



*New Children's Caring Quilt*

# Tabor Church News

August, 2017

## Phil's Ponderings

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)*

At the beginning of July, we had several representatives from Tabor travel to Orlando, Florida to attend the bi-annual Mennonite Church USA Convention. Those who attended from Tabor included myself, Mary, Ethan, and Noah Schmidt, Pastor Katherine and Peter Goerzen, Shelley Buller, Violeta Ajquejay, Phil and Sarahanne Unruh, Elizabeth Alderfer, Joshua Schmidt, Olivia Duerksen, Karina and Emily Brandt, Justice Johnson, and Audessi and Porclein Unruh. We had an opportunity to hear reflections from many of the youth who attended Convention during the worship service on July 16, and we also had opportunity to hear from our delegates during Faith Formation on that same Sunday. Following in this newsletter you will find written reflections from many who attended convention. I invite you read through these reflections and also follow-up in person with the people who wrote them if you have any questions or affirmations.

Personally, I again appreciated the opportunity to attend Convention as a delegate and representative of Tabor Mennonite Church. I enjoyed reconnecting with friends and family from across the country. I enjoyed the worship services, the learning opportunities, and the chance for my boys to experience Convention as well. On top of this, I especially appreciated the conversations that took place around round tables at the delegate gathering and Future Church Summit.

I am grateful for the processing and discernment that has taken place within Mennonite Church USA over the past two years regarding the situation in Israel/Palestine and I am glad we as delegates were able to pass the "Seeking Peace in Israel/Palestine" resolution with overwhelming support. For the Future Church Summit, I enjoyed the process of conversation and discernment that helped hundreds of us from across the country and denomination to reflect on our history, our shared values, and our hopes for the future. If you have not done so already, I invite you to visit the following link to read an article about the delegate response to the Future Church Summit, which includes a link to the Future Church Summit Outcomes Report: <http://mennoniteusa.org/convention-news/delegates-accept-future-church-summit-results-guide-discernment/>

One follow-up idea I have in response to the Future Church Summit is doing a similar kind of process here at Tabor, a "Tabor Future Church Summit," which will bring us together to reflect on our history, our shared values, and our hopes for the future. I think this would be a wonderful thing to do in 2018 as we celebrate our 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! Look for more information about this in the coming months!

~Peace, Pastor Phil

## Sunday Worship Themes

**August 6 -**

**Reconciliation is the Center of our Work:**

*Others and Self*

2 Corinthians 5:17-21;

Matthew 18:15-20

Pastor Rosie preaching

**August 13 -**

**Reconciliation is the Center of our Work:**

*I am an Immigrant*

Genesis 12:1-4; Ruth 1:1-2;

Matthew 2:13-15

Pastor Katherine preaching

**August 20 -**

**Reconciliation is the Center of our Work:**

*Dismantling the Doctrine of*

*Discovery*

Micah 4:1-4

Karen Kauffman Wall preaching

**August 27 -**

**Reconciliation is the Center of our Work:**

*The God who gets around*

Psalms 39:12-13; Psalm 137:1-6;

Psalm 146:5-10

Pastor Phil preaching

## *Rosie's Reflections*

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths."*

Every time I read these verses, I think of my mom, and I can almost hear her voice reciting them. I suspect they grounded her, especially when standing on shaky ground as she must have stood many times with 6 children underfoot on our small, Midwestern Illinois farm. Although shaken from time to time, mom was firmly grounded in her belief that God would "direct her path." Shortly after she passed away, I was drawn to her kitchen calendar noticing these familiar verses headlining that particular month. These verses have also become grounding for my faith. Many years later, my daughter-in-law, not knowing this story, presented me with a bracelet to celebrate my ordination to ministry. The inscription on the bracelet was, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

This week my daily meditations centered on faith and belief, and the centering verse each day, you guessed it, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." As I pondered these meditations, I wondered with the writer, Brian McLaren, what if Christians moved "from defining their faith as a settled system of beliefs" to "a force for liberation and forward movement." How am I and how is Tabor a force for the liberating message of Jesus Christ?

As we continue to focus on the essentials of our faith; Jesus as our center, Community as our life, and Reconciliation as our work, how can we be strengthened and unified even in the midst of our diversity? How might we be extensions of grace, love and forgiveness to each other; to those who look and think differently than we do? As we move forward together, may we trust in the Lord with all our hearts to direct our path, granting the Holy Spirit space to move freely in our midst, blowing where it may. *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."*

*~Grace and peace, Pastor Rosie*

## Reconciliation Through Conversation

As we walk through life, many new things get thrown at us on a regular basis. One new experiment that occurred right here at Tabor on Sunday, July 23, was a worship service that featured a discussion in the place of a sermon. While comfort levels certainly dropped on that day, the experiment was an overwhelming success. I say this because of the numerous comments I heard about how meaningful the service was. Additionally, the last question that was discussed during the Faith Formation time asked people to describe their experiences with a discussion-focused worship style. After looking through those sheets – which were full of affirmations – I have no doubt in my mind that the experiment was, indeed, a success.

While planning this service, we hoped to learn how to relate with each other effectively, while also recognizing differences. We also were eager to create a space where people felt safe to share their thoughts, whether it was comfortable or not. Along with that we strived to gain a greater understanding and reasoning for our own views as well as others. As I look back on the service, I believe all of those were achieved.

I appreciate everyone's willingness to participate in this experiment as we continue to discern new ways to foster growth throughout the congregation. I am sure some would say that a regular service with a sermon is the most effective method from which they learn. However, I thank them for joining in the conversation anyway because others are heavily impacted by the meaning they gain from discussion-focused services.

I am in the middle of compiling all of the notes that were taken during the discussions and I will send out a summary of key themes that are common across table groups as soon as I am done.

*~Jayce Yoder*

## "Rooted and Built Up in Christ"

Western District Conference 2017 Annual Assembly ~ August 4-6 in Arlington, Texas

*"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." (Colossians 2:6-7)*

This next weekend, several people from Tabor and surrounding Mennonite churches will travel to Arlington, Texas for Western District Conference Annual Assembly. Those attending from Tabor as delegates include myself, Pastor Katherine and Peter Goerzen, Eric Litwiller, Carol Duerksen and Maynard Knepp. Others attending from Tabor include Jayce Yoder, Phyllis Regier, Nancy Funk, Michael Unruh, Violeta Ajquejay and Jose Suastegui. I invite you to pray for all who will be traveling to Texas and gathering together for our conference's annual assembly. For more information about Annual Assembly, please visit <http://mennowdc.org/annual-assembly/>.

*~Pastor Phil*

## Mennonite Church USA Convention Reflections

*Katherine's Candor*

I want to once again express my deep gratitude to you, as a congregation for your generous support and prayers which enabled the youth and me to travel together to the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Orlando, FL this past month. And I want to express my deep gratitude to the youth and sponsors, for the incredible opportunity to have this meaningful and uplifting experience with you!

God was revealed in the fellowship and love that our youth share with one another and the ways they cared for one another throughout the week. God was revealed in the love that our youth shared with those from other congregations and for those we met on the street. God was revealed in our corporate worship and in the thousands of voices being raised together in song. God was revealed in the conversations that we had together in processing our experiences. And God was revealed through the generous support and prayers from you as a congregation.

There is a firm foundation that has been laid within our congregation because of our commitment to faithful and meaningful faith formation. May we continue to build upon this firm foundation and encourage growth in faith and discipleship for all who come. May we continue to be proud of and encourage the young people in our congregation! Thanks be to God for the lives, the gifts, and the passion of the young people in our church! Thanks be to God for the witness, the love, and the encouragement offered by you as a congregation!

*~Pastor Katherine*

Through my employment with Mennonite Church USA, and more directly as the assistant to the Executive Director, I had the privilege of attending the Orlando convention to specifically help with logistics for the delegate assembly. The bigger challenge for me this year was assigning table groups not only for the delegate sessions (572 people) but also the Future Church Summit with an additional 100+ participants. It was refreshing to witness the thoughtful and wide-ranging sharing of perspectives through several discussion models. Values that arose during the summit included: having a "community of belonging," a shared Anabaptist identity and heritage, mutual support, the perspectives of a diverse body and a sense of being able to do more together than individually. The Executive Board will use these findings from the summit to guide their ongoing work for Mennonite Church USA, and I look forward to watching that unfold in the next two years. Personally, I enjoyed reconnecting with friends and acquaintances during convention, and I pass along greetings to our Tabor family from Corey Miller and Brenda Martin Hurst.

*~Shelley Buller*

I especially appreciated the presence of high school students participating in the "Step Up" program, who joined the delegate sessions and Future Church Summit. I always value the participation of youth and young adults around the delegate tables. Appointing youth and emerging adults as delegates to conference and denominational assemblies is a great idea!

I was also heartened to see the Future Church Summit re-affirm our core Anabaptist values of the centrality of Jesus Christ for faith and interpretation of Scripture, church as community of believers, and being a peace church marked by lives of service and justice. As always, it was a joy to join together with Mennonites from across the country, building relationships as we worship, pray, and discern together.

*~Peter Goerzen*

Part of my job is attending the Mennonite Church USA Convention. As a staff person of Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) I do not get so many chances to go to the delegate sessions. One of the highlights this year was to attend the Hispanic Mennonite Church Assembly. The theme for the event was "Transform and Renew". It was energizing to see the enthusiasm among the people attending. A new board was elected and it was nice to see new leaders emerge and accept to be part of this new board. New people bring new ideas and new vision to lead the Hispanic church. Many of us left feeling that something new was beginning.

While at the convention, part of my job is also to promote and inform people about our program – Anabaptist Biblical Institute (IBA). So, I always enjoy meeting new people, making new connections and talking about our Hispanic Ministries programs. I enjoy working at our MEA booth where you meet new people and old friends stop by.

*~Violeta Ajquejay*



## *MC USA Reflections Continued*

As always, convention is a time for me to re-connect. Not only with people from my Goshen, IN and Hopedale, IL days, but with the aspects of my faith that form the most fundamental and important part of who I am as a person. The worship, the singing, being surrounded by people who share those beliefs which exemplify our Confession of Faith and who strive to live it out every day. What I see at convention is that - within the frame-work of the Confession - we all have different expressions and manifestations of those tenants that make us, both individually and as a church body, Mennonite. Over the span of my week in Orlando, I was able to have deep and enriching conversations with people about how they seek to fulfill God's calling in their lives. Some would not be practicable for me. Some I've tried and did not find helpful in my personal journey. But many were novel and exciting. In them, I saw opportunities to not only grow in my own faith, but to also draw others to deeper relationship with our Creator. In prayer and in these frank discussions, I learned more every day about what it means to live with God on a more intense level than I have before. To trust him with my cares and concerns. To really believe that He loves me and cares for me. And that I could lay my burdens at His feet with a higher level of confidence that He would answer my prayers . . . even if they were likely to be on His time and in His own unique ways, rather than on the time-tables and in the ways that I hoped or expected. Convention never fails to renew my spirit and give me confidence in future generations of our church. I thank Tabor for allowing me to serve as a delegate, and I pray that this spirit of renewal and connection will continue to grow across the church.

*~Eric Litwiller*

Not only did I have an amazing time with my youth group at convention getting free t-shirts, going to worship services and more, but I also had the opportunity to participate in the Step Up program. This program was designed to get more youth involved in the Future Church Summit and the Delegate Meetings. I sat at a table in the front row so I got to experience the action from up close. Even though I was not able to attend every one of the "adult meetings", I really enjoyed having meaningful and productive conversations with my table group. It was so interesting how our table could disagree so strongly on different issues yet still come together and talk about it peacefully, all be friends, and agree on one main fact that our God is an awesome God. It was a busy week, but one packed with fun times, great conversations, and love for the Lord.

*~Karina Brandt*

Convention was a little different for me this year. It wasn't a specific speaker or worship leader that stood out to me as the highlight. I was at convention acting as the American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Coordinator arranging services for all who needed ASL interpretation for any convention events. In the past we have had a team of 4-7 interpreters serving a small group of Deaf individuals. It takes a lot of work to interpret; interpreters usually switch off every 20-30 minutes because of mental fatigue so they usually work in pairs. And it's not just interpreting that's required, but gathering information about what songs will be sung the next day, touching base with speakers to get an idea of their presentation topics and goals, and making sure our lighting and audio is appropriate for us to hear well and be seen. I was coordinating and I knew I would need a minimum of two interpreters, possibly more. As the time drew near we didn't have any Deaf registrants. In fact, I hadn't booked any interpreters and the convention had connected me with the coordinator of the Prayer Team thinking I would be switching to be a member of their team this year instead. Then, on June 13th, three weeks before convention, we got a single registration for a Jr High deaf girl. Yes - this year we had a grand total of one deaf convention attendee. I went to work finding two interpreters with the availability and skills required. One attendee. Three volunteers. At first I wondered if the conference would ask us to make do with less than three volunteers and I found myself wondering how we would make that work. They didn't ask. It reminded me of the parable of the lost sheep. Our deaf attendee had other physical and cognitive challenges as well and I wondered how many people overlook her on a daily basis -- thinking it may not make a difference if she is included, naming their inaction on her behalf as somehow excusable. It's easy to do when someone cannot speak up for themselves, seek assistance, or even request acknowledgement... Not this week. This week a little girl who may be considered one of the least of these, a little lost sheep, was acknowledged, served, loved, and not by one, but three volunteers. The theme of convention was "love is a verb"; MCUSA was setting an example, putting their words into action. What an opportunity my team had as we all three were able to devote time and energy to showing this little girl a small piece of how God loves her, pulling her out of obscurity, and serving her as a valuable and cherished part of convention -- now that's a highlight.

*~Mary Schmidt*