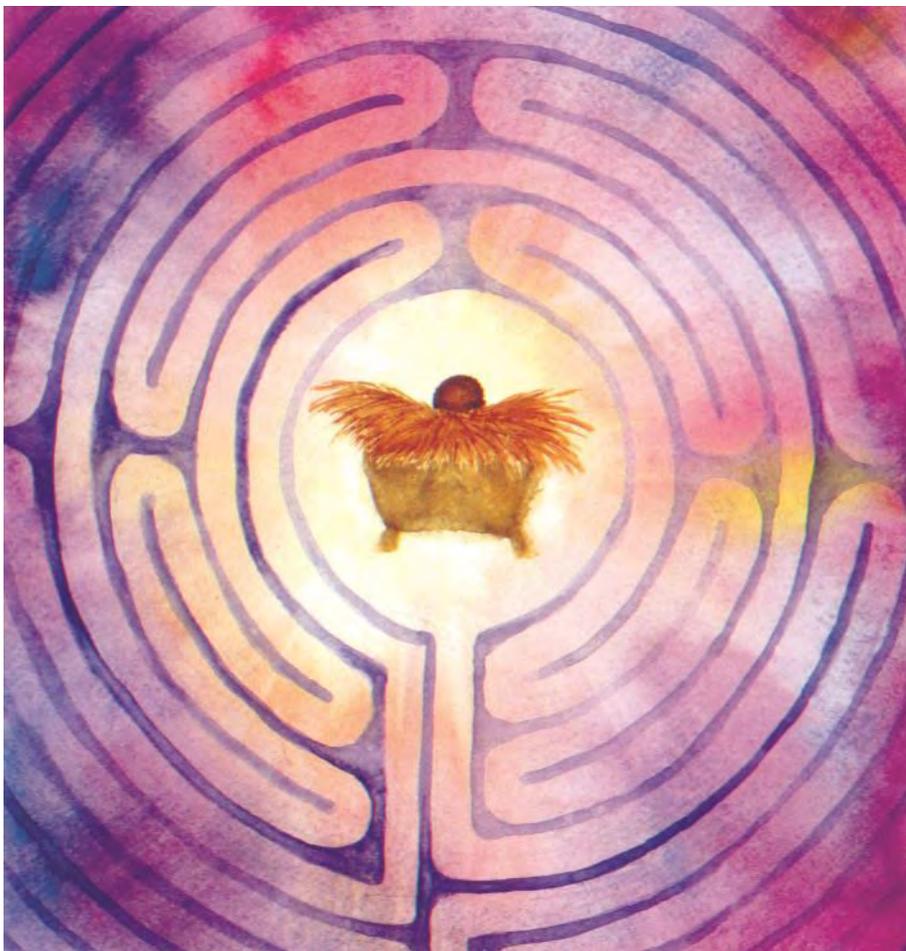


SING!

College Mennonite Church

December 2016/January 2017



Many peoples shall come and say,

Come, let us go up
to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that God may teach us
God's ways and that
we may walk in God's paths...

Come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

—Isaiah 2:3, 5

Christ Is the Center of Our Journey
print by Sylvie Gudin Koehn

In this issue:

- Celebrating Christmas in story
- Strategic Planning updates
- Called to serve with youth
- CMC's Vision Campaign

Walking Slowly to Bethlehem

This Month in Worship

The incarnation, the reality of the Divine becoming material and concrete in our tumultuous world, beckons to us as a vulnerable child, crying in the night. And so we embark on a journey, to seek after God in our concrete, physical world. This frames our Advent worship, where we join together in the task of "Walking Slowly to Bethlehem." Each Sunday throughout this season of Advent and Christmas we will focus on one aspect of what is needed and what is found on this arduous and challenging journey: **Hope, Peace, Love, Joy, Christ, Light.**

(continued on p. 2)



Sing!

We worship together

Every Sunday

9:15 a.m. – Songs for Gathering

9:25 a.m. – Off-site Worship

Radio: WGCS 91.1 FM: the Globe

Online: www.collegemennonite.org

Greencroft Communities: Ch. 13

9:30 a.m. – Worship service

interpretation in Spanish and, on request, American Sign Language

11 a.m. – Fellowship and Christian education classes for all ages

Pastoral Team

Phil Waite, pastoral team leader

Gwen Gustafson-Zook, outreach & worship

Marty Lehman, administration

Daniel Yoder, Christian formation – youth

Pamela Yoder, pastoral care

Talashia Keim Yoder, family ministry

Ministry Coordinators

Claudia Granados, Hispanic ministries

Sheila S. Yoder, Deaf ministries

*College Mennonite Church is a member of **Mennonite Church USA**, an Anabaptist community of believers.*

To learn more go to:

www.collegemennonite.org

www.mennoniteusa.org



“This Month in Worship” continued

We can easily join with our children in imagining the journey taken by Mary and Joseph long ago. But we can also dare to do what is needed to take our own journeys to the places where we encounter the Divine—to slow down; to be intentional; to keep our eyes and ears open; to engage in the tasks before us with conviction and courage; to embark on a journey into the unknown with hope, peace, love, and joy; to breathe deeply as we step out in faith, one step at a time.

This is the journey of faith we remember each year around this time—the journey that leads us to encounter Immanuel, God with us. May we each embark on this holy journey with courage and audacity and conviction during these challenging days. And may our worship inspire us to keep walking, one step at a time.

—Gwen Gustafson-Zook

December/January Bible Study Guide

For the remainder of Advent and until Epiphany, we will focus on our worship theme of “Walking Slowly to Bethlehem.” To study the texts and stories for each Sunday, here is a suggested reading list:

Dec. 11	Walking in Love	Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10 Luke 1:46-55; James 5:7-10
Dec. 18	Walking in Joy	Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:1-7
Dec. 25	Walking with Christ	Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 148 Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)
Jan. 1	Walking Together	Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8 Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46
Jan. 8	Walking in the Light	Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7 Matthew 2:1-12; Ephesians 3:1-12

Celebration Sunday

Becoming Part of the Christmas Story

Celebration Sundays have been part of church life here for two years. They are times to set aside our usual routine and come together to celebrate who God is and who God has created us to be. They unite the worship and Sunday school hours into a whole Sunday morning focus. These Sundays are uniquely College Mennonite Church, a chance to bring our best selves together with a common goal. They help us see each other in new ways and form relationships as we grow together in Christ.

Past Celebration Sundays have been Celebrate Easter, Celebrate World Communion, Celebrate Feast of Tabernacles, and Celebrate Learning. This month, we try a new one: Celebrate Bethlehem Sunday.

On Dec. 18, we will enact our second full-church, unrehearsed Christmas pageant. Last year's pageant was one to remember, with moments of reverence (people of all

ages gathered around the manger singing "Go Tell It on the Mountain") and moments of levity (Phil the cow dancing to a Jamaican song).

We do this pageant because the story of Jesus' birth is a story that unites us, a story for people of every age and culture to enter into together. When we become part of the story by enacting it, the birth of the Christ child is written on our hearts in a new way.

On the morning of Dec. 18, come to church as usual, but on your way into the sanctuary, stop to pick up a costume. Then during the worship service, follow the cues given to sing, enact, and celebrate the story of Jesus' birth. If you have your own costume, whether Middle Eastern attire or animal gear, feel free to wear it instead of using one provided by the church. The pageant isn't



hard, and doesn't require anything very daring of its actors—just a little imagination.

Following worship, we will continue to enter the story with a shepherds meal in the Fellowship Hall. All Sunday school classes are cancelled for the 18th, and instead we will imagine what that holy night was like for the shepherds with food, conversation, and song.

—Talashia Keim Yoder





Engaging Our Future

Listening to God's Call for CMC



CMCers gathered for lively conversation in strategic planning sessions this past summer.

CMC's Strategic Planning Work: An Overview and Invitation

The "Engaging Our Future" phase of strategic planning at College Mennonite Church kicked off on June 22, 2016. The focus of this phase of strategic planning is to identify and implement action steps for the three strategic priorities and eight goals approved by the congregation on April 17, 2016.

Prior to the kickoff meeting, the Strategic Planning Implementation Team was established to provide oversight, to ensure ongoing communication among action step groups, and to reduce duplication of effort. Members of the Strategic Planning Implementation Team are Becky Horst, Tim Lichti, Carol Grieser, Karen Sherer Stoltzfus, Ervin Beck, Sarah Yoder, Phil Waite, Marty Lehman, and Carol Ebersole, chair. This group meets regularly and reviews the minutes of all the action step groups and will receive proposals that are completed by the action step groups and decide whether proposals are complete and determine what commissions need to see the proposals. After all necessary reviews, the planning oversight team will send proposals on to the pastoral team. The Strategic Planning Implementation Team can also fast track to implementation certain action step proposals that do not involve financial, strategic, and staffing considerations consistent with the planning process scope of work.

By design, the action step groups all have a core group of members who signed up and have an interest

and passion for that goal; however, all of the action step groups are open to anyone who wants to attend or share ideas. If you are not yet part of a group and would like to join one, contact any member of the Strategic Planning Implementation Team to assist you. You can also check the bulletin board in the east hallway to see which group you might be interested in participating in. Join us, make a difference, learn to know someone you haven't had a chance to work with, and help us understand and implement what God is calling CMC to do! —Carol Ebersole

Priority #1 Discerning How CMC Welcomes LGBT Christians

Our strategic planning process identified "Hospitality and Welcoming" as the first priority out of three. In an April 2016 meeting, attendees gave the highest number of votes to the suggested action step: "Add an LGBT inclusion statement to the CMC website and order of worship." Because of the sensitive nature of this proposed action step, the church board named a special task group to propose a discernment process for the congregation regarding such a welcome statement. The board requested a discernment process that would promote strategic priority #3, "Community and Unity," as well as priority #1, "Hospitality and Welcoming." Group members

were Becky Horst (chair), Seth Yoder (church board member), Daniel Yoder (pastoral team member), John Lederach, Naomi Lederach, Michelle Oyer-Fowler, Kent Beck, Claudia Granados, and Ann Kauffman.

The group met six times from June to September. Meetings included prayer; engagement with scripture; learning about Mennonite Church policies and CMC's history with homosexuality; listening to each other's experiences; sharing books, articles, and videos on the topic; and reviewing welcome statements from other Mennonite congregations. The final report submitted to the board includes this proposed welcome statement for CMC, which will be voted on in March 2017:

We believe that all individuals are created in God's image, and all people, regardless of age, gender, race, citizenship status, abilities, or sexual orientation, are welcome as full participants in the life of our congregation.

The LGBT task group was not all of one mind when it concluded its work, just as the congregation is not all of one mind. The task group, church board, and pastoral team do not believe that this issue needs to divide us. The New Testament shows us examples of the church working through thorny issues and respecting each other's differences. Mennonite Church USA has adopted a stance of *forbearance*, encouraging members to respect each other's differences on the relationship between homosexuality and Christian faith without passing judgment. Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (of which CMC is a member) is considering a proposal to accept *variance* among member congregations in regard to homosexuality.

Between now and next March we will have opportunities to increase our understanding of the relationship between homosexuality and Christian faith. Discernment activities will include Bible study, testimony (stories of personal experience), and learning about the nature of sexuality and marriage.

Resources for our discernment are available on the CMC website and will be updated regularly.

Discernment requires trusting in God's Holy Spirit to guide us and "leaning in" toward each other, living out our vision to be "a community of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Spirit, experiencing and extending God's love and grace."
—Becky Horst



Priority #1

Hospitality and Welcoming

Priority #1 in our 2016 Strategic Plan is *Hospitality and Welcoming: We will embrace diversity and improve our practices related to welcoming and actively including and inviting others into our physical space and spiritual community.*

Action groups are working on three goals summarized below.

Goal 1.1 – *Fine-tune our structure, processes, and language to create a more welcoming environment and intentional guest experience.*

This action group is led by Larry Yoder. Members are working on recommendations related to improving

- our use of nametags,
- the recruitment and training of greeters and ushers,
- our practices of inviting and responding to guests.

Goal 1.2 – *Assess all ministries and programs for how each is welcoming and meeting the needs of diverse audiences and develop a three-year action plan to welcome and grow target audiences.*

This action group, led by Becky Horst, is concentrating on addressing gaps in our current ministries to young families, young adults, and Latinos.

One change recommended by this group is already being implemented: an earlier Christmas Eve service (7:30 p.m.) that would be friendlier to young families at CMC and in the community.

We welcome more members to join the work of this action group. Contact Becky if you are interested.

Goal 1.3 – *Transform our physical space to be more welcoming and to promote relationships and a sense of belonging.*

This action group, led by Caryl Guth and Myra Oswald, is focused on the question: How can our physical space enhance the circles of welcoming to all who come in our doors and enhance the circles of love and caring in our midst?

Our building has challenges, including multiple entrance doors, confusing parking arrangement and building layout, and many hard beige surfaces. The group is working on significant recommendations, including

- A covered drive-up entrance at the south doors to aid guests, families, and older or disabled members.
- Air-lock doors, a cloak room, and other modifications to clearly designate the south doors as the main entrance to the building.
- An electronic sign along State Road 15 to clarify the main parking entrance and inform the public of church events.

continued on p. 6

“Engaging Our Future” *continued*....

- Improved signs throughout the building, including greater visibility, Spanish translation, and more “you are here” building maps.
- More conversation areas in the hallways, including plants, seating, and carpet.
- More green plants throughout the building.
- Improvements to the Gathering Rooms (142-144) to make this the coffee and gathering space for the congregation before and after worship. Recommendations include adding large interior windows and double-glass doorways to make the memorial garden visible from the church hallway.

Funding for recommended improvements will be included in a capital campaign, which will launch in 2017.

Priority #2 Spiritual Formation & Discipleship

Goal 2 – *Develop list of opportunities; survey to inform program planning; offer new opportunities to deepen faith; assess ministries and programs; and develop a plan to support high-bar discipleship*

The groups working on Priority #2 “Discipleship and Spiritual Formation” have been busy collecting material that reflects current practice and identifying some areas of possible growth. Certain tasks like the creation and resourcing of small groups will take considerable time in the coming months. There are numerous activities at CMC that promote growth but not all members take advantage of these opportunities (Sunday school classes) or may not even be aware of their existence (spiritual direction).

Currently there is work being done on various web-based resources for group and individual exploration. As these are identified and/or developed they will be promoted. In addition, we are moving into an assessment phase to consider ways the current practices can be improved.

One thing that seems to be clear is that our pastoral team is very aware and embraces the opportunities to challenge and encourage spiritual practices that lead to growth in discipleship. —Tim Lichti



Priority #3.1 Community & Unity

Goal 3.1 – *Create relational and physical spaces to cultivate deeper intergenerational connections and provide opportunities for CMCers of all ages to share stories of God at work in their lives.*

“Enlarging Our Circles of Comfort” is the overarching action plan of Goal 3.1. The action plan was initiated at our Wednesday, Nov. 16, evening meal by an “Upset the Fruit Basket” activity. Persons were handed a colored sticker which indicated a table where they were to sit. Members along with college students enlarged their circles of comfort as they enjoyed a meal talking with and making connections with persons whom they did not know previously.

In January another activity is planned to continue Enlarging Our Circles of Comfort. Members will have the opportunity to sign up for “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.” Jan Smucker will spearhead this opportunity, with information for signing up printed in the bulletin in January.

As we worked on the action plans for our goal, it became evident that there is some overlap with other goals, which will involve cooperation between action groups. Small groups is one area that groups in all three priorities have designated as needing to be addressed. A task force is being formed with members from each priority to work on a plan to bring to the congregation. Dale Kaser will represent Goal 3.1 on the task force.

Sharing stories of God at work in our lives is happening at Wednesday evening meals. There will be stories shared in the Wednesday evening break-out groups starting in January. —Carol Grieser



“Truly a Blessing”

Dan Schrock’s Ministry with CMC Youth



Many people within the church know Dan Schrock. What people may not realize is how special Dan is to the MYF. He has been coming to our MYF Wednesday night activities and Sunday school class for 14 years now. We as MYFers wanted to share with the CMC congregation the love he shows to us.

Through an interview with Dan and some reading of his book *Journey with “Justice,”* I was able to get a better idea of why he decided to help with the group in the first place.

After his family’s experience with “shaken baby” allegations, he realized that his post-retirement time needed to be filled and occupied. Dan quickly decided that he wanted to become involved within the church in some way. He started to pray about where he should get involved to see where that would lead him. He soon began to hear God’s calling to “be with the MYF.”

This calling led him to come up with a proposal of what he would do for the youth, which eventually began with him walking into a room full of 35+ high school students with whom he was going to build relationships.

Dan makes it his goal to go to as many of our events as possible throughout the week, whether it be a music concert or a sporting event. If an MYFer is involved in it, you can pretty much expect Dan to be there at least for a bit! Through this Dan is able to build small relationships with everyone and is able to bond differently with each member of the group.

Dan has always been a smiling face to greet us on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. Some may

think that they get four high school years to build this relationship, but this is not the case. Dan continues to build these relationships after high school years as the bonding done during high school leads to lifelong friendships. He mentioned that these post-high school friendships have been “an unexpected blessing” in his life. (See p. 8 for the prayer Dan has offered youth as they graduate from high school.)

In recent years, Dan has gone to an average of more than 200 different events a year. I know that personally I will never be able to thank him enough for coming to my extracurricular activities, and I know others within the group feel the same. One conversation I remember having with Dan was discussing what he hopes to get out of being with the MYF; building relationships, obviously, but he also said, “a hug after events.” So my goal is to always give Dan a hug after I see him at my events.

This man has shown the face of God to so many youth who have passed through the group and he is still doing this through all of his interactions with us. Being in my fourth year of interacting with Dan, I am still amazed at all of the little things he does for the group. Dan is truly a blessing to the MYF and we can’t thank him enough for everything that he does for us.

—Elsie Koop Liechty



Above left: Youth and their spiritual mentors participated in a one-day exploring baptism retreat.

Above right: The youth group enjoyed a day in Chicago, including a church visit and a photo of their reflection in the famous “Bean” sculpture, officially known as the “Cloud Gate.”

CMC Vision Campaign

Early this year the Vision Leadership Team and the Administration Commission developed a plan for launching a fundraising campaign for CMC. The CMC Vision Campaign Committee began working when Phil Waite, pastoral team leader, returned from his sabbatical this fall.

The committee includes David Lapp Jost, Jim Caskey, Scott Litwiller, Krista Troyer, Phil Waite, and Marty Lehman. Gordon Yoder is also meeting with the group and serving as a consultant.

The committee is working to raise funds for strategic planning initiatives, technology needs in the building, solar energy, new ministry opportunities, and the new hymnal project. Additionally, the committee will work at building the CMC endowment.

Look for more information and ways you can become involved in the campaign early in 2017. —Marty Lehman



WHEN

When I feel that no one cares about me ...

The Lord is my shepherd.

When I am inclined to overwork to meet

my economic and psychological needs, I remember ...

I shall not want.

When the rush of cares and concerns chokes my growth and creates a spiritual wasteland ...

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

When I feel like I'm drowning in the depths of activity around me ...

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

When I give and serve and help until my spirit grows empty ...

He restoreth my soul.

When the crush of demands causes me to look for questionable moral and ethical shortcuts ...

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

When the evil one causes me to feel alone and fearful at times ...

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.

When I feel lost, discouraged, and helpless ...

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

When, because of damaged relationships and hostility, I don't want to commune with others ...

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

When I deserve little in the way of good things ...

Thou anointest my head with oil and my cup runneth over.

When I commit grievous sins and wonder if you will abandon me ...

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.

When I run away to follow selfish desires, you seek me out, call me back, and ask me to recommit my life ...

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

—Dan Schrock (Psalm 23 amplification)

Dan has shared this in prayer journals for graduating high school seniors. See the article on p. 7 about his ministry with CMC youth.

Mark Your Calendar

- Dec. 18 9:30 a.m. Christmas pageant and shepherds meal
3 p.m. Adult Choir presents *On This Shining Night*, a cantata for Christmas
- Dec. 21 6 p.m. Longest Night worship service
- Dec. 22-Jan. 2 CMC office closed for the holidays – check the weekly bulletin for details
- Dec. 24 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service
- Dec. 25 10:30 a.m. Christmas Day worship service
Noon Christmas potluck meal – sign up in advance if possible
- Jan. 1 9:30 a.m. Worship service and communion
11 a.m. Fellowship time – bring light snacks to share

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