

First Threshings

First Mennonite Church

Ash & Grand

Hillsboro, KS 67063

620-947-5662/www.fmchillsboro.net

Randy Smith, Minister (pastor@fmchillsboro.net)

Asia Frye, Youth Minister (youth-pastor@fmchillsboro.net)

David Mathis, Moderator (dmathis@ghflc.com)

Linda Mathis, Secretary (secretary@fmchillsboro.net)

...a guilty suffering spirit is more open to grace than an apathetic or smug soul. Therefore, an age without a sense of sin, in which people are not even sorry for not being sorry for their sins, is in rather a serious predicament. Likewise, an age with a Christianity so eager to forgive that it denies the need for forgiveness. For such an age, therefore, Lent can scarcely be too long!

Edna Hong (1913-2007)

Holding On, Letting Go

The more you die to yourself, the more you will live unto God. (Thomas à Kempis: 1380-1471)

Ann has long told me that I don't know when to let go of something. She is probably right. It is just that I like to believe I have done everything I can; everything I should; everything expected to make something right, complete, developed, healed, fixed, whatever. So I tend to hold on and not let go easily.

Holding On, Letting Go is our worship theme for this season of Lent. Each Sunday will reclaim God's love and character. As God holds on to us, we renew our holding on to God. Each Sunday we listen to a story of Jesus from the gospel of Luke and reflect on the holding on and letting go in each of these stories. What is held on to in the story? What is let go? What should be held on to? What should be let go? And, what changes occur in the story – what changes from being held to being let go, or being let go to being held?

As I write this I am reflecting on the story of Jesus healing the demon possessed man who lived in a cemetery on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. This man was let go by his own townspeople. Jesus comes to him and holds on to him: he heals him of demons, ordering them to let go of the man and allowing them to hold on to a herd of pigs. Too bad for the pigs and those who make money from the pigs. The townspeople come out and tell Jesus to leave. They want no part of holding on to Jesus and hope he wants no part of holding on to them. However, the man healed wants to hold on to Jesus, but Jesus tells him, "No." Instead, Jesus tells him to go back to his people and hold on to them – the same people who had let go of him. Will they embrace him too? The story leaves us to wonder and speculate.

For the six Sundays of Lent we will consider the dynamics of holding on and letting go through events in the life of Jesus. These events are: the temptations of Jesus (Luke 4), the demon possessed man (Luke 8), the feeding of the 5000 (Luke 9), the man with two sons (Luke 15), the woman who washes Jesus' feet (Luke 7), and Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (Luke 19).

Being able to hold on and to let go are important life skills and spiritual disciplines. Important parenting skills too. What are the important things to hold on to, and what are the things we should let go? And, when should we hold on and when should we let go? Are we holding on and letting go of the right things or the wrong things? I like to think we get better at this skill as we grow older. Certainly, the process of aging itself presents us the occasion to practice this skill. As we age, we are compelled to let go of much we once took for granted. And, we are wise to hold on to those things which are important, endure, can never be taken, and are eternal. But, while the skills of holding on and letting go are important life skills and spiritual disciplines, we never really master them. Consider the example and instruction of Jesus in this season of Lent. What is it Jesus wants you to learn about holding on and letting go in your own life?

Randy

March 2010

FMC Ministries Council Minutes: February 18, 2010

Present: Mindy Richmond, Asia Frye, Sharon Ressler, Eric Coddling, Marvin Funk, Verda Albrecht, Ken Neufeld, Bonnie Funk, Randy Smith, Dave Mathis, Jan Schroeder. **Absent:** Keith Harder, Judy Harder, Nadine Friesen. **Opening Prayer/Meditation:** Dave shared some additional thoughts on the Zacchaeus story (Luke 19) which showed him that Jesus has a keen interest in the unremarkable/marginalized among us. He also focused on Jesus' statement that "Today salvation has come to this house:" salvation is available to all the moment we are prepared to receive it, like an "instant redemption coupon." **New Business: Constitution.** Dave would like the Constitutional Revision Committee to review the side-by-side e-mail copy and affirm it by Feb. 24, if possible. Marvin Funk gave an overview of the changes and stated that the constitution has been simplified: the church is planning to use an FMC policy manual that would allow for updates in structure without the constitution having to be rewritten. After discussion, it was tentatively agreed to present this to the congregation the second Sunday in April. **Policy Manual.** In tandem with updating our church's constitution, Randy has been updating our policy manual. According to Western District Conference, constitutions should be simple and difficult to change, and policy manuals should be more detailed and easier to update. Randy would like the council members to review his draft with regard to their ministry. He stressed that this is to be a fluid document, not a fixed set of rules. **Logo.** Randy, Asia, Cheryl Bartel, Judy Harder and Eric Coddling worked with Jesse Graber to design our church logo and, after showing samples to the council, M/S/C unanimously to adopt designs labeled D2 and D6. **Committee Reports: Care:** now there are seven members, they have had trouble finding a mutually agreeable time to meet. Casson Schmidt has submitted a letter of transfer. Alexandre (Ali) Dablemont has also asked to become a church member; he has been baptized as an adult believer. M/S/C unanimously to accept both individuals into our membership. **Nuture:** The new adult Sunday School class is going well. **VBS:** Cheryl Jost (Methodist Church) would like to know who will be our VBS coordinator. Jan Schroeder volunteered. After discussing daytime VBS with Pastor Wintermote, Randy said Trinity is willing to participate but that they may not be able to provide in-session adult help. **Wednesday evening bible study:** February 24, Jeff Wintermote will give a presentation on his mission trip to Thailand and Laos, then Eric and Randy will lead discussions the last few weeks on how our bible came to be. **Hospitality:** Mindy is learning her

new assignment: she is working to increase the number of kitchen helpers, and has already done much work on the pictorial. **Mission:** the current focus is on the July DOOR mission trip: through bulletin inserts and an e-mail, members have been asked to make a solid commitment (and submit a \$50 deposit) by February 24. Ten youth and sponsors are committed to going. The first deposit to DOOR is due in early March. **Stewardship:** the committee worked on designated offerings; they continued discussing technology improvements, the next step being to buy a camera for the church. A new cabinet to store the audio-visual equipment in the balcony has been built by Dan Klaassen (Joel and Nancy Klaassen's son). Clark and Anna Marie Wiebe built and donated the new church mailboxes; Anna Marie refinished the two tables in the foyer. **Worship:** This being the beginning of Lent, the worship theme is "Holding On, Letting Go." There is a Lenten devotional available in the foyer. Judy Harder is working on a Lenten drama. **Treasurer:** See submitted report in the church office, **Pastor:** No report beyond the work done on the constitution revision and the policy manual. **Youth Pastor:** Ali Dablemont put together the Youth Sunday worship service. Danielle Bartel has been working hard on the (intergenerational) DOOR mission trip; the youth are very invested in it. HiFy's budget can meet most of the trip's costs. Asia and Randy are teaching a membership class on Sunday mornings, "Understanding Christian Faith." HiFy is studying bible basics: last week, they focused on several views of creation.

The official version of the minutes is in the church office.

March events

- 2 7:30 p.m. Parish nursing org mtg (Ann Smith)
- 3 9:30 a.m. *Life Enrichment*, K.A.
Wed evening meal/activities.
- 4 7:00 p.m. Spring Opera, *Die Fledermaus*, K.A.
7:30 p.m. *Arsenic and Old Lace*, Theatre Lab,
Lohrenz Building, T.C. (Tickets \$5 (students), \$8
(general public): 620-947-3121 ext 1033.
7:30 p.m. Vision Council mtg.
- 5 7:30 p.m. *Arsenic and Old Lace*. (See March 4.)
- 6 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., Faith M.C., Newton. Gilberto
Flores and MCC Legislative Assistant, Tammy
Alexander (by phone), "Immigration, Faith and
Justice." Info: www.mennowdc.org, 316-783-6300.
7:00 p.m. Spring Opera, *Die Fledermaus*, K.A.
7:30 p.m. *Arsenic and Old Lace*. (See March 4.)
- 6 7:00 p.m. Spring Opera, *Die Fledermaus*, K.A.
- 7 Noon carry-in.
4:00 p.m. International Women's Day concert, K.A.
4:30 p.m. *The Darwin Songhouse* with singer/
songwriter, Krista Detor, and guest vocalist, Bethany
(Amstutz) Schrag, Newton: Prairie Window
Concert Series, Dyck Arboretum. Soup served at
intermission for a donation to the arboretum.

- Tickets: 620-327-8127.
- 8 10:00 a.m. *Learning in Retirement*, WMEC.
- 8-9 (8th) noon-9:00 p.m., (9th) 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., at Journey Yoder Church. Help meet MCC's goal of 25,000 comforters for Haitian earthquake survivors.
- 10 9:30 a.m. *Life Enrichment*, K.A.
Wed evening meal/activities.
- 11 6:00 p.m. Women's Spring Supper, Eden M.C., Moundridge, Gracia Burnham, guest speaker. Soup supper (\$6.00). Special music by "Just Friends." Offering: Mennonite Women USA. Reservations: Judy Jantz, or sign up on bulletin board, by March 2.
- 12-14 Scrapbooking Retreat, Camp Mennoscah. Brochure at www.mennowdc.org or 620-297-3290.
- 13 7:30 a.m. Mennonite Men's Breakfast, Bubbert's.
- 14 2:00 a.m. *Advance your clocks one hour!*
Mission Committee (tentative afternoon mtg)
Sunday-Afternoon-at-the-Museum: Paraguayan art, Kauffman Museum.
7:00 p.m. Wind Ensemble concert, K.A.
- 15 10:00 a.m. *Learning in Retirement*, WMEC.
- 16-20 WDC basketball tournament, B.C.
- 17 9:30 a.m. *Life Enrichment* K.A.
USD 410 Spring Break: *only HiFy will meet.*
- 18 7:30 p.m. Ministries Council mtg.
HBPA Glenn Miller Orchestra, Memorial Hall.
- 19-20 WDC volleyball tourney, Hesston H.S. auxiliary gym
- 20-28 Spring Break (BC/TC): *no classes.*
- 22 10:00 a.m. *Learning in Retirement*, WMEC.
- 24 9:30 a.m. *Life Enrichment*, K.A.
Wed evening meal/activities.
- 29 10:00 a.m. *Learning in Retirement*, WMEC.
- 30 7:30 p.m. Hospitality Committee mtg.

K.A. = Krehbiel Auditorium (Bethel College)

WMEC = Wohlgemuth Music Education Ctr (Tabor College)

April 1, Maundy Thursday: service at Trinity.

April 2 Good Friday: service at First.

April 4 Easter Sunday: FMC/TMC Sunrise Service

Mission Moment – Opportunities for us all to volunteer our services!

Community

- Be a peer mediator.
- Become certified in first aid.
- Befriend a kid.
- Befriend a senior citizen.
- Be a peer mediator.
- Become certified in first aid.
- Be a friend.
- Check into summer and post-high school short-term mission and service programs.
- Clean house for someone who is housebound.
- Collect baby items for a pregnancy center.
- Collect food for a local food pantry.
- Collect recycling.
- Donate your old cell phone to an organization collecting old cell phones.
- Donate your old computer to an organization collecting old computers.
- Make friends with someone from another culture
- Make lots of sandwiches and hand them out to people

- who are hungry.
- Mentor a child.
- Organize a community day or evening with games and free food for kids.
- Participate in a walk or related walk/run to combat hunger.
- Read for an organization that makes audio literature for people who can't see well.
- Read to someone who has difficulty reading.
- Train a seeing-eye dog.
- Tutor a child.
- Tutor a newly arrived immigrant who doesn't speak English well.
- Visit someone who is housebound.
- Volunteer at a domestic violence shelter. (You may have to go through training.)
- Volunteer at a rape crisis center. (You may have to go through training.)
- Volunteer at the food pantry.
- Volunteer at the hospital.

Church

- Collect CARE packages for missionaries from your church.
- Commit to writing and encouraging a mission worker.
- Give or raise money for missions.
- Invite friends to your church or youth group activities.
- Make care packages for college students from your church.
- Set aside daily devotional time.

Beyond Home

- Be a summer counselor at a children's camp.
- Collect health or school kits for people in underdeveloped countries. (Find an organization that collects them to know what to put in them and where to send them.)
- Collect socks, underwear, coats and blankets for the homeless in a local city.
- Write letters for a human rights organization.
- Write letters to a prisoner.
- Keep up-to-date on national and international news: read the newspaper.
- Learn a foreign language.
- Learn about social issues, and contact local government officials about your concerns.

At Home

- Baby-sit.
- Bake cookies for your pastor.
- Do your chores without being asked.
- Mow lawns.
- Pet-sit.
- Pick up trash beside the road.
- Rake leaves for your neighbor.
- Read about places where you might like to serve some day.
- Ride your bike to school instead of having your mom drive you (if it's not too far).
- Shovel snow.
- Sort through your closet—give away clothes that you haven't worn this season; give away one that is your favorite.
- Volunteer to walk a dog.
- Wash cars.
- Wash dishes for your family without being asked
- Wash windows.
- Weed flower beds.

Submitted by Sharon Ressler, Mission Team

Prisoner of Hope

(condensed)

“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death,” Jesus said, and begged his friends to stay awake with him. Here, for the first time, he does not want to be alone with God. And then comes the prayer, “Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me” (Mark 14:6) – spare me this suffering. What suffering?

Christ’s request *was not granted*. God, his Father, rejected it. Christ’s true passion was his suffering from God.

Of course there was the simple human fear of pain. But I believe it was the fear that he, the only begotten Son, who loved the Father as no one had ever loved before, could be “forsaken,” “rejected,” even “cursed” by that Father. He is not afraid for his life. He is afraid for God, for the Father’s kingdom, whose joy he had proclaimed to the poor.

This godforsakenness is the cup which he is not spared. God’s terrible silence in response to Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane is more than a deathly stillness. It is echoed in the dark night of the soul, in which everything that makes life something living withers away, and in which hope vanishes.

Who can stay awake in this night of God? Who will not be as if paralyzed by it? Jesus’ friends were protected from its terrors by a profound sleep. Luke, the doctor, and other witnesses speak of a “bloody sweat” which fell on the ground from the wakeful, imploring Christ. Was this Christ’s struggle with himself? With death? I think it is Christ’s struggle with God. This was his real agony. He overcame it through his self-surrender. That was his victory, and our hope.

At the end of Christ’s passion, on Golgotha, we hear a despairing cry to God, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

For three hours he hung nailed to the cross, apparently in silence, locked in agony and waiting for death. And then he died with this cry, which expresses the most profound abandonment by the God on whom he had pinned all his hopes and for whom he was hanging on the cross.

We shall never be able to get used to the fact that at the very center of the Christian faith we hear this cry of the godforsaken Christ for God. What Christ was afraid of, what he wrestled with in Gethsemane, what he implored the Father to save him from, was not spared him. It happened on the cross. The Son was forsaken by the Father, rejected and cursed. He bore the judgment on which everyone is alone and in which no one can stand.

A reality like this can be answered only by another reality. It is the answer of resurrection: “For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you.”

For me it is the beginning of true hope, because it is the beginning of a life which has death behind it and for which hell is no longer to be

feared.

The passionately loving Christ, the persecuted Christ, the lonely Christ, the Christ despairing over God’s silence, the Christ who in dying was so totally forsaken, for us and for our sakes, is like the brother or the friend to whom one can confide *everything*, because he knows everything and has suffered everything that can happen to us – and more.

Our disappointments, our lonelinesses and our defeats draw us more deeply into communion with him. And with the final unanswered cry, “Why, my God, why?” we join in his death cry and await with him the resurrection.

This is what faith really is: believing, not with the head or the lips or out of habit but believing *with one’s whole life*. It means seeking community with the human Christ in every situation in life, and in every situation, experiencing his own history. Good Friday is the most comprehensive and most profound expression of Christ’s fellowship with every human being.

What initially seemed so meaningless and so irreconcilable – our hope and Christ’s cross – belong together as a single whole, just as do the passionate hope for life and the readiness for disappointment, pain and death.

Beneath the cross of Christ hope is born again out of the depths. The person who has once sensed this is never afraid of any depths again. His hope has become firm and unconquerable: “Lord, I am a prisoner – a prisoner of hope!”

Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926)

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 regarding any aspect of the newsletter are also welcome. Please address these to Pat Bartel, Compiler/Editor.