



# The Vine

## Advent Resources

by Pastor Deb

The season of Advent, the four weeks before Christmas, ushers in a time of reflection and anticipation in the church year. With all the wonderful Christmas preparations and events – presents, cards, parties, and family gatherings, we encourage you to also pause now and then to reflect on the meaning of God with us and of Jesus’ invitation to live in the kingdom of God.

This year we have a couple of resources that could guide a time of reflection:

One is a mini-retreat for each week of Advent, with questions and activities to ponder the Scriptures and themes for the upcoming Sunday. Each week in the library we will have these resources in a basket: the Scripture of the week with prompts and activities for prayer and reflection. We invite you to come for an hour or even 30 minutes at any time during the week. There are four suggested activities each week, so it’s not a problem if more than one of you use it at the same time. Complete the activities anywhere in the church, or take the page of prompts home with you. The church is open regularly Tuesday through Friday from 9-2 and you can speak with the office about coming in at other times

Another take-home Advent resource, this one from our church’s Advent materials, includes suggestions for family Advent activities. Copies are available on the table in the foyer.

We hope you can take advantage of these resources or find your own unique ways to reflect on the meaning of God with us!

### First Mennonite 25th Annual Chrismon Service

Sunday, December 3  
6:30 pm

Our Chrismon service is a time of singing and listening to Scripture as we decorate the Christmas tree. Come worship together as we sing through the life of Jesus. *Friends and neighbors are welcome!*



### Upcoming FMC Advent Events

- 12/3 Chrismon service (6:30p)
- 12/6 Community Meal & Taizé at Uni Place (6p)
- 12/9 Progressive Dinner (6p)
- 12/24 Sunday morning worship (10a)
- 12/24 Christmas Eve service (6:30p)
- 12/31 Sunday morning worship (10a)

## Joint Worship Service on October 15, 2017

Since 2003, First Mennonite Church has enjoyed a sister church relationship with El Divino Redentor (EDR), a Lutheran congregation in Bucaramanga, Colombia. This friendship has included delegations traveling back and forth, sharing prayers and photos, and learning about the ministries of EDR in Colombia. On Sunday, October 15th, we live-streamed a joint worship service, with songs, readings, and sermons delivered in English and Spanish. Pastor Sergio and Pastor Michael preached back-to-back short sermons based on Scripture readings from Philippians 4:4-9 and John 10:11-18 (his is below). At the conclusion of his reflections, Pastor Sergio refers to the Mennonite-Lutheran reconciliation dialogues of 2010, involving both the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference. Following the language developed in this earlier reconciliation process, EDR and First Mennonite Church exchanged words of confession and reception. It was a gracious gift of our friendship that we could manifest this personal expression of a global conversation. The words of Pastor Sergio's sermon, EDR's confession, and FMC's response are printed below.

### Sermon, Pastor Sergio Talero (English language translation by Rafael Luquis):



"Jesus' alternative, shepherd's standard, united we conflux in Him" (Translator's note: The word pastor in Spanish means both shepherd and pastor, making words play between both meanings).

Our reflection comes from the reading of John 10:11-18. Jesus has presented himself as shepherd, as the access to life, the alternative to death. His pastoral/shepherd actions describe the work with who were given to him by the Father. (6:39) Jesus is not just another shepherd, is The Standard, the true one, and his primary function is to give his life for his own. (15:13), the one who is not willing to give his life out of love, is not a shepherd (21:16). There is a strong antagonism within the verse 10:10, that's why Jesus comes to give life abundantly and that's why he gives himself. To give yourself is to communicate life. (12:24) Life can only communicate love, that it is a gift in itself to everyone.

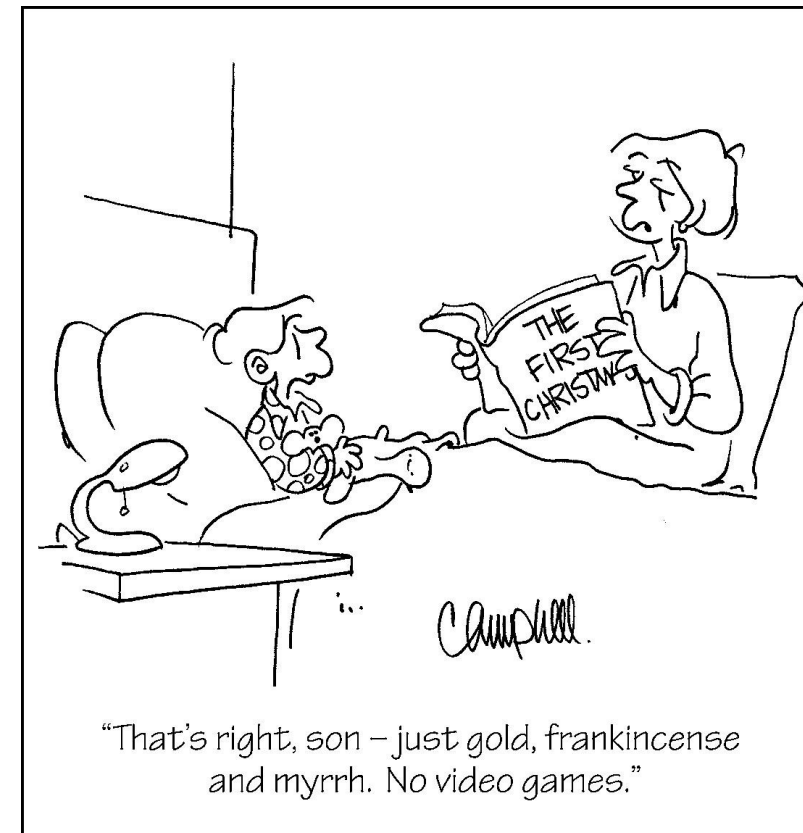
The hireling or mercenary shows his relation with his own (11-13) just like the true shepherd with his own (14-15) the antagonism between hireling and the shepherd is fundamentally different, the first one gives his services for profit, the second one does it for love. Facing danger, the hireling leaves the sheep behind to die. Jesus knows personally each one of his sheep, he calls them by name and gets them out of the enclosure (10:4) In the same way Jesus declares that between him and the community (as the sum of individuals) exists a personal relationship of deep and intimate knowledge.

The community means that it knows Jesus, that having given his life for his friends, and having communicated his Holy Spirit, meaning, to know Jesus' love, (1:16) and this relationship is so deep, that Jesus compares it with the one He has with his Father. That is based also in the communion with the Spirit. Belonging into Jesus' community, is based in experience, not in an external affiliation. In this consists definite life, in knowing personally the Father and his envoy Jesus Messiah (17:3). In another way, Jesus sees the horizon of his future community. His mission is not limited to Jewish people, it reaches to others.

This universality is consonant with John's conception, from the prologue, he places his gospel in context of creation. John realizes, that God's love has the finality to reach the whole human race (1:9, 3:16-17, 4:42, 8:12). The disciples that come from other origins will form, with the ones from Israel, one community, ending the privilege of the chosen people. Everyone's unity will be verified by the convergence in one shepherd, Jesus. The universal community isn't exclusive of a national, confessional, or cultural institution.

In the Eleventh World Federation Lutheran Assembly of 2010, in Stuttgart, the Lutheran community asked for forgiveness for the persecution to the Anabaptist community of the 1600's, also we asked forgiveness for forgetting and ignoring this persecution in the following centuries. Also, the use of derogative, fallacious and hurtful terms, used to refer to Anabaptists. Our standard of a shepherd: Jesus, calls us by our name, and it is as sons and daughters, without distinction. He calls us to recognize each other as equals, to ask forgiveness, to restore the brokenness, and to celebrate together the life He has given us, in alternative, to the death that surrounds us.

## Christmas Humor



## Coming in 2018: A Changing Vine

Our monthly church newsletter, The Vine, has been a part of the First Mennonite landscape for many years. It provides an opportunity for us to share more deeply with each other and to highlight special events in our congregational life. Over the years, The Vine has been a forum for sharing wisdom, relating experiences within the wider Mennonite conferences, sharing poetry, reviewing FMC books, laughing together (think “Ms. Menno”), and highlighting happenings at First Mennonite.

Beginning in 2018 The Vine will officially change from a monthly newsletter to a bi-monthly newsletter. The change will give individuals and committees more time to make submissions. The goals of The Vine remains the same— to enrich our life together as a congregation and to help us grow as followers of Christ.

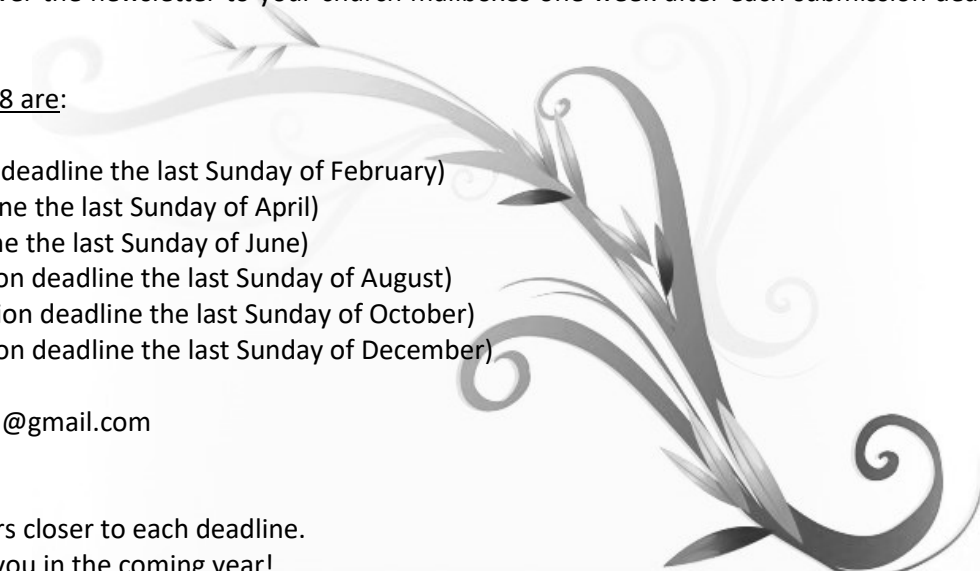
Alexandra Bidner and Rhonda Gibson will work together to create The Vine in 2018. Alexandra will publicize the newsletter and gather submissions. Rhonda will take the submissions and format/edit, design, and print the newsletter. We hope to deliver the newsletter to your church mailboxes one week after each submission deadline.

### The publication dates for 2018 are:

February/March (submission deadline the last Sunday of February)  
 April/May (submission deadline the last Sunday of April)  
 June/July (submission deadline the last Sunday of June)  
 August/September (submission deadline the last Sunday of August)  
 October/November (submission deadline the last Sunday of October)  
 December/January (submission deadline the last Sunday of December)

Send submissions to: [fmcvine@gmail.com](mailto:fmcvine@gmail.com)

Look for submission reminders closer to each deadline.  
 We would love to hear from you in the coming year!



## Joint Worship Service continued

### ***Confessional Statement of EDR Spoken to FMC (English language translation by Rafael Luquis)***

CONFESSIONAL STATEMENT (Divine Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church) to the ANABAPTIST MENNONITE COMMUNITY “First Mennonite Church”



As Lutherans from Bucaramanga, of the community of El Divino Redentor, in this 500 Reform’s Anniversary, started by Martin Luther in 1517, we make our own, the words of the Eleventh World Lutheran Federation in Stuttgart, Germany, where we procure to keep getting close to the community of God’s sons and daughters, and ask forgiveness for the persecution done by Lutherans and fellow reformers, against the Anabaptist community of the 1600’s, also we asked forgiveness for forgetting and ignoring this persecution in the following centuries. Also, the use of derogative, fallacious and hurtful terms, used by the Lutheran authors to refer to Anabaptists.

The subscribed document says in some parts: “...we are painfully conscious of our own inadequacy ... we cannot have reached this far without seeing our own sinfulness. We couldn’t have reached this far without recognizing our need of God’s grace and forgiveness”.

From your behalf, the Reverend Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, president of World Mennonite Conference, gave a wooden basin, used by the Mennonite community that has kept the feet washing as a tradition. He gave it with this words: “We give it as a symbol of our commitment to a future, in which the distinct seal of the Anabaptist-Lutheran relations would be one of unlimited love and infallible service”.

We thank the First Mennonite Church for its support on this date, October 15, for your unconditional love to us in Bucaramanga, especially in your support to our children’s diner “Semillas de Vida” (Seeds of Life) in Girón. With this joined, simultaneous service, through the internet, we want to tighten the relationship, get to know each other a little bit more, and to commit to let the God’s Holy Spirit to flow between us, for God’s glory, Amen.

### ***Response and Reception of FMC Spoken to EDR (English language original)***

As your friends and coworkers in God’s Kingdom: Thank you for your heartfelt words. We receive them with humility and in God’s peace.

It is our honor to live in the future that Rev. Ndlovu of Mennonite World Conferece described, one marked by “unlimited love and infallible service.” As he said in his address then, “Today, in this place, we together – Lutherans and Mennonites – are fulfilling the rule of Christ.”

You, our friends at El Divino Redentor, teach us about the boundless love of God in your commitment to feeding the hungry in your midst. Your confession reminds us that we, too, are in need of God’s grace in all things. To quote Rev. Dr. Larry Miller, another representative of Mennonite World Conference, Our communities “are also in need of healing and forgiveness. In this action between us, for Mennonites also, the promise of release and renewal.”

With thankfulness in our hearts we pray for God’s gentle rain of renewal. AMEN.

For John Otto

- by Lynne Sancken

**The Sunday  
after you died,  
I went walking  
in a public garden.  
The sun's hands,  
warm as peace,  
pressed our backs,  
scattering light,  
on the just  
and the unjust.  
Choirs of flowers sang  
their joy in bright  
rounds of red,  
octaves of orange,  
a perfect pitch of pink, purple.  
I wondered  
if heaven was  
a place of  
part-singing Mennonites,  
and thought of you.  
A community of butterflies  
filled the walkways,  
hovering like souls  
above the blooms,  
then touched  
flower to flower,  
spreading resurrection.**

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## Some Thoughts on Memory and Repentance from Moscow

- by Matt Klopfenstein

On October 30, the *Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression*, I went to witness a memorial event not far from my apartment in Moscow in which the names of people executed during the Stalinist purges of the 1930's were read. I did not realize until I arrived that this particular event was part of the larger initiative by certain groups of Orthodox Christians called "Prayer of Memory" and represented part of an effort on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution to call for national repentance for the violence of the Soviet era. I had only intended to listen as names were read by the small group of people who had gathered, but one of the organizers found me and encouraged me to take part. I expressed hesitation about the appropriateness of a foreigner participating in such an event, but she insisted, saying that the most important thing was not where I was from but that I was interested in remembering those who had been persecuted. I agreed, and ultimately read a short list of names from a sheet that also listed ages, occupations, and the dates of execution. Others who read names also shared from their own family histories, remembering grandparents, great-grandparents, cousins, and others who had been arrested and shot during the time of the Great Terror.

It was an extremely moving event, and since then I have been thinking about memory, responsibility, and repentance. I do not feel that I am in a position to adequately assess the complex politics of an event like the one I attended – there was a certain element of Orthodox nationalism in some of the literature I was given, and more broadly there is a tendency among some in Russia today to embrace a romanticized history tinted with imperial nostalgia in which the collapse of the Russian Empire is seen as the tragic loss of "Holy Russia." However, I believe that there were features of this event that speak powerfully to situations that go beyond the particularities of Russia in the twentieth century. The memorial gathering was marked by a desire to remember and specifically name those who had been persecuted, to acknowledge a sense of collective loss, and to assert that society cannot move forward without acknowledging and claiming responsibility for the wrongs of its past.

As Anabaptist Christians in the United States, it seems clear that these are all things that we should aspire to do as well. At First Mennonite we often devote attention to important issues like racial justice, the current and historic treatment of native peoples, gun violence, and environmental care. Attending a memorial event in Russia reminded me just how important it is to publicly remember such events. There is enormous social inertia pushing us to forget, sanitize, and romanticize the past, while ignoring the deep wounds that exist and feigning surprise and offense whenever events occur that challenge these notions. The work of reconciliation is also a work of remembering and of confessing our own role in perpetuating injustices. "I would like to call you all my name," wrote the poet Anna Akhmatova, in words that are inscribed on a memorial in St. Petersburg to victims of Soviet prison camps. Thinking of these things in light of our stated mission at FMC, I can't help but feel that seeking a just peace must include remembering the names of those who have been denied justice, because healing has to involve remembering.



## 'For Pete's Sake'

- by Pete Shungu

I write for Pete's sake  
 Spit rhymes for Pete's sake  
 Play horn for Pete's sake  
 Make beats for Pete's sake  
 Music sustains me, replenishes me  
 With music the possibilities are endless to me

I write for Pete's sake  
 Spit rhymes for Pete's sake  
 Play horn for Pete's sake  
 Make beats for Pete's sake  
 I make music for me, but it's also for you  
 Cuz if sharing is caring then that's what I'm gonna do

I really can't imagine a life without music  
 It's a gift that I'm blessed to both give and receive  
 From childhood, we've been like best friends, inseparable  
 And who knew all that us two would achieve  
 From an early age, I explored your white and black keys  
 A metaphor for my identity in a way

Expanded to the trumpet and a new dimension opened  
 Two instruments to project what I'm trying to say  
 I was shy, reserved, scared to put myself out there  
 Always playing the background when given the choice  
 But with music my self-consciousness shed from my being  
 Helping me to truly discover my voice  
 Went from speaking through the horn to speaking through the mic  
 MCin and spoken word projected my soul through cables  
 Kickin freestyles outside the Tufts campus center  
 Crazy cyphers over beats produced by fists striking tables  
 Organic-- all natural, straight from the heart  
 I developed my own rhymes, own songs, own beats  
 With some trumpet mixed in, it was hip hop, jazz  
 With a whole lotta soul-- it was authentically Pete  
 And still is-- over time I've been blessed that music  
 Has connected me with amazing people and amazing places  
 It's humbling that my rhymes can impact peoples' emotions  
 I'm truly moved by the smiles or the tears on their faces  
 It's incredible to think that some of my idols  
 Would end up making music with me on the same stage  
 And I'm convinced that in life things come full circle  
 So I'm excited to see what'll be written on the next page

## Letter from Hiroshima

- by Dannie Otto



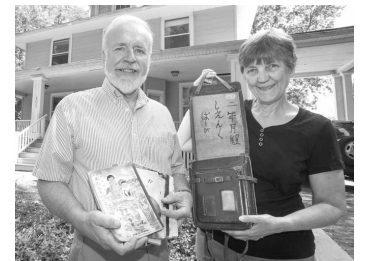
Greetings from Hiroshima. Barbara and I have now been at the World Friendship Center for three months and it feels like home, although very unlike our home in Urbana. We live in a quiet, mostly residential neighborhood, about 50 yards from the Tenma River, one of six tidal rivers which runs through Hiroshima.

The Center is in two houses which share one lot. The one we live in has many elements of traditional two story Japanese homes of the the previous generation. Some of the floors are traditional tatami mats which are made of a tightly woven reed. In rooms with this type of floor there typically are no chairs or sofas. One sits on the floor on zabuton cushions. In bedrooms with tatami floors, sleeping is on futons on the floor.

Our neighborhood has many restaurants, more than we can possibly try out even over the next two years, although we are doing our best. There is only so much one can eat. We have bikes that allows us to cover the center city quite easily. The riverbanks are elevated levees with walking/bike paths that are nice for biking. When we have free time we enjoy taking our bikes on ferries to islands which dot Hiroshima Bay.

Our work here involves hosting guests in our overnight facility. We also each teach several English classes per week and we work with other peace and education organizations in Hiroshima.

People here are very excited that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 is being awarded to the International Coalition Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for successfully leading a long international campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. One week before the announcement we attended a symposium analyzing the treaty led by the Japanese negotiator on the committee that drafted the treaty. Many of the people we work with here have been working on nuclear disarmament for decades.



Because the American government is so strongly opposed to such a treaty, it has received relatively little coverage in the American media. But it is a big deal to the rest of the world. The general assembly vote in July was 122 nations in favor, 1 no vote and 1 abstention. The U.S. and its close allies, as well as the other nuclear powers, did not even bother to attend the session. Japan, the only nation to suffer the effects of a direct nuclear attack, sided with the U.S. and refused to support the treaty. This was a bitter pill for peace organizations here and especially for survivors and those who worked hard to bring the treaty to a vote. Some here think that Japan's refusal to sign helped to nudge the Nobel Committee to award the Peace Prize to ICAN.

The bombing of Hiroshima was 72 years ago and so any survivors (Hibakusha) of the bomb are getting quite old. There are a number of Hibakusha who are active with the WFC and are willing to come tell their story to our guests. This morning we had an 84-year-old woman, Kasaoka-san, who was 12 years old on the day of the bombing, come and tell her story. Her mind is still very clear and she spoke for an hour with great clarity and detail. She spoke without passion. The power of the story was in the events that she recalled for us. It was almost more than one can bear to hear her detailed account of that day on August 6, 1945.

## Letter from Hiroshima continued

She was in her family home about two miles from the hypo-center and was partially sheltered from the direct effects of the bomb blast. Both of her parents, who were on a work detail in the center city, were victims. Her father was not killed immediately and she cared for him for three days in their partially destroyed family home. His body was charred black. Although she was only a child, she tried to relieve his pain by making a poultice of grated cucumbers and potatoes. There were no functioning crematoria to dispose of the dead, and so after his death, she and her grandmother had to move his body to the sand beach where they cremated her father with found pieces of wood salvaged from destroyed homes.

Her message is pretty simple, straightforward and extremely compelling. We are so moved by each story we hear. Each is unique, but all end with the plea to pass on the stories so that the world remembers, and to work for a peaceful world, free of nuclear weapons.

The guests who come through the WFC are the nicest people one can imagine, and many of them are quite interesting too. We are making connections that we will carry with us after we leave here. There seems to be a steady stream of artists and writers who come to Hiroshima to do their work and some of them stay with us. We have just had an artist and film crew from Australia with us for several days while filming a documentary on the artist's life.

We look forward to hosting people from FMC. Our two years here will go fast, so make your plans now.

## End of Life Planning

- by Phyllis Croisant

You're probably wondering why I would want to write about planning for end of life – after all death is not a topic brought up in casual conversation. But dealing with my mother's death and settling her estate this past year has focused my attention on ways to ease this process for my children when I reach end of life.

A few months ago I was asked to join the board of trustees of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Champaign County. This organization is a wonderful source of information on pre-planning and dealing with issues surrounding end of life. One notable example is that the FCA-CC conducts a biennial survey of funeral homes and cemeteries in Champaign County. The results of this survey include a list of services and prices for each funeral home and cemetery. You can view this information on the FCA-CC website (<http://FuneralsChampaignCounty.org>). This can be a great help in pre-planning burial, cremation, and other funeral services. I personally was surprised to see the great variation in costs for similar services from different providers.

The FCA-CC website also contains information on body donation for medical research and education. This includes a list of organizations that accept bodies in Illinois. With most of these organizations there is no cost to the family of the deceased, and when the cadaver has served its purpose the ashes are returned to the family if desired. Therefore, body donation may be an economical as well as thoughtful and generous choice. The FCA-CC website also contains links to Federal Trade Commission information on *Shopping for Funeral Services as well as the FTC Funeral Rule which states you have a right to see price lists, obtain price quotes by phone, and pick and choose those goods and services that you want and can afford.*

*I encourage you to take a look at some of this information on the website and consider making some of these decisions surrounding end of life while you are still healthy. It can relieve your children or other relatives from having to make choices during a very emotional time.*

## Maria Dorsey

- by Sharon Monday

*Below is an article about a talk my daughter Maria Dorsey gave on November 1.*

My name is Maria Dorsey. I have come a long way to share the stories I am going to share with you, and by a long way I mean it's been a journey of tough lessons, adventures and new friends and networks.

I was born in Bucaramanga, Colombia. I was adopted when I was 18 months old, along with my sister, Reinal and brought to live in Urbana, IL where we grew up! In my talk I am hoping to share the story of my journey to find my ancestors and connect with the people and country where I came out of the Earth from. This journey was kicked into gear by my work offering at the Oceti Sakowin Camp in Standing Rock, Cannonball, ND. Surrounded by thousands, literally, of other indigenous people who know their ancestors, know their culture and trust it with every breath they take was an experience I had never known. Especially having this connection and healing while in such a violent setting made its mark even deeper. It made me long with a desperation that I still feel many days, to learn everything I could about indigenous culture, specifically my own.

On this journey I have made connections with many people, particularly a group called Idle No More SF Bay, which is an indigenous resistance group geared towards environmental and indigenous rights in the San Francisco Bay area. Idle No More was initially founded in Canada by a woman raising awareness around the horrifically high number of indigenous women who are kidnapped, raped and murdered with out a trace. Law enforcement approach to indigenous victims is oftentimes starkly different from the approach of missing and murdered victims of other races, namely of caucasian victims and it is an ongoing horror that *still is addressed this way, so I need to say that.*

Through my work with Idle No More SF Bay I met a woman named Gloria, which is what tonight is all about. Gloria Ushigua Santi was brought from her home territory in the Amazon forest, in an area that is the most biodiverse area in the entire world, to deliver a letter to the Chinese consulate in San Francisco demanding the halt of Chinese exploration and exploitation of oil in her tribes homelands. Gloria is an incredibly brave woman who has her life in danger much of the time. The government is constantly decrying her because she speaks out against them, while they want to forget about their humanity in lieu of paying off their debts. Over the weekend I became friends with Gloria.

I shared my story with Gloria and my personal journey back to my people who i don't know, and she told me about her adopted daughter. Gloria is braving the world outside the Amazon for one simple reason: her tribe's survival. Because of the environmental and humanitarian impacts of Andes Petroleum in the rainforests she is speaking out loudly on behalf of her people and the many untouched tribes who will certainly perish as well. It's a huge job, very dangerous and incredibly brave, and they need help, which is why I have chosen to also make this a cause close to my heart. I am helping to educate us on the realities of indigenous survival in our oil driven world wide economies, I hope to help people also want to stand up for Gloria, her people and those who don't even know they need to have a voice to fight to exist.

I am profusely grateful for the opportunity to share Gloria's story with my home town community and truly hope to raise funds to support her work, as it turns out it's not cheap to stand up to big oil and major government agencies. Thank you for this gift of time to speak, I pray that the rivers and the earth hears my words and Knows I am fighting for Her as well. In the words of Gloria "to me, water is more precious than any coins. Water IS the gold."



Someone has contacted the church regarding a small house for sale:  
717 S. Prairie St in Champaign.

If interested, contact ReMax or Norm Kauffmann: 574-238-7464