

# First Threshings

## First Mennonite Church

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One more step along the world I go,  
From the old things to the new  
Keep me traveling along with you.  
As I travel through the bad and good  
Keep me traveling the way I should.  
Where I see no way to go  
You'll be telling me the way, I know.  
Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough.  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me traveling along with you.  
You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me.  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me traveling along with you.

*One More Step*

by Sydney Carter

No other foundation can anyone lay, than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ  
I Corinthians 3:11

Have you noticed the cross mounted on top of our church sign? It's the craziest thing. One day this fall, I looked and there was a metal cross on top of our church sign. "Where did that come from? That was never there before." I walked up to the sign to check it out. The cross wasn't simply sitting on top. It was bolted to the sign. "Now this is really strange. I'm sure that cross wasn't there before. At least I don't think it was there. Was it there?" I couldn't remember anyone talking about mounting a new cross to our sign. Surely this would have been discussed somewhere. I asked around. Nobody seemed to know anything about a cross. Some hadn't even noticed there was a cross. Now this is really weird.

Then the story began to unfold. When the church was built back in 1967, a street sign was needed to go with the new building. So Ken and Bonnie Funk received approval for a design, and built and donated the new sign - the one out front today. The design was completed with a cross mounted on top. They reasoned that, since the church building, and particularly the sanctuary, incorporates literally hundreds of crosses throughout, surely the sign outside required a cross as well. And so an aluminum cross was mounted and bolted to stand at the top of the sign.

Then one day, suddenly, the cross was not there. What happened to the cross? No one knew. Apparently it was stolen. Who steals a cross from a church, especially one bolted down? This is especially amazing because so many things of value are left unattended and unsecured all over this town, yet no one seems to disturb them. But the cross was gone. Stolen, never to be seen again. And that is how the sign remained for years, even decades. Until recently.

As mysteriously as the first cross disappeared, a new cross has reappeared. Where did it come from? I have heard that those responsible for its reappearance wish this to remain a mystery. But I think I know who they are. So, thank you for bringing this engaging story of the disappearing and reappearing cross in our church history full circle. The story serves as a metaphor to us.

The cross serves as a symbol of the center of our faith. The symbol of the cross reminds us of the call of discipleship in Jesus, our Lord. The symbol of the empty cross reminds us of our hope in Christ, the Risen Lord. As we walk through life there are days when the cross is there, plain to see. We hear the voice of Jesus calling and we claim the hope of Christ, our Lord. Then there are days when the cross seems nowhere to be found. Where is the voice of Jesus? Where is his hope? And then there are days when the cross suddenly, unexpectedly, amazingly just appears. We wake up to Jesus calling. We discover his hope. Where did it come from? It's a mystery.

As we enter this new year, where will the cross be in your life? If you are like me, how you answer can depend on the day you are asked. But know this. The call of Jesus to follow as disciples, and the hope of the Risen Christ - the cross - is the foundation already laid for living fully and faithfully. The cross is there and it's worth looking for in this new year. Happy New Year!

*Randy*

January 2010

## Ministries Council Meeting, December 17, 2009

At the Ministries Council's December 17 meeting, Bonnie Funk gave the treasurer's report, Kent Funk gave a brief update on MMA and the remaining time was spent discussing the first draft of the proposed changes to the church's constitution.

No official minutes were taken.

### This Month's Events

#### 3 Epiphany Sunday: Holy Communion

Noon carry-in dinner.

Baby shower for Cadence Kelley.

Wedding showers for Amanda and Brandon Emery, Nathan and Rinda Amstutz, Bethany and Tim Schrag.

Nursing home services.

Dismantle Christmas decorations.

#### 6 6:15 pm Wed evening meals resume.

7:00 Wed evening classes resume.

#### 12 Noon: "Table Talk" for WDC pastors, Tabor Mennonite Church, rural Newton.

#### 16 6:00 p.m.: Agri-Urhan annual meeting (includes meal), Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge. For reservations, contact Marlin Bartel by Jan 10.

#### 18 Martin Luther King Day at Bethel College

1:00-2:00 pm, Krehbiel Auditorium: Premiere of recorded speech – originally given in Bethel College Memorial Hall by MLK, Jr., 1/21/60.

2:00-4:00 pm, Krehbiel Auditorium: *Remembering the Dream:* Bethel College and Civil Rights in the 1960s. Panel discussion by alumni who attended the speech and/or participated in the Selma-to-Montgomery March, or Spelman College Exchange.

4:00 pm, Memorial Hall: Plaque dedication commemorating MLK's speech 50 years ago; reception to follow.

6:30 pm, Memorial Hall: Art show – *Artwork* by local students.

7:00 pm, Memorial Hall: MLK, Jr. Celebration Service – "More Than Nostalgia: Revisiting King in 2010" featuring music by Newton Community Children's Choir, excerpts from the speech MLK gave in Memorial Hall 50 years ago, and a scheduled presentation by Vincent Harding. (A short biography follows.)

22-24 Junior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO.

29-Feb 2 WDC Ski Retreat, Copper Mountain, CO.

Vincent Harding was an associate of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. He is professor of religion and social transformation at Illiff School of Theology in Denver, where he currently serves as vice president of institutional transformation and co-chair of the Veterans of Hope Project: A Center for the Study of Religion and Democratic Renewal.

Before Illiff, Vincent Harding taught at Pendle Hill Study Center, the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University and Spelman College. He has written numerous books, including *The Other American Revolution; There Is a River, Vol. 1; Hope and History; Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero; and We Changed the World* (with R. Kelly and E. Lewis).

Harding has a long history of involvement in domestic and international movements for peace and justice, including the Southern Black freedom struggle. He was the first director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center in Atlanta, served as director and chairperson of The Institute of the Black World and was senior academic consultant to the award-winning PS television series *Eyes on the Prize*.

### Old and New

Where has the old year gone?  
What does the new year hold?  
What are the lessons we've learned  
From a year once new and now old?

What of our good resolutions  
To be selfless and put ourselves last?  
All those noble intentions  
Long since over and past.

We had honestly meant to bring light  
To the lives of the poor, the denied,  
But we seemed so alone in our struggle  
That our candle soon spluttered and died.

How quickly the months have all gone  
A new year waits at the gate;  
Though we grieve for the time that is lost,  
We know that it's never too late.

Jeffrey Gee

## How was your Christmas? How will you live out 2010?

### 1 Corinthians 13 (from *The Message*)

#### The Way of Love

<sup>1</sup> If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. <sup>2</sup>If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. <sup>3-7</sup>If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.  
Love cares more for others than for self.  
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.  
Love doesn't strut,  
Doesn't have a swelled head,  
Doesn't force itself on others,  
Isn't always "me first,"  
Doesn't fly off the handle,  
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,  
Doesn't revel when others grovel,  
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,  
Puts up with anything,  
Trusts God always,  
Always looks for the best,  
Never looks back,  
But keeps going to the end.

<sup>8-10</sup>Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.

<sup>11</sup>When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

<sup>12</sup>We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

<sup>13</sup>But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

### I Corinthians 13 (A Christmas version)

By an unknown author

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce tree with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but giving the gift of love will endure.

Submitted by Sharon Ressler  
Mission Team

All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timeliness and space availability. *First Threshings* is distributed the first Sunday of each month so, if possible, materials should be submitted at least ten days previously. Comments, pro/con, regarding any aspect of the newsletter are also welcome. Please address these to Pat Bartel, Compiler/Editor.