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## *The FMC Vine*

First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana

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**This month's Vine may look a little different, as we explore new ways to produce the newsletter (the editor is being difficult by owning a MacBook). If you have ideas, please let me know at: [FMCVine@gmail.com](mailto:FMCVine@gmail.com).**

### **“I’ve Got the Power!” Anabaptist Women Doing Theology Conference**

Laura L. Brenneman

On the weekend before the U.S. general election, 150 Anabaptist women gathered in a conference center near Washington, DC to do theology. Subtitled “Naming and Reclaiming Power as a Force for Good,” people from a tradition that has often felt more comfortable with terms like “servant leadership” than “power” and women with our own often negative experiences of power, came together to name what is good, necessary, true, and personal about power.

The second Women in Leadership Project (WLP) conference (a Mennonite Church USA project) brought together different expressions of power, shown beautifully in mixing song, Bible meditations, scholarly papers, personal reflections, homilies, poetry, and more, reminding me of the power of multiple ways of knowing. The time was packed—plenary sessions, corporate worship, small group time, break-out sessions, talent night—with meals and breaks interspersed. I found it impossible to do it all. I needed long moments to connect, talk, laugh, walk outside, and integrate the many things happening all around. Above all, I think the importance of this conference will be in the many seeds shared that are and will be planted throughout the Mennonite church.

Here I focus on some of the points from the conference that particularly stick with me in the weeks following the conference. You will find reports from *The Mennonite* at <https://themennonite.org/daily-news/second-women-theology-conference-focuses-power/> and the *Mennonite Church USA* <https://mennoniteusa.org/news/mennonite-women-theology-conference>. Please read these for more comprehensive overviews.

First, a diverse steering committee (Moniqua Acosta, Erica Littlewolf, Linda Gehman Peachey, Sandra Pérez, Regina Shands Stoltzfus, and WLP coordinator, Jenny Castro) and conference planning committee carried off what seemed to be a fully diverse Anabaptist conference. By this, I mean that while many white women were present and speaking, many women of color were up front and leading. In many cases, there were multiple representatives from racial groups, which in my view helpfully allowed women to speak from their own experiences, rather than as “the voice” of a whole category of people. I think the WLP committees have done landmark work that can model for the Mennonite church how to bring people together in respectful and accessible ways.

Second, the term “remember” has stayed with me as useful in conveying how generational trauma can be passed on. Sue Park-Hur, co-director of ReconciliAsian, spoke of this on Saturday morning (“Owning the Power within Us”), crediting Elaine Enns (co-director of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries) for prompting her thinking on this. Park-Hur recalled some of her family stories, speaking of how past events can have a hold beyond the initiating trauma, and they can also carry potential power for healing in living generations. I find this to be a useful stance in approaching painful past stories from family and church in hope of healing.

Third, it is exhilarating to see women gain clarity and confidence that what they do is theological. In February 2014 at the first WLP conference, I went to a workshop session where a friend gave her first-ever conference paper. Her presentation emphasized how doing theology for her was in the everyday connections and interactions between neighbors and she contrasted it with how some men in her life do theology in officially recognized capacities. At this recent conference, I attended another paper given by this same friend, whose

vision for how she does theology is still experiential and grounded in “the ordinary,” but refined and now claimed as a vocation. This is a moving example to me of the importance of this conference as a testing ground for women wanting to grow in confidence about the new ways being opened to them by the Holy Spirit.

Related to this, the Sunday session, “Empowered to Empower,” worked with the theme that claiming power can be risky and ruffle feathers. Each panelist, Chantelle Todman Moore (founder of unlock Ngenuity 1\*), Barbra Graber (editor of Our Stories Untold), and Erica Littlewolf (Indigenous Visioning Circle, MCC Central States) touched on the professional or public risk of being visible, clear and passionate in communication, and sometimes not fitting into the “right” Mennonite narrative. But all were emphatic that choosing not to speak out and exercise their power was too costly, both personally and for people they care about and represent. Todman Moore said that it is not enough for her exercise of power to be about personal liberation, but must take into account the people “we’re bringing with us and that we’re creating space for women who are becoming empowered.” I am glad that the conference dealt with reckoning with the costs of power.

Finally, there is power in naming something from the front of the room. For me this came through most clearly when Rachel Halder (founder of Our Stories Untold) talked about her own healing journey from interpersonal and institutional sexualized violence, coming to a place of deep acceptance with “I am who I am, and that is okay. I am who I am, and that is all right.” During the Saturday morning session, Halder asked everyone to repeat those words and as I heard and saw a whole room of women saying this, I had a profound feeling of love and feeling part of God’s good creation. Such simple sentences, but their profession held power, perhaps because in a room of diverse identities, many not often honored by the church—non-male, non-white, non-straight—it is amazing to publicly claim God’s love for who I am. It is a good reminder to me as a church leader of the healing power of public welcome from the people who stand up front.

Although I hope for more Women Doing Theology conferences, it is not clear that they will continue because the budget for WLP is tenuous. Get acquainted with the WLP’s work at <http://mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/peacebuilding/women-in-leadership-project/>.

You will find that they are working to prompt us Mennonites out of pretty conventional gender and race relations. I was honored to be part of the first Women Doing Theology conference in February 2014, “All You Need Is Love,” and many of the fruits of that conference can be accessed in the book about the conference, which you can get for free at <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/all-you-need-is-love-honoring-the-diversity-of-womens-voices-in-theology/>. If you wish to help, please spread the word and donate at <https://secure.jotform.us/form/41906015063143>.

\* Hear more about Todman Moore’s new organization in a recent interview with Glen Guyton, “Unlock Ngenuity to Step Out into New Ventures w/ Chantelle Todman Moore” (Nov. 16, 2016)

### **FMC Committee Updates:**

Each month there will be updates from each committee. Please see conveners for any questions.

**Worship:** The worship committee has been hard at work this month; between the new chairs in the sanctuary, the centering chimes at the beginning of worship and planning for Lent, there is lots to be done! The Lenten theme will be “Enliven Us” with a goal of using our physical senses to explore worship in new ways. The conference attended by Andrea and Matt brings some new song selections to be placed in the pew folders (forthcoming) along with an idea of what the new hymnal will include.

**Service and Outreach:** S & O seeks to present the face of FMC to the larger community. We promote, support and encourage service and outreach efforts. Many in our congregation are actively working in a variety of service activities aimed at reducing hunger; helping the homeless and those in crisis; working for peace and justice, including racial justice; caring for the earth; and assisting refugees and immigrants. We try to match our local missions giving to support these areas. We also help in determining our giving to the larger Mennonite community. We encourage “mission moments” and provide other ways to learn about service opportunities and to share concerns. FMC presents itself through our website, the newspaper, our on-site signage, our block party (as of last year) and through our presence in many organizations. We are working to update these outlets, keep them relevant, and help our congregation be aware of the many service opportunities available. If you are connected to service and outreach opportunities

and want to share those connections with the congregation, please talk with us. The current Committee is made up of Pastor Michael, Mary Krick, convener, David Schrag, Council Representative, Peter Dyck, Kajsa Herrstrom, Phil Martens, and Jan Sabey.

**Christian Education:** An annual question we face each new year on Christian Education Committee is “What should we do about Vacation Bible School this year?” In my time on the committee we have tried several different approaches with varying degrees of success. A common refrain each year is how to find a suitable time with sufficient volunteers to staff such an event.

VBS targets a relatively small audience but requires a good amount of energy. We also realize that the current era is not the same as the one many of us grew up in. There are different demands on family time especially for members with jobs tied to the school calendar. Summer months are not the lazy times of years past when options were limited. Now we work to find time for work related travel or educational advancement, as well as for vacations. Sports commitments, church conferences, service opportunities and camping opportunities also draw people away for varying times. Out of a brainstorming session last year, we agreed to encourage members to take advantage of programming that is already in place and to offer a financial incentive to do so. We noted that our church camps already have many of the same goals as VBS, offer similar programming and have resources already in place. Church camps offer time for intergenerational interaction, time to make new friends from different churches, time for spiritual input in a unique environment away from our normal routine. Accordingly, we increased the amount in the Christian Education budget this year specifically for camp scholarships. We will continue to support our children's camp attendance but we hope that more people will choose to take part in the family camps that are offered at our church facilities. Family camps are not limited to only families. Single persons and couples without children are also welcome. Consider signing up for a family camp together with others from the church, or consider going as a small group together! If you are interested in taking advantage of this offer, please talk to Pastor Michael or Pastor Debra. The money available is still limited and will be divided among those who inquire thus don't wait too long! As an addendum, we had hopes in years past that a Peace Camp could be developed with the Mosque

and Temple but are not seeing the necessary help needed for the current year. We are still in the early stages of exploring if there are other summer events we could join in a collaborative way.

**Property and Finance:** The property and finance committee has started off 2017 with a healthy list of projects to keep us busy and the hope of developing a longer term strategic vision for our building and how it serves congregation. Our projects include supporting the nursery renovation efforts that were initiated by the Christian Ed. committee and pushed forward by Donna and Jeri. We are also soliciting bids for replacement of the unreliable heating boiler. Our current boiler is a brand that is no longer made and is not supported by any local contractor leaving us totally dependent on Phil Marten's ingenuity to keep warm in the winter. In the process, we are also getting bids to install ductless air conditioners for the library and offices which presently rely on window A/C units. In addition to being more efficient and not needing taken in and out seasonally, many a summer meeting in the library has had to turn down the present window A/C so as not to need to shout over the noise.

A few smaller projects include replacing our current drinking fountains. The one on the main floor is out of service. The replacements will likely not require electricity for refrigeration but we would like to include spigots for filling water bottles. Also check out the renovated JYF room which suffered extensive water damage from a toilet leak in the women's restroom above it. There is a new floor and trim, drywall on the north side and some new ceiling tile to round out the renovations. The sanctuary upgrades are nearing completion with Perry building center and side railings for the steps to the platform. Finally, we are also planning to replace the security camera on the back door with an Internet streaming unit that can send pictures to any of our office computers.

Last but not least, put Saturday morning May 6 on your calendar. This will be our Spring work day featuring many routine and one of a kind tasks as well as good fellowship and goodies. See you there.

## FMC Interview: Meet the Editor Edition!



*What is your real daytime job, and how long have you been doing it? What do you like most about your job? What would make your job perfect?*

My "real" job is as a Title I Math Interventionist - basically catching the kids who aren't in special education but are struggling with math more than the average student. I love that I get to work with small groups of kindergarten through fifth grade students, but is also a challenge! So many personalities throughout my day! It would be perfect if I had more time with the kids! If we could add a couple hours to the day, the problem would be solved (please don't add hours to the school day).

*What guided you into this job?*

Last year, I taught second grade. I interviewed for a job at Unity West, but was asked if I would be interested in taking a Title I position teaching math. The best part of this story is that I have learned (throughout the last couple years) that I LOVE teaching math!!

*Where were you born? Did you grow up at the Bidner farm? What is it like being the big sister of twins?*

I was born inside Washington D.C. city limits. Dad determined that walking around the Jefferson Memorial with mom before I ever got to leave the hospital was prudent. That said, I was nameless for 5 days because they wanted the perfect presidential name. I grew up on 5 Gen Farms, living in the room that my grandma called home as well. This was mostly great, except for being the older sister. Turns out that it's not all fun and games when your siblings gang up on you! The worst part was that I didn't love all the chores (re-seeding fields, filling the planter, putting iodine on cattle) that the twins

seemed to enjoy. I like them slightly more now, but DO NOT tell them. I'll get roped into doing them again!

*Where were you educated? For primary and secondary education and for college? Do you have a favorite story from your education prior to college?*

I went from K-12 in Mahomet-Seymour schools. I think all of my favorite stories come from all the extracurriculars... I spent many hours marching with my flute, sewing costumes and scoring wrestling matches. I may have gotten lost in the Assembly Hall parking lot once or a few times... I attended Illinois Wesleyan in Bloomington, IL to get my BA in Elementary Education.

*What was your favorite subject in college?*

I minored in political science - I really enjoyed the international political science classes! It kept me in the loop and feeling empowered, but also made me stop and think. Every college student needs that reaffirmation that the world continues to spin, right?

*What are the favorite things to do when not working?*

HA. I'm not sure what "free time" is, but I do like to binge netflix on days off, catch up on school things (not my favorite but it sure feels good!), and plan future trips.

*Have you been on youth trips from FMC? Have you been a camper at Mennohaven?*

I think I went to every winter retreat during JYF and MYF years and I missed one convention because I was in Spain with my grandparents! I attended Mennohaven during the summer a couple times, I was more about 4-H camp in Monticello.

*What would you like to be doing five years from now? And ten years from now?*

Well, hopefully I will be in my 7th year of teaching and a pro! Just kidding. But I really do hope I am at a school that I love. Ten years seems like light years away - I'll be 34 and probably still driving my loved ones crazy.

*Feel free to tell us anything else about yourself...your favorite food, or book, or movie...whatever...*

Surprisingly, I really don't have favorites.. changes every time I think about it. I love Spain, I would love to live there at some point. My favorite place on UIUC campus is a place that I can get froyo, my favorite place to explore is Turkey Run and my favorite place to procrastinate is a coffee shop.

*Finally, we are excited that you were willing to take on the job of doing the Vine. Thank you very much for doing that. Do you have some special things you would like to do with the newsletter?*

I'm excited about the "Caption This" photo section! We have a lot of creative people in our midst. Committee heads are also going to share a monthly update so we know what's going on around us.

*FMC Menno Night:*



*Comic by Soren Schrag:*



*Caroling:*



**Miscellaneous:**

*Carle Hospice* is looking for volunteers to spend a couple of hours with hospice patients in their homes or nursing homes. If you are interested, let Pastor Deb know. It might be good to do the training together. Training involves three hours of instruction and 10 hours hands-on.

*Lent* is quickly approaching, the forty day period of reflection leading up to Easter. (Forty days brings to mind both the forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness and the forty days Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.) Although we know that God does not need special days to receive or relate to us, it can be helpful for us humans to set aside time to try a new discipline, be it a time of meditation, a giving-up of something that has become too important, or an intentional change of attitude. Sometimes just changing a pattern in a small way can remind us to refocus our attention toward God. So think about what might help you in your daily life with God this Lenten season. The Lent committee will be suggesting a time of reflection through pictures, poems and stories relating to each week's theme. Try it!

**Zwieback Recipe:***Ingredients:*

1 cup warm water  
2 teaspoons sugar  
3 Tablespoons traditional yeast  
1 1/2 cups butter  
2 Tablespoons salt  
1/4 cup sugar  
2 cups warm potato water (add 1/2 cup instant potato)  
4 cups scalded milk  
14 cups flour (about)

*To Do:* Pour hot milk and potato water over butter, salt and sugar in large bowl. Let cool 5-10 minutes. Prepare yeast by dissolving 2 tsp. sugar in 1 cup water and adding yeast. Add 6 cups flour to the milk/butter mixture and beat well. Continue adding flour and mix until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl. Dough will be very soft. Knead about five minutes more. Cover and let rise until double in bulk. Form the buns. Bottom bun is about the size of a large walnut. The top bun is smaller. Place smaller ball on top of larger one...and push down through centre of both balls with knuckle of index finger to prevent buns from falling over during baking. Let rise until light. Bake at 375 degrees for about 20 minutes.

*Yield:* About 8 dozen buns

# One Winter Night 2017 Reflections

## *From Baggins:*

It warms my heart that so many of you donated your resources to Phil and my endeavors. I was also heartened to have so many visitors to our boxes, especially Tom Anderson who brought me coffee, courtesy of Kathy. Thanks!!! At 10:00 I saw the documentary “Phoenix Rising” which I had never seen before. It brought the plight of the homeless more in focus to me. I figured that the cold would be my biggest challenge, however, noise was a greater problem. First drunken revelers, and loud cars, then garbage and delivery trucks. As I spent the night outside I thought about my adventures on the Appalachian Trail (AT), sleeping outside, walking in the rain, and living outdoors for months at a time. How much worse is it for the homeless who have no choice but to survive outside. They have to deal with sleeping outside in the rain, cold and snow. Also I always felt safe during my trek, but do the homeless feel any security on the streets? It was an awesome experience for me and I hope by sleeping in a box, and helping to raise money, I have raised more awareness to the challenges of the homeless. I know that as I reflect on my box time I will never view the homeless the same way. They are each individuals, and it is an injustice for us to lump them together as a unit.



Baggins and Phil

## *From Phil:*

Some highlights of our “box-time”:

- Having a bunch of you visit!
- Saying hi to Mark Evans staffing a registration table as we got signed in.
- Seeing the documentary film (and warming our toes) between 10pm and Midnight. It was my second time to see the video, and it was well worth it.
- Checking out the “palace” of boxes built and staffed by about 10 burly bikers from the motorcycle club “Blue Crew Central” just across the street. (Melany Jackson is active in biker activities in the area)
- Getting hot chocolate and PB&J sandwiches from the Canteen Run folks (from the refurbished ambulance that delivers meals routinely to folks on the street)
- Finding out that hand/pocket warmers actually DO make your toes toasty (all night).
- Being neighbors to Carolyn Codes-Atkinson, who taught Rex in 7 th and 8th grades at Franklin (she now teaches at Central High) as well as Pastor Willie Williams of New Jerusalem M.B. Church in Urbana.
- A visit by several pastors from Stone Creek church.
- Finding out from Melany that there were 240+ box dwellers this year, compared to 160 last year.

A special shout-out goes to Kajsa, who spent many frigid hours staffing the donations table at Walnut and Taylor, just a few steps from our “front door”.

## Caption This?

Each month, there will be a photo selected for the congregation to caption. For submissions (of photos/captions), please email [FMCVine@gmail.com](mailto:FMCVine@gmail.com).



## FROM MENNO NIGHT

**Menno Nite Slogans:** For those of you who were stymied by the Menno Nite game or too busy enjoying your table companions to bother, here are the answers. For those of you who have had it with all things political, skip this and my apologies.

1. 54 - 40 or fight! - James Polk
2. A chicken in every pot, a car in every garage. - Herbert Hoover
3. America first - Woodrow Wilson
4. Americans must rule - America Millard Fillmore
5. Anything to beat Grant Horace Greeley
6. Are you better off than you were four years ago? - Ronald Reagan
7. AuH<sub>2</sub>O - Barry Goldwater
8. Bring it on - John Kerry
9. Come home, America - George McGovern
10. Get America moving again - Jimmy Carter
11. He's making us proud again - Gerald Ford
12. It's time to change America - Bill Clinton
13. Let well enough alone - William McKinley
14. Let's make America great again - Ronald Reagan
15. Moving America forward - George W. Bush
16. Peace and prosperity - Dwight D. Eisenhower
17. Return to normalcy - Warren Harding
18. Ross for boss - Ross Perot
19. The better man for a better America - Robert Dole
20. Tippecanoe and Tyler, too - William Henry Harrison
21. It is nothing but fair to leave Taft in the chair - William Howard Taft