



A new children's caring quilt created by Sharon Unruh, Lois Voth, Krista Graber, Pam Abrahams and the children of Tabor.

Tabor Church News

July, 2017

Phil's Ponderings: "Working Across Factions"

On June 4, Pentecost Sunday, about 25 people from Tabor came to the church Fellowship Hall for a Leadership Retreat. We gathered for about four hours to dialogue and fellowship together. Our focus was to address the challenge of "calling *leaders* and working together across *factions* in order to live out our collective *vision*." As many of you know, our *vision* as a church is "As God's children and the body of Christ, we are called by God to offer *hospitality*, *healing*, and *hope* in the name of Christ." Furthermore, in conjunction with the Kansas Leadership Center (<http://kansasleadershipcenter.org/>), we defined *leadership* as "mobilizing others to do difficult work for the common good." With this definition in mind, we recognized that leadership is an activity, not a position, and that *anyone* can lead *anytime* and *anywhere* (This is the reason we called it a "Leadership Retreat," because we are all leaders in the church). We defined *factions* as "groups of people who have different viewpoints and/or perspectives on a challenge." More specifically, *factions* are groups that have different values, loyalties, and losses.

After setting this framework, we sought to understand better how to identify different factions. Factions can be identified based on people's favorite Mennonite food, brand of tractor, or sports team. But factions can also be identified according to people's generation, worship style preference, or theological beliefs. After gaining a better understanding of how to identify different kinds of factions, we broke up into our church's structural factions: Trustees, Deacons, Outreach, Education, Worship/Fellowship, and Finance Task Force. Within these groups, we identified each faction's specific values, loyalties, and losses in relation to our collective challenge of living out our church vision together. After sharing our insights with one another and after a break for supper and fellowship, we came back together to talk about how we can better work across factions at Tabor Mennonite Church. Several strengths and growth areas were shared. Some strengths that were mentioned included: the church commissions work well together, we have good communication, we get along, we have a mindset to work together, we have diversity in our ideas and perspectives, we are dedicated to prayer, and we are willing to try new experiments. On the other hand, several interrelated growth areas shared included: the need to address theological differences more directly, the need to find ways to share perspectives without fear of judgment, and the importance of building trust and having more conversations about our diverse ideas and perspectives.

At this point in the retreat, people were engaged and energized by the conversation we were having. We continued the conversation by brainstorming several ways that we might build on our strengths and address our growth areas related to working across factions. Some ideas that were shared included having more retreats throughout the year for this kind of dialogue, taking time during a worship service for intentional conversation about topics in which we have diverse viewpoints, and seeking to be a church that is safe for everyone even if it isn't comfortable.

continued on back page

Sunday Worship Themes

July 2 -

Community is the Center of our Life:

Bind us together

Ephesians 2:17-22

Pastor Phil preaching

July 9 -

Community is the Center of our Life:

Many bodies in our body

Ephesians 4:1-16

Pastor Rosie preaching

July 16 -

Community is the Center of our Life:

Celebration of our diversity

Acts 10

Jayce Yoder preaching

July 23 -

Reconciliation is the Center of our Work:

Healthy Dialogue

July 30 -

Reconciliation is the Center of our Work:

God & Creation

Pastor Phil preaching

Digging for Treasure: Parables Revealed Tabor Vacation Bible School



Rosie's Reflections

How do we know when the Spirit's here? That's a question in one of Brian Moyer Suderman's songs. He goes on to sing about several ways to recognize the Spirit, one way being in the wind that blows. During wheat harvest this year we had very windy days that reminded me of God's breath blowing over us. Now, I'm not especially fond of windy days; breezes, yes, but the strong hot KS winds, not so much. However, when I think of the winds as God's breath (Spirit) blowing over us, I feel more open to its intensity.

I also felt the Spirit blowing during the week of Bible school. In the classroom each day the children looked for hidden puzzle pieces, that when put together the puzzle revealed something about the parable for that day. I believe the Holy Spirit hovered over all of our activities that week as the children dug deep for the treasures of truth hidden in each parable.

Another "Spirit" moment was at our recent Leadership Retreat. Throughout the evening we gathered in small groupings with focused questions that stimulated conversation around Tabor's strengths as well as our areas for growth. As we reported back to the larger group, it became clear that all of us longed for more intentional times of conversation with each other, not just with those present but with the whole Tabor church body. In the spirit of Pentecost, we read Romans 12:3-8 several times and listened for ways that the Holy Spirit was falling on us anew. I left hopeful, and with a sense of God's Spirit among us even as we parted that evening. "For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another."

May the Holy Spirit blow as it chooses, and may we have open eyes, minds and hearts to recognize and receive its presence.

~Grace and peace, Pastor Rosie

Katherine's Candor

We continue our summer worship series on the Anabaptist Essentials with Community is the Center of our Life, and Reconciliation is the Center of our Work. We have been blessed to reflect on the ways that Vacation Bible School, church camps, communion, and convention have enhanced our sense of community with our sisters and brothers in Christ. As we continue with our series, we anticipate learning more ways that we can foster community and seek reconciliation with those who differ from us. We will be drawing from themes laid out in this summer's issue of MennoMedia's *Leader* magazine.

- July 2: Community is the Center of Our Life: Bind us together
- July 9: Community is the Center of Our Life: Many bodies in one body
- July 16: Community is the Center of Our Life: Celebration of our diversity
- July 23: Reconciliation is the Center of Our Work: Service of Listening to One Another
- July 30: Reconciliation is the Center of Our Work: Reconciliation with God and Creation
- August 6: Reconciliation is the Center of Our Work: Reconciliation with Others and Ourselves
- August 13: Reconciliation is the Center of Our Work: Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery
- August 20: Reconciliation is the Center of Our Work: "I am an Immigrant"
- August 27: Reconciliation is the Center of Our Work: Solidarity with Refugees

It is our hope that this worship series will continue to bind us together as sisters and brothers in Christ, and that it might lead to conversations and deeds that help us better build relationships with one another here in our congregation, in our community, and with those who are outsiders or marginalized.

I leave you with these verses from Colossians 3, taken from one of our 12 Scripture passages: “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. ... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:14-15, 17)

~Pastor Katherine

Reconciliation is the Center of our Work

In a world that contains so many people from countless different backgrounds, relating with others can seem to be a daunting task. Tabor Mennonite Church is not exempt from this issue as there are many differing theologies and understandings of faith-based topics present in this community. As an attempt to create a safe church in which all voices are welcomed and acknowledged, we invite the congregation to worship in a different setting than normal on July 23. The service will take place in the fellowship hall around tables. While listening to a sermon is one way to promote spiritual learning and growth, conversations will take place during the time that would normally be dedicated to a sermon. Questions on the topics of community and reconciliation will be posed for table groups to discuss and will be concluded by taking communion as a reminder of the unity that exists in the body of Christ. Further pondering of important questions will continue in the Faith Formation hour.

The idea of a service of this type has been talked about by the Church Council for years and it was brought up again during the most recent Leadership Retreat. A conversation-based service is new to Tabor, but possibilities of further experimentation with different worship styles will be opened up considerably with the completion of the building project. In order to make this experiment possible, children will have other activities planned for them elsewhere during the service.

Why have a service like this?

- Pastors are not the only people who can help others grow spiritually. Much can be learned and gained from peers, whether or not there is agreement.
- There are many learning styles present in the church, a discussion based service may be beneficial for some.
- Controversial issues are important – we are missing something if we ignore them.
- It is an important spiritual practice to be able to acknowledge and understand beliefs that differ from our own.
- Our existing views can be challenged/questioned/strengthened through conversation. Perhaps some of us will find ourselves looking at issues from a different perspective by the end.

What can be gained?

- Learn how to relate with each other while recognizing and not avoiding differences.
- A greater understanding and reasoning for our own views as well as others.
- A space where people feel safe to share their thoughts/questions, whether it is comfortable or not.

We are excited to try out this experiment and we hope to see you there!

~Jayce Yoder



New Member Faith Stories

On June 25 we received seven members into our fellowship here at Tabor. Following are a couple faith stories from new members.

I was raised in a Christian home with wonderful parents and a nurturing faith community in rural Virginia. Highlights of my childhood and teen years centered around summers at camp, both as camper and staff, and youth activities with the MYF. My first recognition that I needed Jesus in my life to save me from my own bitterness and selfishness occurred around my fifth grade year, and I was baptized the following summer. We have been on a journey ever since, trying to figure out who I am, and who God is, and how we work together with others in this world. And of course, what this means for the big decisions and the daily choices of life. Sometimes, when our relationship is healthy, I rest in knowing that God is big enough to handle anything (including my emotions), that I am but dust, and that God's existence, love, and truth will endure regardless of who we humans understand God to be.

~Erica Stoltzfus

I grew up in the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, and Bruce and I have been members at Grace Community Church in Newton for many years. When we started attending Tabor, our greatest desire was to find community. Some key elements of my faith are:

1. Jesus is the center of my faith.
2. I thirst to know more about God, even as I know that God is a mystery that I cannot fully understand. He reveals himself to me through the circumstances of my life, in solitude with Him, and in community with others.
3. I believe everything is spiritual. God is always with me and I can always talk to Him.

~Nancy Funk



Phil's Ponderings continued

Personally, I was energized by our retreat! I enjoyed facilitating a conversation that people actively engaged in, I loved that new ideas came out of our time together, and I especially appreciated hearing people's desire for building more trust and having more conversations together at Tabor Mennonite Church. This desire for deeper relationship and communication gives me a lot of hope for our congregation as we seek to live out our church vision together.

Thanks to everyone who attended the Leadership Retreat! Please be looking for information about our next retreat, which will hopefully take place in the fall. And, just to clarify: these retreats are open to all members and attenders of Tabor. (We are considering calling them "Followers of Jesus" retreats so that everyone feels more welcome to come and join in the conversation!)

~Peace, Pastor Phil



Tabor Bible School Celebration Service



Mennonite Church USA Convention 2017

July 4-8 in Orlando, Florida

"Love is a Verb"



This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18, NIV)

Thousands of Mennonite people from around the country will gather in Orlando, Florida July 4-8 for the Mennonite Church USA Convention. I invite you to pray for everyone attending convention and especially for those attending from Tabor, including Pastor Phil, Mary, Ethan, and Noah Schmidt, Pastor Katherine and Peter Goerzen, Shelley Buller, Violeta Ajquejay, Phil and Sarahanne Unruh, Joshua Schmidt, Olivia Duerksen, Elizabeth Alderfer, Karina and Emily Brandt, Justice Johnson, and Audessi and Porcelain Unruh.

If you would like more information about convention, please visit the convention website: convention.mennoniteusa.org. On this website, you can find schedules for youth and adult activities, subscribe to the convention blog and newsletter, and find information about speakers and seminars that will take place at convention.

Peter Goerzen and I will be Tabor's delegates to convention. The central delegate agenda item is to discern and vote on the resolution entitled "Seeking Peace in Israel and Palestine." This resolution calls for Mennonite Church USA to address both military occupation in Israel/Palestine and to address antisemitism. If you have not done so already, I encourage you to read this resolution noting any areas of affirmation, question, or concern. Please contact me if you would like to visit more. Both Peter and I strongly support this resolution because it fits within our understanding of following Jesus and seeking to speak and act for peace and reconciliation even amidst much violence, anger, and fear. Since we emailed this resolution to you several weeks ago, I have not heard any concerns, but have had a few people share their affirmations for the resolution and hopes for its implementation.

The other main area of worshipful work for the adult delegate body plus several other people, will be the Future Church Summit. According to the convention website, "The Future Church Summit will be a generative, open space for denomination-wide conversation — to dream together, reset priorities and engage one another in answering the question: **How will we follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the 21st century?**" Personally, I love the idea of this summit and look forward to what emerges.

In the August Tabor Newsletter, I along with others who attended convention will write reflections on our experience there. Additionally, several of the Tabor Youth who attend convention will share in church on Sunday, July 16. Again, I invite your prayers for those of us attending convention as well as all who attend and participate in the worshipful work of the denomination.

~Peace, Pastor Phil