

The Vine

Easter - Jesus is risen - He is risen indeed!

by Pastor Deb

Today (March 31st) is the fourth week of Lent, and I for one am ready for Easter! I'm ready for celebration instead of looking TOWARD the cross. Perhaps like anything we dread – an exam, a surgery, a difficult meeting – it's so much better when the hard part is over!

I noted in a sermon this month that it is hard for us to understand why Jesus' crucifixion was a part of his call. But at some point in all the gospels, it does seem that Jesus knows that he is called to such a death. Truly Jesus experienced the whole range of human reality – the grief, the fear, the pain, the loneliness, the rejection, as well as the joys, the celebrations, the hope and the love. And even though he could have opted out, Jesus through his connection with God, continued on the path of his death out of love, the love of God for all. And truly Christ is beside us as we experience the trials and the joys that come to us in our humanity.

And so we celebrate God's resurrection power that can give us freedom from fear of death and strength to follow in Jesus' way, knowing we are loved and seeking to live in love in the midst of whatever life brings. We celebrate God's presence through all of life - even when we don't feel God near, and even in death. We celebrate God's power through and beyond death – Jesus' death and our deaths. We celebrate the freedom that comes with knowing that God is in control even when life seems out of control. As we continue the journey to the cross, may we grasp God's love for all more fully. As we celebrate Easter, may we be renewed in joy, strength and hope. May we draw on God's renewing, grace-filled, energizing love and power in the midst of the demands, challenges and relationships of life. We are ever invited to live fully, for "Christ is alive and goes before us to show and share what love can do."



April 14: Palm Sunday service
(9:15a)

April 18: Maundy Thursday
meal & service (6:15p)

April 19: Good Friday service (12:15p)

April 21: Easter Sunday
Brunch (9:00a)
Worship (10:15a)
No Sunday school

THE VINE IS PRINTED BI-MONTHLY

Content Editor: Peter Dyck
Layout/Production Editor: Rhonda Gibson

Deadline for the 2019 June/July issue:
Sunday, May 26, 2019

Email submissions to: fmcvine@gmail.com

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



But God Can!

by Norma Nelson

My grandsons were 4 and 7 when we moved (with their parents, of course) into brand new houses next door to each other in a small town in Wisconsin. The front landscaping for both homes was lush green sod and nothing else. The side and back yards of our quarter-acre properties were layers of dirt.

It was July and there hadn't been rain for several weeks. It didn't take much movement across the surfaces of the yards to see the swirls of dust billow into the air. There would be a lot of work to make this spread into the football/baseball/hockey/volleyball/golf field we talked about and imagined.

One evening, my son and daughter-in-law needed to go somewhere and would not be returning until after the boys' bedtime, so I was asked if they could do a sleepover. "Absolutely," was my quick response.

The boys had already had their dinner and wanted to play outside. We went out and sat in the chairs on the back patio and watched the sun dip behind the huge trees that lined the back of both lots.

Justin, my younger grandson, darted off the concrete patio and into the loose dirt. He laughed at the spray of dust he created and began to kick at it even more. His brother Jeremy joined him, kicking the dirt in Justin's direction. Justin, of course, kicked back. Oh, well, I thought, there definitely will be baths tonight.

They enjoyed this ruckus until even the sun's low rays could not penetrate the haze and Jeremy returned to his chair on the patio. Justin, however, knelt and began to scoop the dirt into a mound. Every few minutes he would lean over and gently blow on the top of the mound. I was curious but said nothing. Justin was intensely focused on this ritual and continued for about ten minutes, a long time for a 4-year-old.

Unable to restrain myself any longer, I asked Justin what he was doing. Resolutely, he stood up, shook his head, and sighed, "I can't make a man." Then, smiling and pointing his finger skyward, added, "But God can!"

Whenever I receive ashes on my forehead at the beginning of the Lenten season, I think of the confidence of this innocent child in the God of our creation. And I smile, and agree.



Cultivating Hope in Anxious Times:

The 1st Annual Champaign-Urbana Community Interfaith Exploration
by Pastor Michael



From academic lectures to supper conversations, the “Interfaith Exploration” includes something for everyone. The project began in May 2018 when a group of local clergy, religion scholars, faith community members, artists, and campus ministry met at First Mennonite Church to reflect on Ted & Co’s play, *I’d Like to Buy an Enemy*, performed at FMC. The show presents, in stark comedic fashion, how misunderstanding and fear make “enemies” out of those who are different from us. The discussion was catalyzing and plans quickly emerged for a 2019 community-wide interfaith event, with Earl Kellogg and I (Pastor Michael) serving lead roles in the planning. The event will take place November 7-10, 2019.

The program is truly exciting. Core events include:

Thu, Nov 7 (evening) – A keynote address by Dr. Eboo Patel, University of Illinois alum and founder and President of Interfaith Youth Core. Dr. Patel was a member of President Barack Obama’s inaugural Advisory Council on Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships and was named by U.S. News and World Reports as one of America’s Best Leaders in 2009.

Fri, Nov 8 – Afternoon lecture by Dr. Mark Swanson (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago). Evening community dinner hosted by the Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center, with an interfaith panel discussion featuring speakers from U.S. Lutheran, Muslim, Jewish, and Mennonite institutions.

Sat, Nov 9 – Sinai Temple will host a relationship-building event with a focus on strengthening local interfaith partnerships.

Sun, Nov 10 (evening) – Ted & Co. will premier an all-new show written for interfaith audiences and growing out of the performance and discussion at FMC last May. The evening will include artist talk-back and small-group discussion.

Other events are taking shape, with local congregations invited to shape weekend services around interfaith themes. We are exploring youth and children’s programming, a service project component, and a public action of “interfaith peace witness.” If you are compelled to join the work, please talk to Earl or me.

What’s for Lunch? - MYF Mystery Lunch & Silent Auction Fundraiser

by Rhonda Gibson

This summer, our high school students will attend the MC USA Mennonite Youth Convention in Kansas City. We anticipate needing to raise about \$3,000 in order to cover expenses and to leave some funds in the line item as a kick-start for the youth service trip next year (“pay-it-forward” is a long-held MYF fundraising tradition at FMC).

In past convention years, the youth and their families organized an auction — great fun for the congregation! Since our fundraising goal this year is less than in previous years, we decided to do something a little different. On April 28 we will hold a “Mystery Lunch” and silent auction fundraiser. The youth and their families will prepare and serve a 2-course lunch, complete with a menu. Diners will select items for each course, but the items listed on the menu will have unusual names. The fun is in guessing what to select and not knowing what you get until it arrives! We have designed a menu that is vegetarian-friendly.

Youth and families will offer some silent auction items, but we would welcome some additional donations from the congregation too! Do you have something to offer for the silent auction? If so, please contact Chuck Gibson (crgibson@fastmail.net) by April 21.

In order to better prepare for the event, we will request “lunch reservations”. The sign-up will be sent out within the next week or two. If you have any questions, please contact one of the lunch coordinators, Rhonda Gibson or Dianna Black.

We hope to see you for lunch on April 28. *Bon appétit!*

2019 Priorities

These three priorities are concrete tasks we will be working on as a congregation this year. They will guide the work we engage in as a congregation: committees, small groups, Council, and individuals.



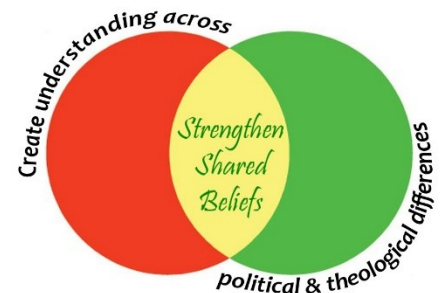
Seek and promote opportunities for education about the spectrum of gender and sexuality & the use of inclusive language.

Encourage the sharing of each person's gifts, including diverse expressions and explorations of faith.

Work for racial justice within ourselves, our congregation, and our community.

2019 - 2020 Questions

These questions are ongoing conversations that may guide our work and develop into future priorities.



What changes to the green space will we pursue?

How are we called to focus our peace witness in response to many interests and needs?

How do we create understanding across political and theological differences & at the same time identify and strengthen the shared beliefs that draw each of us to FMC?

2019 FMC Priorities and Questions: Rationales

- from the FMC Council

Priority 1: Seek and promote opportunities for education about the spectrum of gender and sexuality and the use of inclusive language.

Rationale: We need to be proactive about our welcoming church policy to a community in which there is still much misunderstanding and discrimination. We need to be open to learning about the experiences of our LGBTQ participants about how FMC's welcome is experienced and what changes are needed. This also has implications at this time for our conference relationships. In addition, we need to be sensitive to our use of language in worship when the default is commonly male.

Priority 2: Encourage the sharing of each person's gifts, including diverse expressions and explorations of faith.

Rationale: We are a congregation with many talented people and need to make sure that we provide opportunities for these talents to be used and that all will be affirmed in sharing their talents. In From data collected in 2014 in the US (below), there are clear trends that the importance of religion is declining in the younger generations. Not all young people growing up in FMC are finding the church meaningful in their life. It is important for us to understand why this is happening and the role of our definition of the Christian faith in forming negative perceptions.

Importance of religion in one's life by generational group (2014)
Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life

Generational cohort	Very important	Somewhat important	Sum of important	Not too important	Not at all important	Sum of not important	Don't know	Sample Size
Younger Millennial	38%	29%	67%	17%	16%	33%	< 1%	3,291
Older Millennial	44%	27%	71%	14%	15%	29%	1%	4,128
Generation X	53%	25%	78%	11%	11%	22%	1%	7,303
Baby Boomer	59%	24%	83%	9%	8%	17%	1%	13,049
Silent	67%	18%	85%	6%	7%	13%	1%	5,989
Greatest	72%	15%	87%	7%	6%	13%	1%	585

Priority 3: Work for racial justice within ourselves, our congregation, and our community.

Rationale: We live in a community in which current racial discrimination and effects of past discrimination are major factors that negatively affect the lives of people of color and provide benefits to European Americans. This is contrary to the Gospel. We cannot change everything that needs to be changed but we have the power to change some things including ourselves.

Question 1: What changes to the green space will we pursue?

Issues: What factors should be considered in planning changes to the green space? Use? Public witness? Aesthetics?

Question 2: How are we called to focus our peace witness in response to many interests and needs?

Issues: Several important areas were highlighted in our discussion including gun culture/violence, earth care, immigration, racial justice and LGBTQIA justice. At least two of these are also explicitly stated priorities. How do we choose what we do? How important is it to have an impact? How does our institutional lifestyle reflect our peace witness and are changes needed?

Question 3: How do we create understanding across political and theological differences and at the same time identify and strengthen the shared beliefs that draw each of us to FMC?

Issues: Those that hold minority opinions can be hesitant to express their ideas and may feel alienated from the congregation. We are not all going to believe the same things. Is our goal acceptance, understanding, tolerance, change, or something else? What is the value of differences and what can we gain from these interactions? What holds us together?

Black Lives Matter for Children

by TJ Black

Photo from [Black Lives Matter at School Week](#)

I came today because I have an opportunity to talk about how I feel about racism.

I want to say we are treated differently than other people.

Us, without white skin, those of us who aren't Caucasian.

And I despise it.

Color shouldn't matter, period.

Black should not mean dangerous, we should not have to fear cops.

We should not fear going South, be taught those from the homeland all eat bugs and starve.

We shouldn't have to protest because someone's son was killed.

"I CAN'T BREATHE." Michael Brown.

Trayvon Martin was killed while holding a can of tea and a bag of Skittles.

Rodney King was pulled out of his car and brutally beaten for speeding.

People say black people cause more crimes? Police profile us, employers don't hire us, our government gave us crack to ruin our brains.

I don't say this to be pretentious or for attention. I say this because it needs to be said.

Melia, Naima, DeShaun, my little brother. Black kids should not live in fear or get a handicap because of their skin.

We all deserve the same rights.

My father taught me to deal with the cops when I was only 8, and it may have saved my life because a few years later, Tamir Rice, a twelve-year-old, was killed while playing in the park.

No parent should have to bury their child.

Can you imagine that pain, especially knowing the one responsible has gone free?

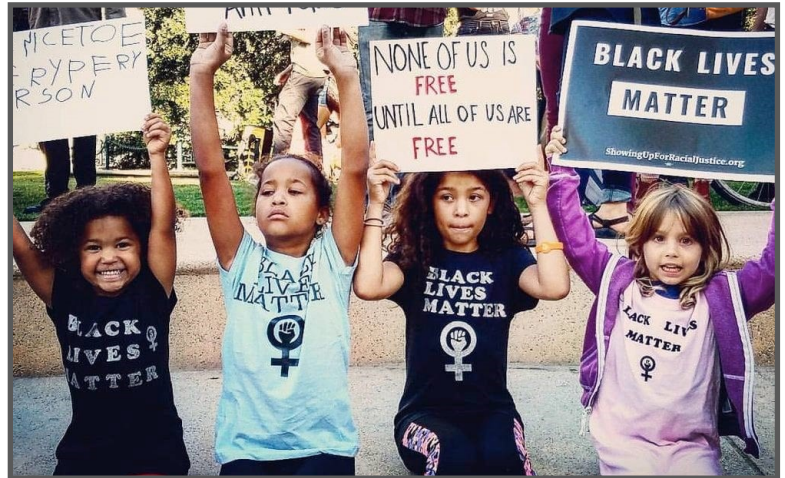
Can you imagine leaving your child behind because you were killed because of your skin?

Something you can't change?

We can't hide from these issues.

It has gotten better, but is it equal? Are we done?

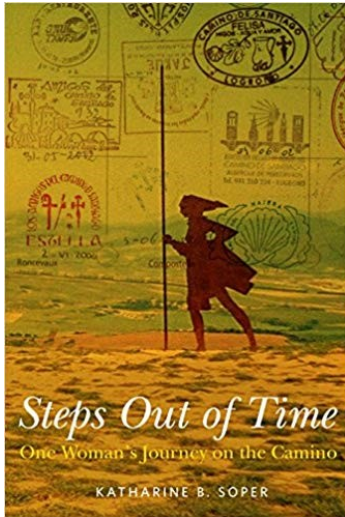
No. We need change.



Coming soon to our FMC LIBRARY



Book reviews by Kristy Rice, Library Committee member



Steps Out of Time: One Woman's Journey on the Camino* by Katharine B. Soper

This is a marvelous book of honest self-discovery. Later in life after raising a family, demanding jobs, and the tyranny of a fast-paced life, Katharine takes a time-out and embarks on a pilgrimage to walk the Camino de Santiago, known as the Way of Saint James. She loves her family and also wants to connect with herself and find deeper meaning in her life.

Katharine writes in a way that quickly drew me in and I felt as if I was walking the 'Camino' with her as the silent witness, the observer. A fabulous adventure book that flows as if life is being lived at its fullest. I appreciate her ability to travel solo, remain strong and thoughtful. It had great appeal to me as an introvert.

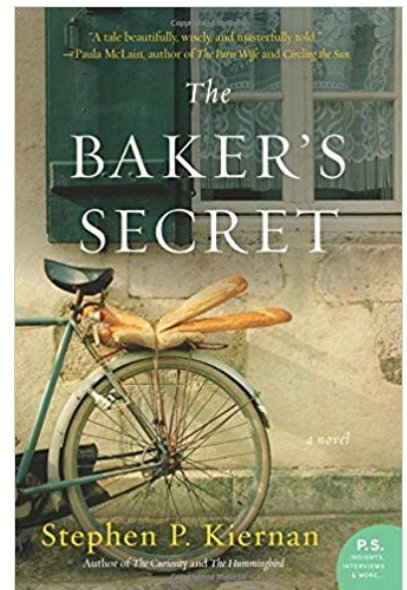
I frequently asked myself if I could walk the 'Camino' and the next question was "would I want to walk the Camino?" Now that I've read this book, it doesn't matter whether I do or not, for I've gleaned the experience as a voyeur with Katharine. It was fun meeting with Katharine the other pilgrims and how lives became weaved together during the 500 mile pilgrimage.

The introspective nature of her personal journey and spiritual insights makes this book a personal favorite. Its an inspiring book, and it combined my love of hiking and quest for meaning and purpose.

The Baker's Secret* by Stephen P. Kiernan

This is a mature novel about survival, under Nazi occupation in a small village near the Normandy Beach, in the years and then days leading up to D-day. How life unfolds in this coastal village and the choices that people make to continue living, some with dignity others without, is well told.

I loved the protagonist, Emma. Her faith is a power of determination. Her strength to persist and survive deepens as she continues to have little to no hope of the Allies rescuing them. She thrives on outsmarting the militia occupying their village, creating ingenious ways to feed herself, her grandmother and others in the village. This book is a page-turner with wisdom about life and embracing the people around us with whom we share it.



*These books will soon be available for check-out in the FMC library.



A Message from the Social Media Coordinator: **Matt Klopfenstein**



 **ChambanaMenno** 
@ChambaMenno

-Church council kindly asks whoever continues to fill the lending library box by the peace garden with Amish romance novels to please stop [#PublicWitness](#)

1:53 PM - 27 Jan 2019

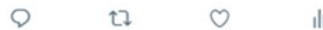




 **ChambanaMenno** 
@ChambaMenno

-What do Rocky Balboa, Martin Luther King Jr., Bob Dylan, and maple syrup have to do with the way of Jesus? Find out Sunday!
[#SermonTeasers](#)

1:53 PM - 27 Jan 2019





 **ChambanaMenno** 
@ChambaMenno

-Due to a regrettable incident at the last Retiree Game Day, alcohol may no longer be served at church-related events
[#TooCompetitive](#) [#NoMoreMonopoly](#)
[#askTammie](#)

1:54 PM - 27 Jan 2019

