

## New Spiritual Direction Small Groups Forming This Fall

by Pastor Debra Sutter

As some of you know, new spiritual direction small groups begin each fall. Now is the time to think about whether you would be interested in such a group this fall.

Spiritual direction groups seek to strengthen our relationship with God and with the others in the group. The groups of 4-6 people meet to listen for God through the words of the Scripture and the everyday events and relationships of our lives. Each meeting begins with an extended reflection on a Scripture passage. Then we share and reflect on where we see God in what has been going on for us. We spend some time in silence as we listen for what God might be impressing upon us.

Groups meet twice a month from September to May and usually continue monthly in the summer. Meeting times are set according to the schedule of those interested and last about an hour and a half. Groups finish in August and new groups are formed and begin in late September.

Feel free to see Pastor Deb if you have questions or would like more information. Please let her know by August 18th if you would like to join a group this fall. She can be reached by phone (office: 367-5353) or email ([debra.sutter@fmc-cu.org](mailto:debra.sutter@fmc-cu.org)).



## August

No Sunday school in August

August 4: Introduction of Care  
Groups during the service  
(9:15a)

August 11: Salt & Light Tour  
after worship (11a)

August 11: Peace is Possible  
Presentation by Mel Lehman (7p)

August 13: Women's Night Out  
hosted by Sheryl Dyck (6:30p)

August 23-24: Arthur Mennonite  
Relief Sale, at the Otto Center in  
Arthur, IL

THE VINE IS PRINTED BI-MONTHLY



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

**Deadline for the 2019 Oct/Nov issue:**  
Sunday, September 22, 2019

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

## What does 'faith in Christ' mean to you?

by Pastor Michael Crosby

*In the week leading up to Sunday, July 7, Pastor Michael put out an all-church call to submit a three-sentence response to the question, "What does faith in Christ mean to you?" Submissions came in from a wide cross-section of ages and walks of life within the congregation. Michael mixed, matched, and wove the sentences together into a single sermon on July 7 (which you can still hear at [fmc-cu.org](http://fmc-cu.org)). The individual responses, unedited and unattributed are printed here:*



...A very wise friend of mine and Presbyterian pastor/nurse/fellow traveler said once in conversation, "It's not what you believe, but how far you trust". So I guess faith for me has to do with trust. Trust in Jesus' words, his example - willingness to let go, willingness to live into the kingdom which is here, now.

Faith in Christ takes many turns for me:

1. Faith in Christ offers the promises of comfort and acceptance: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened" or "ask and you will receive, knock and it will be opened for you" and so many more.
2. Faith in Christ is instructional and ethical: the Sermon on the Mount, the great commandment, the "golden rule," "just as you did it to one of these," and again, many more.
3. Faith in Christ is choosing to believe what is fairly unbelievable: that he is divine son of God and "that God has highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name."
4. A FMC college student once asked me this same question for a paper he was writing, and I concluded my answer with something like this: "If I find in the end that this whole eternal life promise was just a myth (which I do not believe so), I will have still lived a better, more ethical, more loving, and more complete life by following Jesus."

It is the basis of my life, what shapes everything I do and propels my actions.

Almost every day I can honestly answer this question differently. It is the key to God's grace, which, to me, is undeserved mercy from and connection with our great God. "Faith in Christ" is the means to entering the process of transformation from being a person driven by willfulness and self-centeredness to a person hungering for relationship with Creator God and coming to see creation through God's eyes and heart. R.C. Sproul once wrote, "it's one thing to believe in God; it is quite another to believe God." That is what my faith in Christ is about -- continuing to encounter more and more of God and to be changed by those moments.



Faith in Christ means that I trust in the story of Christ without evidence or proof. I am a member in the body of Christ by choice. Trusting in Christ without proof means that I can be myself yet demands that I relate humbly to those with different faiths.

Even though I struggle with my "faith in Christ", I know He/She understands, is patient with me and gives me a glimmer of hope! I take small steps! One day at a time!

Letting go of my illusion of control over people, places and things. Letting the Christ in me, my divine nature, guide me on the path of love and compassionate connections. And I would also add to my comments faith in Christ is a risky business - the road less traveled - that has challenged me to see with new eyes, to get out of my comfort zone and recognize Christ in the least of my brothers and sisters. Quoting Joan Chittister, faith in Christ is "a living commitment to . . . the Kingdom of God within and around us everywhere for everyone."

## What does 'faith in Christ' mean to you? (continued)

Faith in Christ means that I am in the company of a group of people that believe in and act on the transcendent power of God. It is only within the support of this group that I can find, at least occasionally, the motivation and courage to do what is right.

To me, "Faith in Christ" is connected to a willingness to see beyond oneself. The idea that I am valuable and I matter, but the world doesn't revolve around me. Jesus lived his life in a way where he truly saw others as valuable and worthy, especially those on the margins. To me, being faithful to Christ involves a personal commitment to love my fellow humans, to teach young people and promote their well being, to fight for those on the margins in my words and actions and to believe, in spite of all the negativity out there in the world, that my actions as an individual, our actions as a church and the collective actions of people around the world can make a positive impact.



For me, faith in Christ signifies love of others and of oneself, acceptance just the way we are; also the work that people of faith do, work to help others without expecting anything in return. My faith in Christ is found in peace, peace within myself and peace for others.

Faith in Christ to me is believing in something whether or not you may believe in that something you call 'Christ.' It is the act of having faith and believing in this 'Christ.' To give and help you throughout life and through hard or tough circumstances in life. And also for teachings.

To paraphrase Hubmaier (since I cannot remember his exact quote), "True Christian faith feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, cares for the widows...". I recognize the possibility that this is used by some to take themselves off the hook of the more rigorous spiritual disciplines including regular prayer, intense meditation, regular scriptural reading, righteous living, etc. of which prolonged practice seems to escape me. On the other hand, to quote a secular apostle, Hunter S Thompson, who was addressing a completely different access to spiritual bliss, "I would not recommend it for others, but it seems to work for me", so I will continue defining my faith in Christ, as feeding the poor, clothing the naked, educating the gypsies, teaching poultry keeping, equipping the small holder farmers, etc.

Faith in Christ is being able to trust that we are here for a reason and using our given existence to create meaningful experiences.

Faith in Christ is trusting that the spark of divinity within me is there in the silence, working within and through others, guiding me in my connection to the Divine, so I may share God's Love in the world. My Faith is a verb that keeps me safe in the world through meditation, prayer, song, words, physical activity and listening. It's the light in the dream as I work my way home.



To me, faith in Christ means accepting that God loves each of us so deeply that God gave and gives us love embodied in the person and spirit of Christ. This faith humbles us because God's love is limitless even when we are selfish. It inspires us because Christ models how to face hatred with love and to choose hope when we want to fear.

## What does 'faith in Christ' mean to you? (continued)

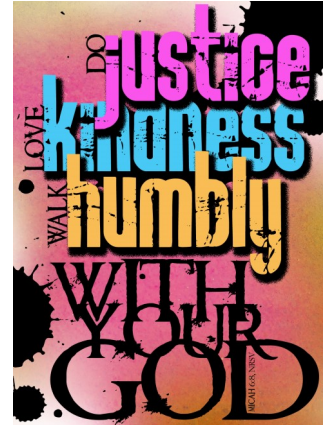
Jesus is God in human form--the exact imprint of God's very being: (Hebrews 1: 1 - 4) I know he understands and loves me as I am. Jesus is above all and holds all creation (past, present, future) together.

Jesus will reconcile everyone and everything to himself. (Colossians 1: 15 -20)

My faith in Christ prompts me to try to follow his path in the way I treat others. This to me means trying to walk in love, faithfulness, joy, simplicity, and reconciliation.

My "faith in Christ" means I want to imitate Jesus as a person of humility, compassion, And integrity. Several scriptures resonate with this desire: ". . . what does the Lord require of You but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" [Micah 6:8 NRSV] Also Jesus' quote in his parable of the Great Judgement, ". . . just as you did it to the least Of these . . . you did it to me." [Matthew 25:40 NRSV] An affirmation of this is a quote I heard in a speech from our former president Jimmy Carter, "The word 'Christian' means 'little Christ.'"

I am loved and all of us are loved. Speak, Your servant is listening. I am listening for how to bring about love, peace and justice.



My head works in pictures. To me, faith casts a light or glow in the mind. That light has never been fully extinguished, so I surmise that is what 'living in hope' means for me.

While I will endeavor to avoid the sappy umbrella metaphor, there's a reason why the phrases "leap of faith" and "stepping out in faith" are prevalent; if faith is evidence of things unseen, as indicated by Hebrews 11:1, I contend faith is necessarily actualized by action (see James 2:14-26, saying faith without works is dead). So what is faith? Faith is Indiana Jones stepping out over a chasm before seeing the bridge with his eyes. Faith is ordaining a lesbian without knowing the ramifications for one's church's conference membership. I'm over the three sentence limit, but I think you get what I'm saying.

I know that he is always with me and that his love is everlasting.

Having faith in Christ gives me comfort in the darkest hours before the dawn. I don't feel alone. I can know that tomorrow will be a new day with new solutions that Jesus/God designed with me.

"The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" is less strange and scary knowing that Jesus went ahead and will be there.



Believing that positive human impact in the world can span generations and renew hope in our communities. Reaching out to grasp hands across borders, whether physical, emotional or political. Breathing in the peace of God to guide our actions and steer our relationships.

Faith for me is synonymous with the acts and attitude of service. Although I never was able to attend Goshen College, I take their slogan "Culture for Service" as a personal inspiration. The consequence of such faith and action is the boundless and fathomless gift of freedom.

Faith is a word of action. I must have obedience to faith; be a friend of God. I am a believing child of God and believe I have eternal life through Him.

## What does 'faith in Christ' mean to you? (continued)

For me faith in Christ means that:

1. I have clarity of my meaning ...in reference to JXT. who I am in relationship to Him.
2. My life has a focus...purposed as a disciple of His.
3. I am in a state of ease....confident that no matter what happens to me I am/will be safe.
4. I can, with those spiritual assets, be loving and gracious to all.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God's love for humans and all of creation. Faith in Christ is an important way to open ourselves to the love of God. Through this love we can receive the guidance, support, and assistance of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Who says I've got any faith in Christ??

Jesus is not my "personal savior" but my archetype -- therefore communal -- of how to lead a spiritual life. Jesus motivates me not through fear of future threat of eternal torment or promise of Elysium, but through present hope of being an ethical, moral, and just person. Jesus doesn't wash me in blood but calls me to service for others.



Faith in Christ means believing in a purpose greater than oneself and the ability to listen for and fearlessly respond to that calling uniquely designed for us. Faith in Christ means living with hope and courage, honesty and compassion and having resilience to withstand the storms of life, knowing (through faith) that everything has a purpose and a season. Faith in Christ isn't only for Christians (and can go by many other names.)

"Faith in Christ" to me means having confidence that there is a perfect way to live and to interact with others; and that Jesus perfectly modeled this way. I don't believe we have full knowledge of how to follow this way, but we know enough to try, and we know when we're off the path.

Faith in Christ is what gives ultimate meaning to my life. The way Christ lived and taught provides a road map to how to treat others, the earth, and the principles that guide my being. Part of the uniqueness of Christianity is a personal, immediate, and ongoing relationship with Christ--we receive much from that relationship, but also have a responsibility to give as well.

Faith in Christ to me means not doing it alone. God provided a way to be justified, whole, and made right and that way is through God's self - Christ. God did not leave me alone, but walked the earth and stood in my place.

Faith in Christ means accepting an invitation to join in a beautiful, radical story of peace, justice, freedom, and hope. It means trusting that the story holds truth about God's deepest dreams for humanity. It means committing myself to participate in the story by following the way of Jesus in service and in love.



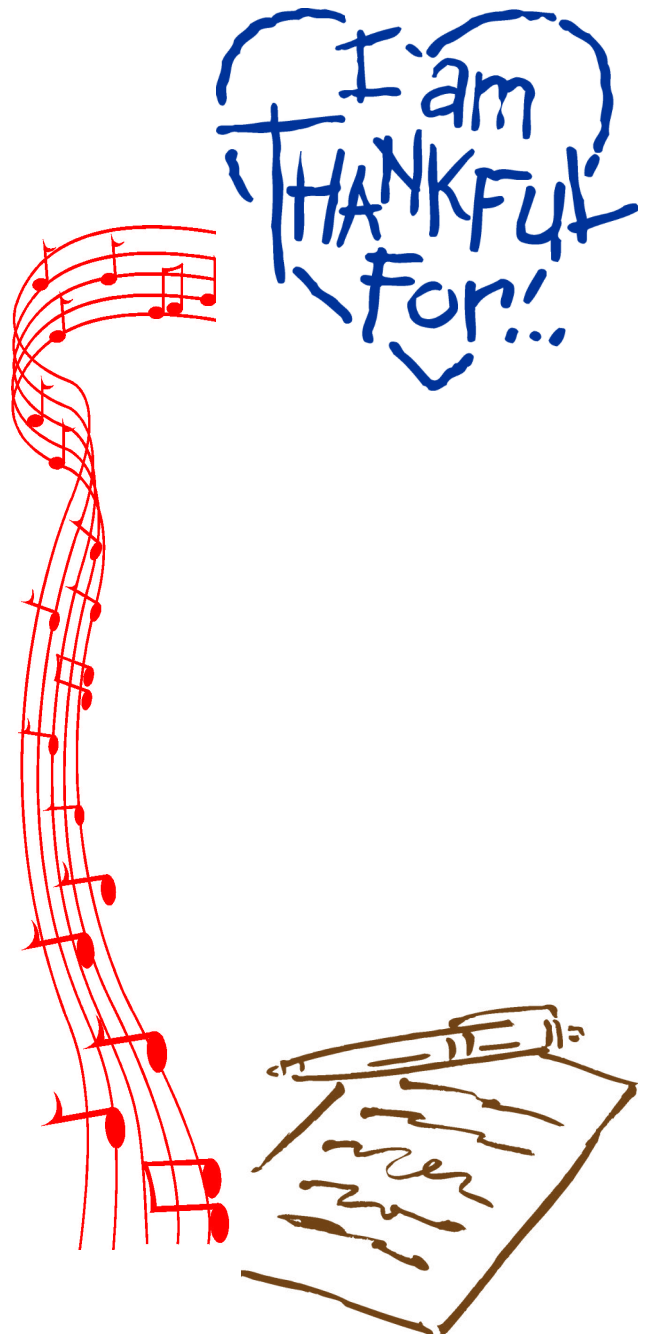
## Gratitude

by Pete Shungu

I could be try and be the baddest dude  
 living life mad and rude  
 but the way of being that I choose  
 is to strive to show my gratitude  
 I could speak in lies and platitudes  
 have an apathetic attitude  
 but the path through life that I choose  
 is to strive to show my gratitude

I'm grateful for God, grateful for life  
 Grateful for my kids, grateful for my wife  
 Grateful for my father, grateful for my mother  
 Grateful for my friends, grateful for my brother  
 Grateful for my family, those connected by blood  
 Grateful for my family, those connected by love  
 Grateful for kindness, grateful for loving hearts  
 Grateful for music, for harmonies in four parts  
 Grateful for Melissa, Paula, Naima, Malia  
 Grateful for joy, por alegría  
 Grateful for languages, so many different tongues  
 Grateful for the breath that fills my lungs  
 Grateful for the beauty of the water, the land  
 Grateful for community, a helping hand  
 Grateful for connection, a handwritten letter  
 Grateful for the human capacity to change for the better  
 Grateful for the past and the way it has shaped me  
 Grateful for the future and wherever it may take me  
 Grateful for the gift of the present time  
 Grateful for poetry, grateful for rhyme  
 Grateful for hugs, for laughter, for smiles  
 Grateful for traveling thousands of miles  
 Grateful for the chance to see the world, to roam  
 And grateful for a place to call home  
 Grateful for education, for lifelong learning  
 Grateful that the world keeps on turning

Cause I could be try and be the baddest dude  
 living life mad and rude  
 but the way of being that I choose  
 is to strive to show my gratitude  
 I could speak in lies and platitudes  
 have an apathetic attitude  
 but the path through life that I choose  
 is to strive to show my gratitude



## A Visit to the Taizé Community

- by Janet Elaine Guthrie and Mark Jaeger

*As part of the summer focus on community, we spoke during worship on June 30th about our recent experience at Taizé. Here are excerpts from our talk:*



In early May 2019, we were privileged to spend a short week at Taizé, in the hill country of Burgundy, France. We were drawn there by the reputation of Taizé as a reconciling community, and by our experience of Taizé-style worship in several locations, including occasional services at FMC.

Taizé exists as a unique community of hospitality and worship, thanks to the vision and dedication of its founder, Roger Schultz, known to all as Brother Roger.

Brother Roger came to the village of Taizé in 1940, 25 years old. From 1940 to 1942 he harbored refugees, esp. Jews, and helped them cross the border to safety in Switzerland. After the whole of France came under Nazi occupation, he escaped capture and spent the rest of the war in Switzerland; there he recruited other brothers to join him. They returned to Taizé to live in late 1944, welcoming German prisoners of war and war orphans.

Brother Roger served as head of the monastic community until his death at the age of 90. Today, the Community is made up of about 100 brothers, both Catholics and Protestants, from some thirty countries. The reconciliation of Christians from different backgrounds has been at the heart of the community's peace witness, on behalf of the whole human family.

Brother Roger explained his vision in this way: "I think that, ever since I was young, the intuition that a life of community could be a sign that God is love, and love alone, has never left me. Little by little the conviction arose in me that it was essential to create a community with others who had decided to give their entire lives, and who would try to understand one another and to be reconciled, a community where heartfelt kindness and simplicity would be at the center of everything."

As the community took root, it became clear that young people felt a special attraction to come and explore their spirituality. Now, each week in summer, between 3,000 and 5,000 young adults (ages 15 - 35) gather for prayer and sharing with others from many different nations. The young adult numbers are lower during the spring and autumn but still impressive (1 - 2,000). Older adults study, share, and eat separately. The week we were there, some 200 older adults and 1,200 youth attended.

On Sunday afternoon, the previous week's visitors depart and new arrivals are welcomed. Anchoring the daily schedule are three community prayer times: morning, noon, and evening.

The distinctive Taizé prayer service is simple and very participatory. There is no printed order of worship, no presiding leader, no sermon. The brothers process in together, in their white robes, and take their places, sitting or kneeling in the center aisle. They lead worship discreetly from their places.

Everyone participates actively, by singing, listening to short Bible readings, and meditating during periods of silence. Morning prayer includes communion, offered simply and joyfully to all who desire, "Christ, make your home in me."

After evening prayer, the church remains open, and late into the night, people stay on to sing and pray.

(continued on next page)

## *A Visit to the Taizé Community (continued)*

Every morning, after breakfast, the adults gathered for an hour of Bible study with Brother Richard, a Swiss German who took us through the book of 1 Peter. He would speak first in English, then repeat his comments in German. We were impressed not only with his linguistic ease, but also with his biblical knowledge and interpretative ability — and his sense of humor. He dealt honestly with contextual difficulties and the mis-use of passages such as those dealing with wives and the authority of husbands.

After Bible study, we met in small groups of 8 to 10 people. Every day, Brother Richard gave us one or two questions to focus our discussions.

Here are some of the questions we were asked to ponder, and discuss:



- What troubles and saddens me?
- What renews my hope?
- How does hope influence our decisions and way of life?
- Where am I at home? What determines my identity?
- What makes us active and creative when we are in a position of weakness?
- How can we live in such a way that people will say, "it is good that Christians exist [in the world]"?
- How can I give to Christ his place as Lord in my heart?

Our small groups were made up of Dutch and Germans and us as the lone Americans. There was a diversity of experience and opinion, with multiple pastors, someone who recently lost their spouse to suicide, another who lost a daughter to suicide, people long married and others recently divorced, some who had only recently joined the church, and so on. One woman was vilified by her friends because they couldn't understand why she wanted to go to church. One man was a pastor with various personal problems, but no means of emotional support within his community or his church. Some people expressed great doubt about their faith, or described their struggle to encourage their children's involvement with the church.

Everyone was very open, and forthcoming, and mutually supportive, and above all, happy to be at Taizé, among so many other people who valued Taizé worship, and found nurture in its oasis of kindness and simplicity.

Brother Roger envisioned the church at her best: "When the Church listens, heals, reconciles, she becomes what she is at her most luminous, a communion of love, of compassion, of consolation, a clear reflection of the Risen Christ. Never distant, never on the defensive, freed from all harshness, she can radiate the humble trusting of faith into our human hearts."

This is the Taizé Community: A communion of love, reflecting the Risen Christ, where there is always just enough, so there will be enough for all.

We encourage you to make your own pilgrimage to the hill country of Burgundy, France, and add your voice to those praising God, "Laudamus te."



## New Books in the FMC Library

- by Kathy Springer, FMC Library convener

*The following books have been recently added to our library. Check them out! Some of the following reviews below are excerpts from the Amazon Book site or the Herald Press 2019 book catalogue.*

[The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong](#) by Karen Gonzalez. This is a story of a journey of loss, alienation, and belonging as the author, an immigration advocate, recounts her own family's migration from Guatemala to making a new life in the U.S. where she found a Christian community where her own faith in Jesus developed.

[The Great Reckoning: Surviving a Christianity That Looks Nothing Like Christ](#) by Stephen Mattson. A book designed to assist those disaffected and disillusioned by American Evangelicalism maintain faith in Jesus.

[White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism](#) by Robin DiAngelo. A NY Times best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality.

[Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise \(Our Compelling Interests\)](#) by Eboo Patel. America is the most religiously devout country in the Western world and the most religiously diverse nation. In today's volatile climate of religious conflict and distrust, how do we affirm the principle that the American promise is deeply intertwined and relate that to how each of us engages with people of different faiths and beliefs?

[The Little Book of Racial Healing: Coming to the Table for Truth-Telling, Liberation, and Transformation](#) by Thomas Norman DeWolf. This is one of a series of *Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding*.

[Happiness](#) by Joan Chittister. The author sees happiness as a personal quality to be learned. She sifts through the wisdom of the ages, inspiring insights that will help seekers everywhere cultivate true and lasting happiness.



## New Books in the FMC Library

Menno-Lite: A Humorous Look at Mennonite Life by Merle, Rebecca, & Kate Good. If you've laughed a lot at FMC's *MennoNite*, you will probably enjoy this book.

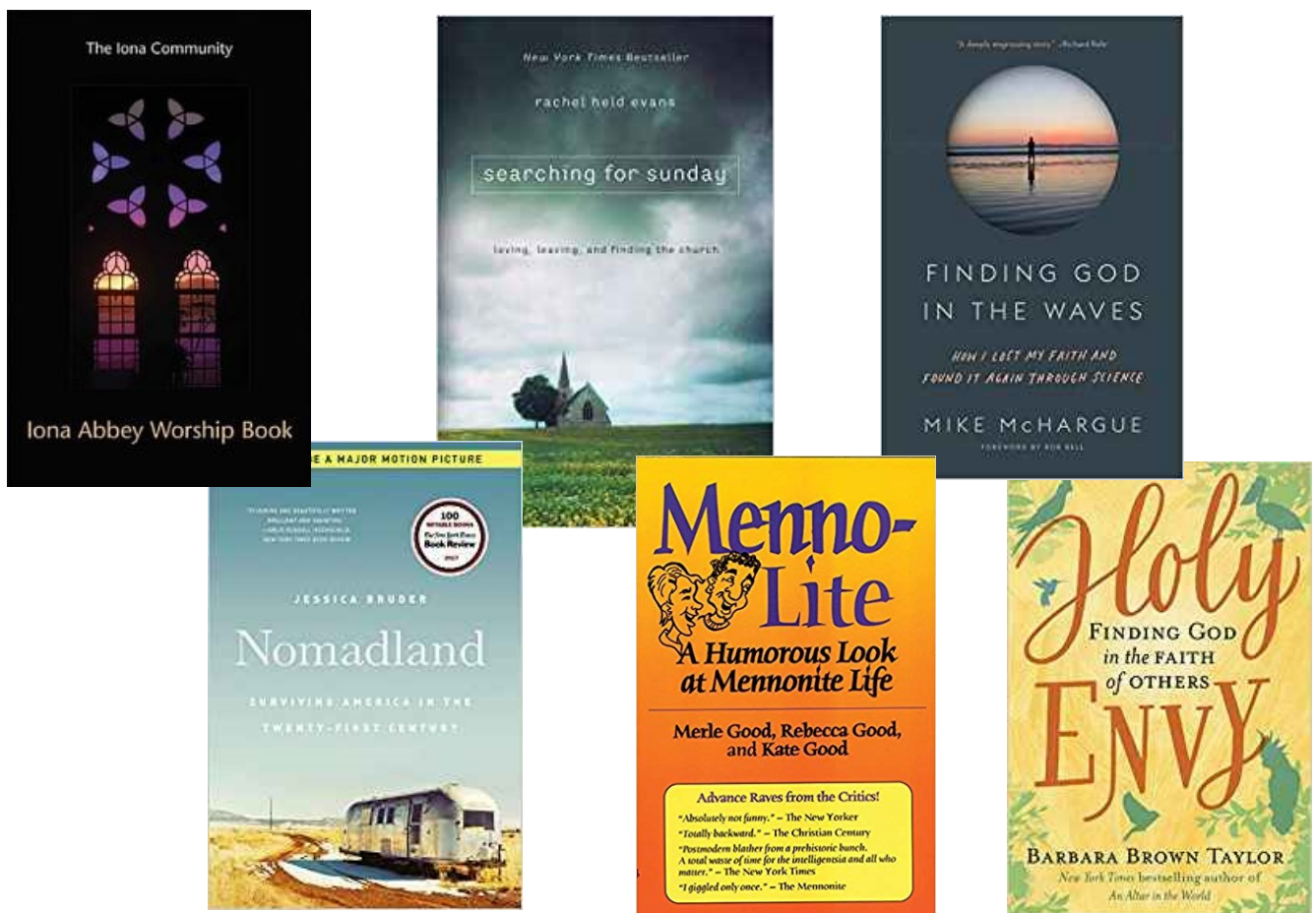
Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century by Jessica Bruder. The author, a reporter, lived among present day "nomads" who may be "houseless" but do not consider themselves "homeless," as they live in their vehicles (vans, campers, trucks, even Priuses!) and form their own support communities. I bought this book as a result of making a new friend this past year who introduced me to a community of people I didn't know existed.

Finding God in the Waves. How I Lost My Faith and Found it Again Through Science by Mike McHargue. See Amber Anderson's excellent review in the June/July issue of *The Vine*.

Holy Envy – Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor. The author asks us to..."see with new understanding these other ways of approaching a mysterious divine that none can know fully, to embrace 'the God just beyond our understanding.'"

Iona Abbey Worship Book by The Iona Community. Sheree Flannigan and Rosalee Otto recently spent time at the Iona Community. This is an excellent resource for worship leaders as well as for personal prayer use.

Searching for Sunday – Loving, Leaving and Finding the Church by Rachel Held Evans. Several people in our church shared their appreciation for Evans' writing after her untimely death earlier this year. In the foreword Glennon Doyle Melton says that the book "helped me forgive the church and myself and fall in love with God all over again."



## Mennonite Convention USA



Those from FMC attending this year's convention as delegates were: Amanda Heinsman, Matt Yoder and Pastor Deb. Pastor Michael also attended and participated as a representative of the Mennonite/Jewish Relations Working Group. Five youth attended the youth convention (TJ Black, Jonathan Gibson, Caden Green, Paula Rivera, Anja Schrag) along with their sponsors, Pete Shungu and Courtney Malcolm.

The FMC delegates and pastors reported a joy-filled atmosphere with hopeful signs of positive movement on contentious issues. Feel free to ask any of the adult or youth attendees about their experience.

The MC USA delegates made two important decisions:

- 1) They passed a resolution condemning the abuse of migrant children in the U.S.
- 2) Bylaws were changed to add youth, ages 16-21, as additional official delegates representing each MC USA congregation, conference and racial/ethnic group. They passed a resolution condemning the abuse of migrant children in the U.S.

Full texts of the resolutions can be found at: [mennoniteusa.org](http://mennoniteusa.org).

---

### OUR HIGH SCHOOLERS AT THE YOUTH CONVENTION



Energetic worship

Service project



Fun together

