



First Mennonite Church of Champaign Urbana

June/July 2018

The Vine

excerpt from 'Multiversity'

by Pete Shungu

Too many people make no effort to learn a foreign language
And act all condescending when they hear Creole or Spanish
As if knowing English makes you a superior person
But what good is English if you're just dissin' and cursin'
Instead of expanding your mind and respecting cultural difference
That's what makes the world beautiful if you just listened
But we're so caught up in our personal bubbles
We become xenophobes, equate difference with trouble
But me, I'm proud to speak French, proud to be Congolese
Maybe one day I'll learn Arabic or Japanese
But I already speak the universal language known as music
Got a trumpet in my hand, and I'm not afraid to use it
Don't confuse it with one-dimensionality
My reality expands way beyond just one tonality
Je suis du monde, I'm reppin for the world
Car le sens de la vie c'est aux mélanges, the swirls



THE VINE IS PRINTED BI-MONTHLY

Editors: Alex Bidner & Rhonda Gibson

Deadline for Aug/Sept issue: Sunday, July 29

Email submissions to: fmcvine@gmail.com

The Vine is also available on our church website (under "news"): www.fmc-cu.org

Service and Outreach Committee Update

by Mary Krick



The Service and Outreach committee has recommended that 12 local charitable organizations be included in the spending plan for 2018 which was approved at the annual congregational meeting on January 21, 2018. At the January Service and Outreach Committee meeting, we decided to provide some information to the congregation -- in the form of articles for *The Vine* -- about these various local groups with which we work and to whom we donate money. This is the third article in our series.

Habitat for Humanity

What: Habitat envisions a world where everyone has a decent place to live. It seeks to put God's love into action by bringing people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Habitat builds and sells decent, quality, affordable houses to families at a zero percent interest rate. It selects families based on their level of need, willingness to partner with Habitat, acceptance of responsibilities, and ability to repay the mortgage. Habitat also operates ReStore which makes used household goods, appliances, electronics, and home improvement items available to the community at convenient prices. ReStore revenues cover virtually all of the administrative costs of Habitat allowing donated dollars to go directly to home building. ReStore also assures that over 460 tons of materials never make it to a landfill each year. FMC has built two Habitat houses and also participated in the two interfaith builds which celebrated CU Habitat's 100th house last year.

Who: Habitat for Humanity has at least 8 staff including Sheila Dodd, Executive Director, Kim Gollings, Volunteer and Outreach Manager, and Adam Morrisette, ReStore Director. Habitat has local partners who work together to provide for those in the community who are in need. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Champaign County Habitat for Humanity. Habitat homes are constructed almost entirely by volunteers and Habitat mobilizes thousands of people each year. Volunteering with Habitat on a house-build requires no prior construction experience. Habitat will teach you everything you need to know on site. ReStore also depends heavily on volunteers since staff make up less than 20% of the manpower needed. ReStore offers more flexible hours and days for volunteers.

Where: Habitat for Humanity and ReStore are located at [119 E. University Ave, Champaign](#).

When: Job site volunteers work between 8:00 and 3:00 on Saturdays during builds. ReStore offers volunteers flexible hours. Volunteer for an hour or a day, every week or every month. Store hours are Wed-Friday, 10:00-6:00; Saturday, 10:00-4:00; Sunday and Monday, closed; Tuesday 10:00-6:00 for donations only. To volunteer: call (217) 359-0507, (217) 819-5118 or send an email to: restorevolunteer@cuhabitat.org

For more information visit: cuhabitat.org (or contact Clark Breeze)

Courage Connection

What: Its mission is to provide a continuum of service so that individuals and families can achieve safety, stability, and self-sufficiency. Courage Connection provides shelter and supportive services to anyone experiencing domestic violence and to homeless women and children. Shelter and services are confidential and free-of-charge. Support services, including safety planning, court advocacy, and counseling, are available to residential and non-residential clients. Courage Connection provides a domestic violence shelter; transitional housing for single women and women with children; and several other support services and programs. Courage Connection also provides permanent affordable housing for single women and for families at Presby House and at their 6 affordable rental units in Champaign. These units are a result of a partnership with the City of Champaign's Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Courage Connections also operates Connections in Lincoln Square which sells donated clothing items for women, men, and children as well as gently used decorative items and housewares. Courage Connections clients can get free emergency and professional clothing there.

Who: Courage Connection has a paid staff. It also depends on interns and volunteers and the support of its business partners and faith communities to continue its work.

Where: The main office of Courage Connection is located at [508 E. Church St.](#) in Champaign. They prefer electronic inquiries.

When: The domestic violence hotline (217) 384-4390 or (877) 352-4390 is continually available. The store hours are Tues-Fri 10:00-5:00, Sat 9:00-1:00. Donations are accepted Tues and Thurs 10:00-1:00, Sat 9:00-1:00.

For more information visit: courage connection.org (or contact Donna Nelson)

Reclaiming Jesus

A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis

We are living through perilous and polarizing times as a nation, with a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches. We believe the soul of the nation and the integrity of faith are now at stake.

It is time to be followers of Jesus before anything else—nationality, political party, race, ethnicity, gender, geography. Our identity in Christ precedes every other identity.

When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics. The church's role is to change the world through the life and love of Jesus Christ. The government's role is to serve the common good by protecting justice and peace. When that role is undermined by political leadership, faith leaders must stand up and speak out. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state."

It is often the duty of Christian leaders, espe-

cially elders, to speak the truth in love to our churches and to name and warn against temptations, racial and cultural captivities, false doctrines, and political idolatries—and even our complicity in them. We do so here with humility, prayer, and a deep dependency on the grace and Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus is Lord. That is our foundational confession. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar was not—nor any other political ruler since. We pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Our faith is personal but never private, meant not only for heaven but for this earth.

Applying what "Jesus is Lord" means today is the message we commend as elders to our churches. We pray that we, as followers of Jesus, will find the depth of faith to match the danger of our political crisis.

The present crisis calls us to go deeper—deeper into our relationship to God; into our relationships with each other, especially across racial, eth-

nic, and national lines; and into our relationships with the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk.

We need to recover the power of confessing our faith. Lament, repent, and then repair. If Jesus is Lord, there is always space for grace. We believe it is time to speak and to act in faith and conscience, not because of politics, but because we are disciples of Jesus Christ—to whom be all authority, honor, and glory. He is the light in our darkness. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Signed: *Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Dr. Amos Brown, Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Dr. Tony Campolo, Dr. Iva Caruthers, Bishop Michael Curry, Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Dr. Cynthia Hale, Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, Rev. Dr. Joel Hunter, Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, Bishop Vashti McKenzie, Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Dr. John Perkins, Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Fr. Richard Rohr, Dr. Ron Sider, Rev. Jim Wallis, Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Bishop Will Willimon*

I. WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God's image and likeness. Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God in some of the children of God.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the resurgence of white nationalism and racism in our nation on many fronts, including the highest levels of political leadership. We reject white supremacy and commit ourselves to help dismantle the systems and structures that perpetuate white preference and advantage. Any doctrines or political strategies that use racist resentments, fears, or language must be named as public sin.

III. WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God. We strongly deplore the growing attacks on immigrants and refugees; we won't accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children.

V. WE BELIEVE that Christ's way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. We support democracy, not because we believe in human perfection, but because we do not.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT any moves toward autocratic political leadership and authoritarian rule. We believe authoritarian political leadership is a theological danger threatening democracy and the common good—and we will resist it.

II. WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT misogyny, the mistreatment, violent abuse, sexual harassment, and assault of women being further revealed in our culture and politics, including in our churches, and the oppression of any other child of God.

IV. WE BELIEVE that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. Jesus promises, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the practice and pattern of lying that is invading our political and civil life. The normalization of lying presents a profound moral danger to the fabric of society.

VI. WE BELIEVE Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples. Our churches and our nations are part of an international community whose interests always surpass national boundaries. We in turn should love and serve the world and all its inhabitants rather than to seek first narrow nationalistic prerogatives.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT "America first" as a theological heresy for followers of Christ. While we share a patriotic love for our country, we reject xenophobic or ethnic nationalism that places one nation over others as a political goal.

Full statement and resources available at ReclaimingJesus.org.

Faith and Political Dialogue

by Bob Hudson

As if the increasing polarization of the body politic in America over the last decade or two didn't cause enough worry, the level of stress many of us feel has only increased since election day of 2016. Personally, I feel deeply disheartened by the bellicosity of the Trump administration's war on environmental regulations and the EPA. More broadly, it's clear that Trump intends to direct the nation's enmity at immigrants, to disrupt the way our government has historically operated, and to create so much doubt about the veracity of the news that reality becomes a matter of "belief" defined by party affiliation. These actions flow from Trump's authoritarian impulses, making this a dangerous time for our democracy. It's also a dangerous time for humanity because the administration and many of its base supporters are undermining a needed national response to global climate change.

I appreciate the ways our pastors, without being "political," have included elements in our worship services that help those of us feeling stressed by our times to cope. I also appreciate the commitment we all share to making FMC a place where everyone experiences the support of the community despite differences in theological and political views. This isn't easy, for one's faith, as the foundation of our highest values, cannot help but intersect with public policy and politics. Sunday to Sunday, it seems we often achieve harmony by avoiding direct discussions of politics or at least limiting who we discuss politics with at church. Yet, as a congregation we have managed to grapple with divergent views on matters of church polity, such as welcoming lesbian and gay members, that mirror the ongoing culture wars in America. Of course, as an historic peace church, Mennonites are best known for personal conscientious objection to war and even taking corporate positions opposing war, yet we do not insist on conformity in this matter out of respect for individual conscience.

Still, we're not used to dealing with a time like this, when the President himself is undermining our alliances and fomenting national division rather than unity. American Christianity is entangled in the rise of Trumpism as well, for Trump's political base is nothing other than the largest and most vocal segment of the American church: white evangelicals. Trump Evangelicals are literally de-meaning the name "Christian" in that their enabling of Trumpism drains the label of Christianity's historic solidarity with the oppressed and downtrodden. Instead, Trump evangelicals are pushing for the "religious freedom" to discriminate against LGBTQ persons, threatening to reduce Christian "faith" to an ornate form of prejudice that serves as a basis for legalizing discrimination. Well-known criticisms of Christians as credulous, hypocritical moralists are being publicly confirmed. Think about what it means for all Christians when those that proclaim their faith most loudly deny the reality of human-caused climate change and instead espouse doctrines that sanction the economic forces that place profits over the future of humanity. How can this not have profound implications for the moral credibility of churches across America?

Of course there are many Christians that find Trumpism to be repugnant, but we have not found our voice yet. Just this week, I learned that a group of Christian leaders have published a statement condemning Trumpism entitled "Reclaiming Jesus" (www.reclaimingjesus.org). A condensed version of it is included in this issue of The Vine. Perhaps some of us at FMC can study it, together with historically significant figures, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for whom Christian discipleship in 1940s Germany meant becoming a leader of the Confessing Church movement that opposed Nazism. While America in 2018 isn't close to the level of murderous evil Bonhoeffer confronted, it would be worth studying how his faith informed his engagement with his times. Perhaps we can draw courage from his words, however:



Faith a Political Dialogue (continued)

Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God's will.
and

Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness and pride of power and with its plea for the weak. Christians are doing too little to make these points clear rather than too much. Christendom adjusts itself far too easily to the worship of power. Christians should give more offense, shock the world far more, than they are doing now. Christian should take a stronger stand in favor of the weak rather than considering first the possible right of the strong.

and

Your life as a Christian should make nonbelievers question their disbelief in God.

Both the Reclaiming Jesus statement and Bonhoeffer proclaim that if Christianity is to be true to God's calling, then we must live lives that have such impacts, challenge those who would use Christian faith to rationalize a desperate attempt to maintain the status quo in the face of demographic change. If we can live this way, instead of thinking "white evangelical" when they hear the word "Christian," people might find themselves actually wondering what mystery motivates us.

I suspect that nearly all of us are relieved that FMC is a space where we can escape thinking about politics in general, but especially Trump's politics and his constant efforts to infuse venomous ideas into every corner of our minds. Escape may suffice for some of us if our political system withstands the current test it is facing, but does having "faith" mean simply trusting we'll find a way to cope with whatever happens? For others of us "faith" means we must stand with and advocate on behalf of the people that are living less privileged lives than us, that are suffering, or that are seeking refuge in our land. I hope that we as a congregation can find ways to make space for dialogue and mutual encouragement aimed at sharing how God is calling us to love our neighbor as ourselves and to pray for our enemies. May God lead us into creative responses and meaningful roles in facing the challenges of this time.

From the FMC Library

Adults

Final Matters: A checklist for "checking out."

This is a notebook collection of practical ways to prepare for one's death. Look for it in the LC (Life Crises) section.

Inside Out and Back Again (poetry) by Thanha Lai

Donated by Janet Elaine Guthrie

Singing at the Fire: Voices of Anabaptist Martyrs by the Eastern Mennonite University Singers (CD)

And When They Shall Ask: A Docudrama of the Russian Mennonite Experience (DVD)

Both donated by the John Zehr family



PEACE GARDEN

by Mary Krick

The Peace Garden was begun many years ago as a joint project with the Mosque to build cooperation and friendship between Mennonites and Muslims and to provide food to those who needed it. It was a very successful project for many years, but eventually the gardening effort required of a food garden became unsustainable. Several years ago Faith in Place started a project to encourage places of faith to create pollinator-friendly gardens. And then, not only pollinator-friendly gardens, but also story gardens. So two years ago, FMC re-envisioned the Peace Garden as a 'pollinator-friendly, native perennial, (with just a bit of food) story' garden.

FMC's story is Peace: Peace with ourselves, peace with others, peace with the earth, peace with God.

Peace with self. A place to sit, think, watch butterflies, pray, walk the paths, and perhaps even eat a pea or a tomato.

Peace with others. Our garden sign proclaims it. Our friendship continues even though we no longer share the garden as a joint project. And, if you look closely, you will see our efforts to create a Colombian flag for our sister church.

Peace with the earth. It is a garden that we care for. And it's mostly native, pollinator-friendly plants.

Peace with God. We are all on our individual faith journey even though we are not all on exactly the same path. So we have several paths in the garden. And God is mystery. Mystery in the Peace Garden is represented by the tall plants in the middle. You can't see all the garden at once. You have to walk in it and experience it.

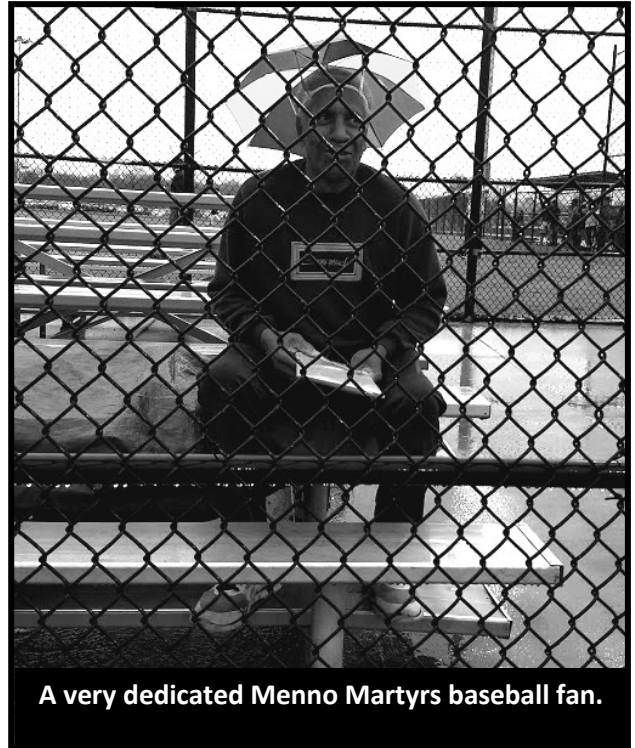
The current Peace Garden is made up of three gardens now. The 'front' garden which was planted four years ago and consists mostly of native, perennial plants. The original Peace Garden which is in its third year as a pollinator-friendly story garden. And the new 'extension' garden intended to draw the two other gardens together into one. This extension garden is still a baby garden which we are hoping will thrive. Most of its plantings have been funded by a Forever Wild Grant from the Illinois Chapter of Wild Ones.

The Garden Committee invites you to walk around and through these gardens.

The committee is currently made up of:

Mary Krick, Tom Anderson, Rebecca Bare, Sheryl Dyck, Mary Hines, Cheryl Koranda, Courtney Malcolm, Karen McKenzie, Donna Nelson, Marcia Nelson, Rosalee Otto, Jan Sabey, Greg Sancken, and Karla Woodson.





Saying goodbye to the Lubienski family
(and most of the worship band!)

TRANSITIONS



Josh & Liz opening gifts at their wedding shower

