

Invitation to an Ambitious Production

by Pastor Debra Sutter

Question: What could spur us at FMC to look at the issue of immigration, think about our Anabaptist history of persecution in Russia, consider the role of tradition in a faith community, think about our relationship with God as an ongoing dialogue, get to know each other better through a joint project and have fun too?

Answer: We could do a production of Fiddler on the Roof together! Really!

Some of you may remember back many sunrises and sunsets ago when First Mennonite Church put on a production of Amahl and the Night Visitors one Christmas. Lots of people helped with costumes, set, lighting, staging, singing, and acting. It took many people – actors, singers, dancers, instrumentalists, carpenters, costume designers, choreographers, and directors. We had fun working hard together and the play was well received in the church and the community!

Some of us have been keeping our eyes open for another opportunity to work together on something like this. And we think the time may be now, as we have quite a few folks talented in drama!

Sound intriguing? You are invited to a get-acquainted time with our director Shawn Rodriguez, who is new to our church as of this summer. Shawn has much experience in theater, especially in the area of directing, and he is excited about doing this with us. Pastor Deb will be coordinating the music. We would like to have an informational meeting, and Shawn would like to get to know those of you interested in participating! We will do some singing and some reading at this meeting. Be assured that there are singing and speaking parts for anyone who is interested and able and there are many crowd scenes as well, so if you are interested, do come and learn more.

Mark your calendars for Sunday Nov. 3. at 12:30 to come and check it out!

We will need many people of all ages – actors, singers, dancers, coaches, instrumentalists, carpenters, costume designers, cooks, and a few people to help with details and publicity.

We anticipate rehearsals this winter and spring on Sundays after church, with a performance sometime in the summer. (Depending on the size of your part, you would not need to attend every rehearsal, but the 2 or 3 weeks before the show, it will be important that everyone is available.) We anticipate that this will be a fun and meaningful community endeavor!



THE VINE IS PRINTED BI-MONTHLY

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

Deadline for the Dec/Jan issue is Sunday, November 24

Email submissions to: fmcvine@gmail.com

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



October & November are busy months at FMC, filled with special services & events

OCTOBER

- Sunday, Oct 6 World Communion Sunday, with a focus on International Justice Mission's "Freedom Sunday", exploring the scope of human trafficking and seeking an end to slavery. (9:15am)
- Sunday, Oct 13 Goshen College Parables Worship Team lead worship at FMC (9:15am)
 Potluck (Noon); You are invited (but not mandatory) bring dishes made with locally grown or raised and your folder/worksheets from the Seasons of Creation to the potluck for Food for Thought and conversation during the meal.
 CROP Walk through Urbana; begins at 2pm at Wesley United Methodist Church (1203 W Green St, Urbana). Route is 6 miles (or shorter if you wish)
- Sunday, Oct 20 All-church Noon book read of "Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others" by Barbara Brown Taylor. A light lunch will be provided for those that rsvp to Mary Krick.
- Saturday, Oct 26 Care Group leaders meeting at FMC (10:30 am)
- Sunday, Oct 27 Topic Night: theme being finalized (6:30-8:30 pm)

NOVEMBER

- Saturday, Nov 2 All church work day at FMC (8am - Noon)
- Sunday, Nov 3 Service of Remembrance; remembering our loved ones who have died this past year (9:15am)
Fiddler on the Roof informational meeting (12:30 pm)
- Thursday, Nov 7 - CU Interfaith Exploration: Cultivating Hope in Anxious Times (details in this issue of the Vine)
 Sunday, Nov 10
- Sunday, Nov 17 Joint worship service with El Divino Redentor, our sister church in Bucaramanga, Colombia (9:15am)
- Sunday, Nov 17 Thanksgiving Sunday:
 Worship & special offering (9:15am)
 Potluck following Sunday school (Noon)



This interfaith exploration is a collaborative effort that involves building bridges across local faith communities, the University of Illinois (U of I), community groups, campus religious and student life associations, faculty, staff, and administrators. Lead partners include: Interfaith Alliance of Champaign County, University YMCA, First Mennonite Church, Sinai Temple, Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center, Hillel Foundation, Muslim Student Association, Illinois Interfaith in Action, and these units at the University of Illinois: Department of Religion, the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs, and the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations.

Schedule of Events (core events scheduled for the weekend of November 7-10)

Details online at: go.illinois.edu/CultivatingHope

- Thursday, Oct 31 4 pm **Foellinger Auditorium** (709 S Matthews; south side of the Main Quad on UI campus)
"Once Upon a Time in Kathmandu: How Hinduism Made Me a Better Catholic", a lecture by Francis X. Clooney, Parkman Professor of Divinity and Professor of Comparative Theology at Harvard University, scholar of Hinduism and Hindu-Christian Studies.
- Thursday, Nov 7 Noon - 2 pm **University YMCA** (1001 S Wright St, Champaign)
Acts of Faith university student book discussion with Eboo Patel.
- Thursday, Nov 7 6-8 pm **Alice Campbell Alumni Center Lounge & Ballroom** (601 South Lincoln Street, Urbana)
Keynote address by Dr. Eboo Patel, University of Illinois alumnus and founder and President of Interfaith Youth Core. Reception to follow. 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 Report* as one of America's Best Leaders in 2009.
- Friday, Nov 8 **Time and location:** TBD
Afternoon lecture by Dr. Mark Swanson (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago)
- Friday, Nov 8 5:15 pm **Central Illinois Mosque & Islamic Center** (106 S. Lincoln Ave., Urbana)
Beyond Tolerance Panel Part 1: Dinner and Panel Presentation
This panel will focus on moving past tolerance of diversity towards mutual respect and affection for the people, practices, and convictions of faith traditions different from our own. Panelists from various religious institutions: Dr. Mark Swanson (Lutheran), Dr. Marcia Hermansen (Muslim), Dr. Jennifer Grayson (Jewish), and Dr. Safwat Marzouk (Mennonite)
- Saturday, Nov 9 12:45 pm **Sinai Temple** (3104 W. Windsor, Champaign)
Beyond Tolerance Part 2: Lunch and Panel of Local Faith Leaders
This panel will focus on moving past tolerance of diversity towards mutual respect and affection for the people, practices, and convictions of faith traditions different from our own.
- Sunday, Nov 10 3 pm **Lincoln Hall Theater** (702 S. Wright St., Urbana)
"I'd Like to Buy an Enemy" Performance by Ted & Company TheaterWorks
A new show exploring issues of race, domestic militarism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, etc. as they present within the current ethos in the U.S.
- Sunday, Nov 24 6 pm **University YMCA** (1001 S Wright St, Champaign)
Evening interfaith dinner conversations following the model developed by "The People's Supper."

The logo features a stylized graphic of three books on the left, with the text "New Books in the FMC LIBRARY" to its right. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font, with "New Books" in a larger size than "in the FMC LIBRARY".

New Books in the FMC LIBRARY

Invited: The Power of Hospitality In An Age of Loneliness, by Leslie Verner.

“Real hospitality is an invitation to enter a sacred space with friends and strangers.”

Verner shares stories of being the recipient of gracious hospitality in her international experiences.

Boy Erased – A Memoir of Identity, Faith, and Family by Garrard Conley.

The story of a young man’s coming to terms with his sexuality as he grew up in a conservative evangelical home. This book was made into a movie, which was released last year. I knew I wanted to read this book after hearing the interview of the author on NPR.

Fifty Shades of Grace – Stories of Inspiration and Promise.

Compiled by Melodie Davis, this book contains stories of goodness from all around the world. Fifty writers share stories of God’s lavish love, a redemptive counterpoint to the darkness and oppression lurking in the shadows of *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Living More With Less by Doris Longacre.

Earth Prayers: 365 Prayers, Poems, and Invocations from Around the World by Elizabeth Roberts.

The Cosmic Dance: An Invitation to Experience Our Oneness by Joyce Rupp.

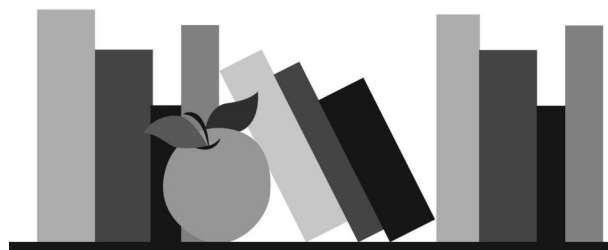
Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver by Mary Oliver.

The following books were donated by Sharon Monday. They are stories which grew out of the author Kent Nerburn’s experiences gathering oral histories on the Red Lake Reservation and his encounters with Native American people on the Great Plains. They are best read in the order below:

- 1) Neither Wolf nor Dog
- 2) The Wolf at Twilight: An Indian Elder’s Journey through a Land of Ghosts
- 3) The Girl Who Sang to the Buffalo: A Child, an Elder, and the Light from an American Sky

Make Every Day Earth Day! Caring for Our Planet (Me, My Friends, My Community) by Vita Jimenez.

This is a children’s book and it includes a musical score.





by Sharon Monday

I was introduced to the trilogy by Kent Nerburn, “Neither Wolf Nor Dog”, “An Elder at Sunset” and “The Girl Who Sang to the Buffalo” by my Catholic

Worker friend, Eric Anglada, whose St. Isadore community is studying the Doctrine of Discovery and working on decolonization relationships and practices.

This trilogy is fiction based on the true story of a relationship between author Kent Nerburn who is a Minnesota professor known for his work in publishing Native oral stories and a Lakota elder who sought Kent’s assistance in writing his own story and philosophy. The stories of past and current trauma among the Lakota tribe and the evolving relationship and conversations between Kent and Lakota elder, Dan, are compelling and some of the best insights I have read on cultural and race relations. The stories and travels to find Dan’s sister who was put in a boarding school and insane asylum for Native adults while she was still a child are heartbreaking. The path of healing and reconciliation is poignant in each of the books and stories. The trilogy is now available for check out in the FMC library.



Sunday, October 13 at 2 pm
starting at Wesley United Methodist Church
(1203 West Green Street, Urbana)

Join us in helping to fight hunger and support the overall work of Church World Service (CWS). A portion of the funds raised will help feed the hungry locally through four CU agencies: Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, Eastern Illinois Foodbank, Sola Gratia, and the Wesley Food Pantry. Walkers of all ages can participate and donations are welcome. Chuck Gibson is coordinating our FMC team and is collecting donations.

You can also donate or sign up to walk at our team website:

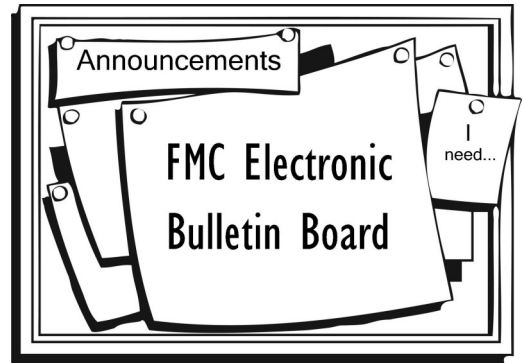
<https://www.crophungerwalk.org/champaignil/Team/View/114945/First-Mennonite-Church>.

In addition to hunger issues, CWS has a long history of working with displaced persons. This year it launched a call center to connect asylum seekers released from detention with resources in local communities; a part of CWS's comprehensive effort to support families fleeing violence and conflict in Central America. CWS collaborates with MCC to distribute immigration relief kits and to stabilize living conditions for people in Central American countries.

New Electronic FMC Bulletin Board

We currently have a system for sending out church-related announcements with our weekly prayer email and through special emails as needed. However, this system isn't designed to convey personal announcements and requests.

In order to address this need, we are developing an FMC electronic bulletin board, which will serve as a virtual space for our congregation to connect with requests or small announcements throughout the week. The intention is to foster community; to connect with and help one another.



It is not intended to be a forum for conversation threads or posting of articles, book suggestions, memes, and cat videos.

Members of the congregation can reach out with requests (examples):

- Is anyone able to offer advice or help with my garden?
- Does anyone have a wheelbarrow I could borrow for one afternoon this week to haul mulch?
- Does anyone have a table that can be used for our garage sale?
- I am looking for a dog sitter during X time period.

Members of the congregation can also reach out with offers/announcements (examples):

- I will be bringing fresh cucumbers from my garden to share on Sunday!
- I am available to babysit this summer! Here is my info...
- We're giving away a couch. Does anyone want it or have suggestions of places to donate it?

Belonging to the FMC Bulletin Board is optional.

Announcements of all-church events and prayer requests will still be sent via our current Mail Chimp system.

How to sign up

Look for an email this week (Sept 29– Oct 5) inviting you to sign up.

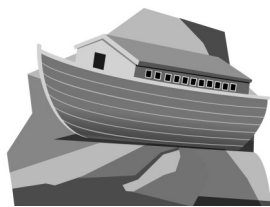
Follow the directions in the email to give consent to add your name to the email list.

Your name will be added within a few days; you should receive a welcome email once your name is added to the list. If you don't receive an email after a few days, check your spam folder.

All members of the group can post to the group by emailing bulletinboard@fmc-cu.org. You can unsubscribe from the group at any time.

If you have a Gmail account, you will be able to decide how often to receive messages once your email has been added to the group. To change the settings, click on the person icon on the top toolbar; there's a pull down menu to select how often you want to receive emails.

Please address any questions to [Melissa Shungu](#), the Group Administrator.



Building Arks of Safety

- by Pastor Michael

The following is excerpted from the August 18, 2019 sermon, titled "Building Arks of Safety." The guiding scripture is Genesis 6:9-22. The theme that day was "sanctuary," with a particular focus on the plight of immigrants and refugees. That still holds. And, at the same time, the concept of sanctuary is even broader than that. It is safe and sacred space where there is room to grow and where wholeness and holiness happens. It applies across all aspects of life in God's Beloved Community. I invite you to contemplate how you, or those you know, have experienced FMC as safe and sacred space where there is room to grow and where wholeness and holiness have been found. Praise God!

Sacred welcome is the source of Noah's righteousness

Life is not thriving in Noah's world. *Now the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence (6:11).* Things are so bad that the Creator questions the whole creative project. Would it be better if none of this existed? (God is not the only one in the Bible to ask that question: Hagar and the Prophets and Job all wonder the same thing. Jesus comes close). What began in Genesis 1 with an idyllic garden scene has quickly become a mess of abused power. Chapters 3-6 of Genesis catalog humanity's worst:

- Domestic dispute & violence
- Forced labor
- Patriarchal abuse
- People going hungry
- Parents and gods playing favorites with siblings
- Jealousy
- Fratricide (that is, one brother murdering the other)
- Displacement, exile, homelessness, forced migration
- The building of cities and the greedy stockpiling of resources

The forging of bronze and iron, a new weapons technology that Genesis links to the justification of violent revenge and mass murder. In these four chapters we get all the things: weapons tech and domestic terrorism; the ownership and distribution of earth's resources; labor rights; displaced people; broken relationships; hunger, homelessness. Even the long and boring genealogies in these chapters are about racism – the ethnic and racial disputes that pit human siblings against each other. And right in the middle of this steaming pile of humanity's worst, God picks out Noah, the righteous one, to build a sanctuary boat that will be a haven for species fleeing the violence wrought across the earth.

God's command to Noah arrives as a beacon of hope in a world filled with violence and destruction. If Noah is faithful to God's call to build sacred community, he will generate a sanctuary that saves innumerable lives. All of creation will flourish for his faith. This is why Genesis calls Noah righteous. It's not because he checked off all the boxes on an impossible heavenly checklist. It's because he was hell-bent on exercising faithfulness to God's most basic call on humanity: tend to life. Build a sanctuary on the earth. Build an Ark of refuge to preserve beauty and hope and fruitfulness. Prepare a place for everyone God sends.

And when refugees fleeing the world's corruption and violence line up around the block to apply for sanctuary, give it to them. Stand at the entrance like a greeter on a warm Sunday morning, doors flung open and sweet music pouring out into the streets. Stand at the border walls and outside the detention centers with open arms.

Migration in the Bible

At the end of 2018, the UN Refugee Agency reported 71 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.¹ Half are children. 41 million are displaced within their own countries, 26 million are refugees, and 3.5 million are asylum-seekers – meaning they have crossed a national border and are waiting for a court to determine whether their case will qualify them as a refugee. Millions more are "stateless" – no country will claim them. All of them have been forced from their homes as a result of conflict or persecution. Like Noah and the animals in Genesis 6, they seek sanctuary from the violence that floods the earth.

Migration may be the Bible's most talked-about subject. Here's an incomplete survey: Adam and Eve are exiles from Eden. Their son Cain wanders across the earth. Noah smuggles a boat-load of creation's refugees. The citizens of Babel are exiled across the earth. Sarah and Abraham are called by God to be refugees. (That's just Genesis 1-12). Then there is the abused slave Hagar and her son Ishmael in the desert. Jacob becomes a refugee out of fear of his brother's revenge, and later in life a famine drives him and all his family to Egypt. Generations later, newly freed from slavery, Jacob's children traverse the desert in search of somewhere that will welcome them. They face big walls and violent rejection. Some countries make war on them rather than let them pass through.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

Building Arks of Safety (continued)

This goes on and on. Many of the Prophets flee: Jonah and Daniel and Amos and Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Elijah is a fugitive who finds sanctuary in the home of a widow in another country. Ruth is a young refugee with courage and resilience. When Deuteronomy gives instructions for worship, the people are told to identify themselves by their immigrant past: *you shall make this response before the Lord your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as a refugee..."* (Deut 26). The Torah is full of explicit commands to honor the foreigner, the immigrant, and the refugee:

Exod 20:21 -- *You shall not wrong or oppress an immigrant, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt.*

Lev 19:33-34 -- *When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (and by the way, that's where Jesus gets the formulation for his command, Love your neighbor as yourself.)*

Deut 24:17-31 -- *You shall not deprive an immigrant or an orphan of justice...*

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow.

Num 15:15-16 -- *...you and the immigrant shall be alike before the Lord. You and the immigrant who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance.*

And don't forget the sanctuary altars and cities identified in the book of Numbers – sacred places of refuge for criminals fleeing unjust punishment!

This list is not confined to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were refugees in Egypt. Several times the adult Jesus was a fugitive, crossing borders to escape from governing authorities. He was executed by the governor of a region that was not his home. (Pilate was no respecter of States' rights). The disciples are all sojourners.

Luke 9:58 -- *Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*

Acts depicts the early Christians on the run from persecution. The author of First Peter addresses Christians who are "immigrants and exiles," citizens of God's realm whose allegiance makes them immigrants in the realms of this world.

Heb 13:2 -- *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

In the words of Barbara Brown Taylor: "scripture's wildly impractical [proposal] is to love the stranger as the self. You are to offer the stranger food and clothing, to guarantee the stranger justice, to treat the stranger like one of your own citizens, to welcome the stranger as Christ in disguise. This is God's express will in both testaments of the Bible."²

A confession of hope

With violence flooding in from every direction, threatening to drown out the breath of life that God's Spirit breathes through creation, we hear the echo of God's call to righteous Noah. *Build an ark. Rescue who you can. Bring aboard everyone who comes to you.*

When it comes to prophetic preaching I'm often asked about hope. And, admittedly, I struggle to answer. Not because I don't have hope, but because I don't believe in false hope. I don't believe that God is going to flip a switch and rescue us from the trauma we're inflicting on orphaned children or the gaping wounds we're carving in the Earth that sustains us. These wounds take generations to heal.

But I do believe in healing. And in struggle. I believe that there is New Life on the other side of the state-sponsored death machine that the Gospels call the cross. And if that's exhausting to think about, I also believe in rest and community. I believe that our greatest hope for New Life is in the Spirit of God who lives in our neighbors, in each other, and in ourselves; in the Spirit of Christ who is making a sacred place out of people like you and me, an ark where there is *welcome, without exclusion, for all who seek God's love and grace.* [And now I'm quoting from the statement printed in the bulletin every week:] *You are welcome here, inclusive of gender, race, country of origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, family status, past imprisonment, education, citizenship status, political affiliation, physical or mental abilities. You are welcome here, in this sanctuary.*

²Holy Envy, 153.