



E-MANUAL



The Newsletter of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, MN

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Not sure what Giving Tuesday is? It’s a day dedicated to kicking off the Christmas giving season, a reminder that Christmas is about more than buying gifts. Give a gift of hope by supporting the work of MCC this Christmas season. Want to double your money? All gifts from first time donors will be matched dollar for dollar on Giving Tuesday. Donate online at mcc.org/giving-tuesday or send checks to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501 with ‘Giving Tuesday’ on the memo line.

Heroes Of Faith In Our Time A Cloud Of Witnesses Report

For Emmanuel Mennonite Church

Minneapolis, MN

by Philip Friesen

I was having my worst year of college, almost flunking a course in my major field and feeling somewhat guilty about being of no help at home. My sister, Jewell, at 16 years of age, was helping pay expenses with an after school job, and Dad was in bed after major back surgery, having spent 6 weeks lying immobile on what was then called a sandwich board, Mom also having been immobilized by crippling arthritis that made it impossible for her to even dress or bathe herself. During that time my sister shared responsibilities with our 80-year-old grandfather for cooking, cleaning, shopping and whatever had to be done at home to care for two helpless parents.

One day during this ongoing crisis a short caravan of automobiles drove up to the house loaded with frozen and canned farm produce and meat, and a check brought from Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Doland, South Dakota, an expression of love that greatly encouraged our family.



“Handstitched”

by Claire Swora

(from the September 9, 2001 edition of *E-Manual*)

Handstitched
And strong
The sinews of
My memories go back
As long as
I have known you
I felt you
were warm
And your love
Was handstitched
And strong.

In looking back through the newsletter files I found this poem, written by Claire Swora, Pastor Mathew’s and Becky’s oldest daughter and it seemed fitting to include in this last edition while Mathew is still our pastor.

Karen Schrock

Give Hope on Giving Tuesday, December 3!

Twenty years previous our Dad had been pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Doland. He and Mom shared their lives with this Hutterite congregation first during the years of depression bringing drought, grasshoppers, hunger, and cold, and then for the duration of World War II. The shared hardships of that period created bonds of friendships that followed the young pastor and wife for the rest of their life. (Both Dad and Mom along with two of our siblings are now buried in that church cemetery.) Twenty years later, this church had not forgotten the young pastor with his crippled wife who had shared life with them through adversity and trial, and their love overflowed with a gift, the memory of which left its mark on both my sister and me forever.

Dad had a legalistic bent typical of his generation that could be both blessing and curse. Two of his pet themes were tithing and Sabbath keeping, along with teaching children about God. Tithing was hard to preach to a starving congregation, but preach it, he did. There could be no compromise in proclaiming God's truth and God's law.

Young Enoch Hofer and his wife, members of Emmanuel church had a dairy herd. One year there was nothing for the cows to eat except wild onions, and the milk tasted horrible. First one cow died, then another, and another, until the last cow of the herd lay dying in the field. That evening, as they offered their prayers of worship and thanks to God, the two of them made a covenant together. Whatever income they had from that day forward, regardless of how small—the first 10% belonged to God as their tithe, and would be given for the service of God. When prayers were finished and they opened their eyes they saw a miracle outside the window. That dying cow had returned to the barnyard. It did not die. A dozen years or so later as a teenager, I drove tractor and loaded bales of hay for Enoch for just a couple of days, but from that short time with him, I'll never forget the gentleness and strength that for me seemed to shine from this man of great faith.

In the 1930's farmers brought fresh produce or meat to the pastor as it became available. It was one way to supplement the \$5 monthly support he

received from the Northern District Conference and whatever free will offerings people gave on Sunday. One of the first things Dad did when beginning his pastorate at Emmanuel was to end traditional family assessments for pastor salary and change to completely voluntary offerings. If the people couldn't or wouldn't give, then his own salary would not be paid, and that was just fine. He would not accept money given by legal obligation. While preaching the law, he still believed that obedience had to be completely voluntary without any form of coercion. God was his employer, not the church, and God would provide. That faith in God's provision was severely tested again and again, but God never failed to provide for his servant's necessities.

Dad also had this thing about Sabbath keeping. I believe his own relationship with his father had something to do with this obsession. I run the risk of making too much out of too little data, but two events in my Dad's childhood seem to explain what happened. The first event is a terrible beating he received from his father, after which his big sister, Kate, wiped off the blood and cleaned him up. He and Kate became close friends for life. Of all his twelve siblings, it seemed to me that Kate and her husband, Dave Schmidt, were among the closest in affection to my parents, despite the fact that Kate and Dave had no qualms about breaking the Sabbath or pretty much any other legality that bothered my Dad. Dad's preaching and the close relationship he seemed to have with these relatives who pretty much never followed his rules were a baffling mystery to me, but also, in a way, a powerful lesson in living together without the need to judge and condemn. Of course, Dad was never their pastor.

The second thing that fed into Dad's obsession with Sabbath keeping probably occurred more than once. On Sunday mornings my Grandpa Friesen had to stand and wait for his wife, eight sons, and five daughters to get out of the house and climb into the horse-drawn wagon for the trip to town. During that time he found little jobs to do, such as mending a hole in the fence to keep the animals in while everyone was in church. That,

to my Dad, was a sin. I suspect that from his own sense of betrayal by his father, Dad had determined he could and would do better at keeping the law than his father was doing. This is how I think I can explain, at least in part, Dad's obsession with Sabbath keeping.

In Dad's church, failure to keep the Sabbath could get his members into real trouble with their pastor. One Monday morning a car drove up to the uninsulated and creaky old rented house in the middle of a treeless, windswept field where Mom and Dad lived. A proud and happy face invited the pastor to inspect a gift he had brought. Opening the trunk of the car this farmer, whose name was Joe T. Tschetter, offered a trunk load of pheasants as a generous gift for the beloved pastor. Dad looked directly into Joe T.'s face and bluntly asked, "Were these pheasants shot on Sunday?" For Dad, to receive birds caught in violation of the Sabbath was equivalent to receiving stolen property. The time spent hunting was time stolen from God, because Sunday was for God and God alone. Humiliated and embittered, Joe T. took his gift and went home.

A day or so later, by chance or providence, Dad was scheduled to do some work for Joe T. As they worked together, according to Dad's report, he sensed there must be something bothering Joe T. (Duh!) His friend didn't seem happy to see him, as he usually would have been. Sizing up the situation Dad stopped what he was doing, looked directly at his friend and blurted out, "Joe, do you still love me?" According to Dad's report, suddenly the ice broke and the friendship was restored.

I think one has to understand something about Hutterite culture (Joe T.'s, that is) and Low German culture (my Dad's) to begin to make sense of this exchange. I would describe conversation in these two cultures as direct and blunt, almost to the point of brutality, sometimes quick to explode, but equally quick to forgive. That's how we get along! Exploding with anger is clearly not a Biblical virtue according to James 1:19, but "quick to forgive"—that is a work of grace, and it is for me a priceless treasure to realize how powerfully this ready forgiveness had become a cultivated grace in the culture of faith that is my heritage. I believe this habit of ready forgiveness can

be nourished in society when we exegete all of scripture and all of life through the lens of the cross. The grace of God's ready forgiveness can overcome all the faults to which we might otherwise be habituated, and I offer the witness of my family's experience as evidence that this is, in fact, the truth. When I feel angry with someone close to me, I try to remember just how much I do really love this person. It turns my mind back to relationship and away from my easy obsession with faults.



"The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us..."

Some Thoughts On Which To Reflect This Season

"God is on earth, He is among men, not in the fire nor amid the sound of trumpets; not in the smoking mountain, or in the darkness, or in the terrible and roaring tempest giving the Law, but manifested in the flesh, the gentle and good One dwells with those He condescends to make His equals! God is in the flesh, not operating from a distance, as did the prophets, but through Him human nature, one with ours, He seeks to bring back all mankind to Himself."

— St. Basil the Great "On the Incarnation"

“The Incarnation is the ultimate reason why the service of God cannot be divorced from the service of man.”

– *The Cost of Discipleship*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“No priest, no theologian stood at the cradle in Bethlehem. And yet all Christian theology has its origin in the wonder of all wonders, that God became man. ... *Theologia sacra* arises from those on bended knees who do homage to the mystery of the divine child in the stall. ... God revealed in the flesh, the God-man Jesus Christ, is the holy mystery which theology is appointed to guard. What a mistake to think that it is the task of theology to unravel God’s mystery, to bring it down to the flat, ordinary human wisdom of experience and reason! It is the task of theology solely to preserve God’s wonder as wonder, to understand, to defend, to glorify God’s mystery as mystery. This and nothing else was the intention of the ancient church when it fought with unflagging zeal over the mystery of the persons of the Trinity and the natures of Jesus Christ...”

– *Letter to the Finkenwalde Brothers Christmas 1939*
by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“The infancy narratives in the gospels are not about the baby Jesus but about men and women awaiting the triumphant Messiah, who were promised suffering instead. Rejection at the inn is followed by Simeon’s bitter prophecy, “This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also).” Herod’s menace fulfills for Matthew Jeremiah’s word about Rachel weeping for her children. The peasants for whom, legend says, St. Francis invented the manger scene knew full well that for a child to be born in a barn means for the mother — poverty, stench, and rejection by men, not sweet-smelling hay and cute woolly lambs at play. “Little baby Jesus,” clean, chubby, innocent — and in our art usually blond, Aryan — has nothing to do with the gospel. Not the innocence of the infant but the obedience of the person Jesus saves us.”

– “On the Meaning of Christmas,”
an essay by John Howard Yoder

DISCERNING THE SPIRIT'S CALL TO MISSION

by Pastor Mathew Swora

September, 2013

“As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you.”

John 20:21

I. THE RESULTS OF EMC'S MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENTS WILL BE:

Knowing Christ, as individuals and in community, and making him known through proclamation, peace-making and doing justice (Col. 1:28)

1. Cooperating with and contributing to the growth of God's kingdom and honor in human lives, relationships and communities (Matthew 13:31-33)
2. Proclaiming, working for, and demonstrating the ultimate reconciliation of all things in Christ (Eph. 1: 10) through ministries of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18-21)
3. Educating, empowering and equipping EMC members and attendees in discipleship and spiritual gifting for their roles in God's mission to the world (Eph. 4:11-12)
4. Working in partnership and relationship with other parts of Christ's body, the church (I Cor. 12:12ff.)
5. Growing the church of Jesus Christ locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, including Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and through Emmanuel Mennonite Church (Rev. 7:9)
6. Sustainable, strategic and mutually-reinforcing engagements in mission, “around the world and across the street.”

II. BEING SENT BY CHRIST, AS THE FATHER SENT HIM, WE GIVE OURSELVES AWAY:

- A. To God and God's Kingdom, through
 1. Prayerful devotion to God and to spiritual growth
 2. Following Christ in this life in discipleship
 3. Generous but careful financial stewardship and sacrificial giving
 4. Cultivating a culture of call to ministry according to every member's spiritual gifts

5. Partnership with other ministries, Mennonite and otherwise, so that the glory is God's alone

B. To each other, by cultivating a “contagious community” of love, hospitality and mutual edification and empowerment through the Holy Spirit

C. By drawing upon our gifts and experiences in:

1. evangelism
2. new church plants, e.g., Shalom Mennonite Church
3. leadership development
4. Biblical stewardship of God's Creation
5. peace and justice

III. EMC THEN COMMITS FOR THIS TIME TO THE FOLLOWING LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND MINISTRIES...

1. Mennonite Central Committee, primarily but not only through Twin Cities MCC Relief Sale
2. Urban Ventures
3. Growing Hope Farm
4. Local Conference Church Plants
 1. Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, WI
 2. Mennonite Worker, Minneapolis, MN
 3. Third Way, St. Paul, MN
 4. Hmong Mennonite Church
 5. Any future church plant that EMC discerns and affirms emerging from its own membership
5. Partners[s] in Peace and Justice Action and Advocacy (current and emerging see below*), with priority given to:
 1. Witness to Christ and His way of making peace
 2. Immigrants and immigration, as immigrants were significantly represented in EMC's beginning and its growth, as immigration concerns are personal matters to many at EMC, are current issues in the lives of members and friends, and relate to the mission partnerships named above.

3. Felt local needs for such things as food, shelter and rental assistance (e.g., through Community Emergency Services and Simpson Shelter), conflict transformation and communication, restorative justice, trauma awareness and healing, and alternatives to violence and military service, food justice and Biblical stewardship of Creation.
4. Partners and ministries of MCUSA and Central Plains Mennonite Conference, whenever possible, such as Mennonite Mission Network
5. Bringing congregational, denominational and theological resources from, or compatible with, our Anabaptist identity to our partnerships and to the felt needs of the community

IV. AND TO INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH PRIORITY TO....

1. ministries consonant with our mission and vision statements
2. partnership, support and consultation with MCUSA mission and service agencies
3. witness to Christ and his kingdom
4. leadership that emerges from among us
5. settings with connections to our local context, membership and ministries

Respectfully submitted
Pastor Mathew Swora and Missions & Service Commission

*Emerging options, according to the criteria above, for local partnerships include STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resiliency), a possible Partner In Mission status for Philip Friesen's ministry, Every Church A Peace Church, Minnesota Peace-Makers' Alliance, SALT (Somali Adult Literacy Training), Minnesota Peace-building Leadership Institute, depending on future exploration, and if and when they have “champions” from EMC.