the pinnacle of the church year.

Out of the Depths has been our theme for Lent – reminding us of the vertical relationship between us and God. This up and down movement is felt at its strongest during Holy Week. There is the joy and excitement of the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem. What great things were expected of him. But what he did was not what the people had expected and the welcoming that was there on Sunday turns quickly and the people are calling for Jesus' execution. We then move to Maundy Thursday – Jesus and the disciples in the upper room. Then from here we move to the garden of Gethsemane – where Jesus prays and is arrested. From this cover of darkness we descend further into the depths as Jesus is tried, crucified and dies. God is dead. Even the earth trembles and shakes.

But death does not have the final answer, we do not stay in the depths of darkness. For on the third day Jesus is resurrected! We move from the lowest of lows to the highest of highs. *Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!* God's love prevails. The wonders of Easter are only so because of the realities of Good Friday. I invite you to participate in remembering God's redemptive work by attending one or all of the services during Holy Week.

Holy Week Worship Services

- March 16 Palm Sunday
Worship @ 10:45
- March 19 Wednesday Evening Prayers
7:00 in the parlor
- March 20 Maundy Thursday
Our service will start at 6:00 with a light supper in the Fellowship Hall and will include communion.
- March 21 Good Friday
Community Service from 12:00 - 3:30 at Wadsworth United Methodist Church. This service will consist of meditations on the Last Seven Words of Christ with a new service starting each half hour. Come and worship as you can. Rachel will lead the meditation on "I am Thirsty" from 2:00 - 2:30.
- March 23 EASTER
Sunrise service at Bethel (time TBA)
Followed by breakfast
Worship at FMC @ 10:45
No Sunday School

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Fellowship Fun!

GAME NIGHT - March 7 @ 6:30 pm

Thanks to all who participated in the Valentine's Day Breakfast. For those who like to bake, here is Norma's French Toast recipe:

Oven French Toast

1 loaf French bread
8-9 eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups half & half
½ cup sugar
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg
pinch of salt
1 tsp vanilla

Slice bread in 1 inch slices (you can remove crust if you want) layer in lightly Pam sprayed 9x13 baking dish.

Combine ingredients and pour over bread. Cover and refrigerate over night.

Topping:

Mix together 1 cup soft butter
 2 Tbsp corn syrup (Karo)
 ½ cup packed brown sugar
 1 cup chopped nuts
 ½ tsp cinnamon
 pinch of nutmeg

Just before baking sprinkle topping over bread mixture. Bake uncovered at 350° for 40 mins.

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.

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

8 - Angie Newcomer
10 - Jay Landis
12 - Rachel Haas
15 - Megan Croyle
20 - Carl Lind
23 - Mary Croyle
28 - Mike and Sharon Stutzman Hartzler ('92)

FMC & Community Announcements

Calling all singers! All who want to sing with the choir on Easter are invited to do so. There will be two rehearsals – March 12 and 19 at 8:00pm – and the choir will sing during the Easter morning service. Please join us.

You are invited to hear "**A Concert of Light Classics-a Tribute to John Howard**" featuring Dan Doty, tenor. Sunday, March 9 at 4:00 p.m. at Trinity UCC, 215 High Street, Wadsworth, Ohio.

Deadline for the **April** issue of the Newsletter is **March 26**. Please submit contributions, including items for the calendar, to Rachel (via mailbox or email).

On March 2, 2007 a charter bus carrying the Bluffton University baseball team tumbled off of an overpass in Atlanta Georgia, killing five of the players and the bus driver and his wife. In response to this tragedy and many others, two senators; Sherrod Brown, of Ohio and Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas have introduced a bill to improve the safety of motor coaches. These safety measures include seat belts, increased roof strength, safety glazing of the windows, and improved fire prevention. These measures have been recommended by the National Transportation and Safety Board since 1966.

More information on this bill can be found at www.motorcoachsafetynow.com, including addresses of legislators, and biographical information on the players. We encourage everyone to visit this website, and sign the petition there, vote in support of the bill, and above all, please write to senators and congress people, and encourage them to move on this important bill. Most helpful would be writing to the members of the subcommittee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation encouraging them to move on this bill that they have had in their committee since 11/6/07.

Let us, as members of Mennonite communities of faith, join in solidarity with Bluffton University grieving families and support this initiative in which they are engaged. John Betts, one of the parents of an athlete who died, said, "We believe the Mennonite community will certainly support a bill that has increased safety features for our most vulnerable population (Youth and Senior Citizens), in part because Bluffton University has been so deeply touched by this tragedy. We believe that now is a good time to act – at the time of the first anniversary of this tragedy."

The broader church

The following reflection comes from the March 2008 issue of Equipping, a resource put out by Mennonite Church USA.

Sharing what God has done for us

The Church Member Profile gives us an unflattering picture of ourselves.

This 2007 national survey shows that Mennonites are older and richer than the national average and we're hesitant to share our faith stories with others. We have fewer children than we once did, fewer even than the national average.

To put it simply, in terms of increasing our numbers and the witness of Christ through Mennonite Church USA in the decades ahead, the future looks less than rosy.

But of course this isn't the whole story. As Mennonites, we have a wonderful story to tell about God's faithfulness among us. It's a story worth sharing with others.

All the more reason why professor of Biblical theology Ben Ollenburger's sermon on testimony caught my attention at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Pastors Week in Elkhart, Ind., in late January.

Ollenburger said to testify, or to bear witness is to connect our story and the biblical story with the stories of others. Quoting Emory University professor Tom Long, Ollenburger said that church should be a language school where we practice what to say and how to say it.

Put another way, we don't know what we really believe until we can learn to share it out loud with others.

As he ended his sermon, Ollenburger practiced what he preached by giving testimony about how God had been present in his life and how healing and wholeness came to him through the community of Christ's people.

The Psalmist said it this way: "Come and see ... I will tell you what God has done for me" (Psalm 66). Can we do any less?

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

Local MCC News from the MCC Kidron office:

Material Resources Report, only from the Kidron MRC during 4.1.06 to 3.31.07

1898 Bedding items	285 new blankets
209 new sheets	120 new bath towels
19,396 school kits	218 sewing kits
5,340 health kits	380 newborn kits
1689 Lbs. new soap cartons	
164 Aids Kits	

MCC constituents living near the Material Resource Center in Kidron gave the above listed materials with a value of **\$248,677.89**

Thanks to all those who shared and especially to Bill Ressler and Fred Smith (full time volunteer at the MRC)

During March/April Newborn Kits are given a priority as suggested by the MCC Material Resource Center in Akron.

In the past year we have had renewed interest and demand for these high value kits from our overseas partners. The increased demand demonstrates the great value of these kits. In the past year we shipped almost 11,000 to displaced persons in and around Baghdad, Iraq as well as close to 6,500 to hospitals and community based health care organizations in Tanzania.

On the horizon...

May 11	Pentecost
June 26-28	Central District Conference meetings in Wheaton IL
July 8-10	People's Summit for Faithful Living in Winnipeg MB
Aug 1-2	Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale & Auction