Lent 2020: Show Us

By Deborah Wetherill

Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before we experience the celebrations of Easter. It is a time for prayer, contemplation, stillness, and repentance; a chance to slow down and breathe in the life of Jesus.

The theme for our Lenten series this year is "Show Us." As the Leader resource writers explain, "Jesus invites us into a deeper understanding and relationship with him. It is a long and difficult journey to the cross. If we pay careful attention, we see that Jesus wants to be revealed in new and deeper ways to his church."

During this season of Lent, we hope that each person, and the church as a whole, can gain a fuller understanding of who Jesus is and experience the stories of his life in a deeper way.

We began Lent this year with a joint Ash Wednesday worship service with our fellow Anabaptist congregation in Lombard, York Center Church of the Brethren. We look forward to worshipping with them again on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday (service details to follow).

Since Lent is often thought of in connection to a dry desert experience, we will be using a photo of Death Valley (taken by Betty Jean Franz, a friend of Linda O., and used with permission), as the focus of our visuals. We hope that both the beauty and the simplicity of this image will allow the admission of doubts and lamentations to feel welcome.

Another way that we hope to encourage reflection during our Lenten worship services is through a time of reflective response after the sermon. This will provide space to ponder what we have heard and how Jesus may be showing up in new ways in our lives.

During Lent, may our hearts and minds remain open as we say to Jesus, "Show us who you are and who we are as your followers."

Office Wing Renovation: Construction On the Horizon?

By Matt Lundin

Exciting news! The Office Wing Renovation Committee has been hard at work finalizing details with a contractor. Pending approval by the congregation on March 15, construction on our office wing improvement project will soon be underway.

The office wing is the heart of our church’s work during the week, and yet it is dated, drafty, and doesn’t function well for our current needs. The renovation will bring it up to code and up-to-date. The resulting space will be an efficient, comfortable place for our staff to work and welcome visitors.

The upgrade will also make our church building much more environmentally friendly, reducing our heating and cooling costs. New classroom and meeting spaces will provide quiet, meditative places for congregants and lay committees to gather, both during the week and on Sundays.

Last year, the congregation approved the project with an expense cap of $150,000, but bids have come in higher than those initial projections. On March 15, we’ll hold a congregational meeting; the motion up for approval is to "proceed with the Office Wing Renovation..."
are relying on PADS to find us another church partner, but this just makes it more important than ever that LMC provides strong leadership for the PADS program next year.

In order to continue this important ministry, we need more than a few people to share the work at the synagogue. Presently we are responsible for the fourth Sunday of September, November, January, March, and May. That is just five nights per year!

Depending on how many volunteers we get from the church that is found to partner with us, we will probably need 4-6 persons per shift between 5:30 and 9:00 PM (currently divided into two short shifts), plus one male and one female for each of the two overnight shifts.

“Many hands make light work,” so I would like to have more than the bare minimum of volunteers in order to prevent burnout and to have a list of subs to fill any last-minute vacancies.

Please give the PADS program your prayerful consideration. And join us during Sunday school in the sanctuary on March 1 as we consider the role we’ll continue to play in this vital ministry!

Pastoral Search Away!

Our search for a pastor of Christian Formation has begun in earnest. The congregation approved the eight-member Pastoral Search Committee (PSC), on February 2. The group has already held two meetings since then, including a meeting with Illinois Mennonite Conference executive minister David Miller.

Committee members are currently hard at work updating the congregational profile and planning for the Congregational and Pastoral Priorities survey (formerly called 20 Pastoral Tasks).

This survey clarifies what our needs and expectations are for our pastor of Christian Formation, and how this future pastor may use their time and energy. It helps identify general agreement between what the church is seeking and the priorities a pastor has for their ministry. PSC encourages everyone to complete a survey; they’ll send them out on March 8.

Members of the search committee are: Chad Harshbarger (Chair), Chris Ewert, Elise Ewert, Richard Gehring, Cynthia Kimball, Melissa Miller, Jonathan Orjala, and Hilary Rhodes. Feel free to contact any one of them with your questions or concerns. —KVR

Office Wing Renovation

(Continued from page 1)

Renovation Project with a project cap of $250,000.

Pending that approval, you will soon have the opportunity to support this renovation through your financial contributions. Look for a detailed brochure with information about the project soon, and prayerfully consider how you can support it.

This renovation project is not simply about a space. More importantly, it is about supporting our church’s mission and the daily work of our church staff long into the future. If you have any questions, feel free to contact any member of the Office Wing Fundraising Committee: Matt Lundin, Amanda Law, Paul Reimer, and Bart Miller.

If you have a particular question or concern about the March 15 motion, please contact any member of the Office Wing Renovation Committee or the Administration Commission.

Vital Signs March 2020
**Sharing Your Ministries of Passion with LMC**

**By Dave Martin**

Are there mission programs or ministries you feel passionate about? Do you believe God is calling LMC to extend aid to a specific organization or cause? LMC’s matching grant program was envisioned as a way that we, the LMC community, can lend financial support to those organizations serving God’s work in the world.

Here’s how it works. Each year, groups comprised of at least three LMC regular attenders can submit an application for a matching grant to support a mission that they are passionate about. If Mission Commission approves their application, the groups then raise funds for their mission project, receiving an amount between $500 and $2,000 from the church to match the funds that they raised.

In 2019, the third year of LMC’s Matching Grant program, we awarded six grants. They funded a pool house refurbishment and general program support at Camp Menno Haven, fresh produce for the camp through Hungry World Farm, and program support at Ten Thousand Villages.

The last two grants were a donation to the CROP Walk, supporting local organizations combating hunger, and a gift to MC USA in support of the Mennonite Piano Concerto event at Menno-Con19 (the biennial convention).

What is the stirring of the Spirit calling LMC to support in 2020? Some new possibilities might include: local food pantries, DuPage PADS, Mennonite Central Committee, refugee resettlement, the People’s Resource Center, local peace organizations, Mennonite Disaster Service, Israel-Palestine peace initiatives, or Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Where do you hear God calling LMC this year?

**Important Dates**

- **April 1**: Grant applications are due.
- **May 15**: Mission Commission informs groups of their application status.
- **November 1**: Matching funds are due to the church.
- **December 31**: Each group must submit a Vital Signs article and share in a “moment in mission” time by this date.

Feel free to contact a Mission Commission member if you have questions: Dave Martin (chair), Sharon Ewert, and Jeff Yoder.

---

**Discerning with Our Fellow Mennonite Congregations**

**By Richard Gehring**

On February 15, five LMCers travelled to Camp Menno Haven for the annual business meeting of the Illinois Mennonite Conference (IMC). For Pastor Barb and me, this was our first opportunity to participate in an Illinois conference gathering. Other LMC delegates included Cynthia K. and Lyle and Carol B.

It was a full day as we were asked to process and vote on two separate proposals, brought from different conference leadership teams, seeking clarity on how to respond to individuals in same-sex relationships. The proposals were similar on several points, but also contained significant differences.

As one might expect with such an emotionally charged topic, the discussion was tense at times. Delegates asked many questions to clarify what each proposal meant, and the implications if it were adopted.

Based on comments, it became clear that one of the proposals had stronger support than the other. In the end, delegates approved the proposal brought by the Church Life Team (CLT), the body that oversees licensing and ordination for pastors, chaplains, and other church leaders.

The CLT proposal calls for “member congregations and leaders to commit to a year of study, to hear Scripture and the Spirit from each other...

(Continued on page 4)
Illinois Conference Meeting
(Continued from page 3)

other’s perspective, to explore areas of common ground, and understand positions with which we disagree.” In doing so, it affirms the “freedom and responsibility” of local congregations to make their own decisions regarding congregational membership and whether pastors are allowed to officiate same-sex weddings. And during this year of study, “IMC will neither revoke nor confer credentials on pastors in same-sex marriages.”

I was pleased by several facets of the meeting. I was impressed with the respectful way that most participants engaged in discussion; the vast majority of comments and questions were thoughtful and demonstrated a genuine interest in being faithful. I was happy that a proposal for additional budget funds to help facilitate the year of study passed unanimously.

I was deeply touched by sharing from Laura, a chaplain whose marriage to another woman has been at the center of the current controversy. In the end, I believe that it was the leading of the Spirit that led us to approve the CLT proposal.

At the same time, much of the experience disappointed me. As a newcomer to the conference, I was sorry that there was so little time to interact with other pastors and delegates in order to build relationships. I was saddened that only about half of the IMC congregations were represented at the meeting—especially that none of the congregations that worship in Spanish felt that it was safe for them to travel so far given the current reality of life for immigrants. And I grieve that some congregations will likely leave the conference over a movement toward broader welcome for LGBTQ persons.

The passage of the proposal does not represent the end of a process. It includes a commitment “to active listening and learning together, in expectant prayer that God’s Spirit will show us a way forward that demonstrates God’s work among us.”

I invite us all to such active and expectant prayer. Pray for our conference leaders, including Lyle, who serves on the Missional Leadership Team, and Carol, who chairs the Gifts Discernment Team. Pray for our congregation as we work to discern our own “freedom and responsibility” in relating with LGBTQ persons. And pray that God’s Spirit will indeed show us all how we might best show the unconditional love of Christ to one another and to the world.

Administration Commission Update

By Rebecca Kuhlmann Taylor

It has been a busy few months for the Administration Commission and we covered lots of ground at our January 22 meeting. Here are some highlights of our activities:

• We recommended budget surplus allocations to key church areas to use our 2019 surplus wisely.

• New custodial service started and is going well; we are implementing ways to ensure quality work without overburdening our office staff.

• Various repairs were completed or planned. These included patching the lower hallway hole in the wall (thanks Chad and Norm!), and firming up concrete and railway repair at the parking lot door for the spring.

• Our Office Wing Renovation Committee facilitated tours and dialogue with four contractors during the contractor bid process. This resulted in three bids, which the committee analyzed and discussed at length.

• We began planning to relocate our office staff once the office wing renovation is underway.

• We updated the guidance for several designated funds to better articulate their use and rules.

The next few months are sure to be just as exciting for the Administration Commission! Look for continued updates along the way.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 8: 38-39

LMC Verse of 2019-2020
Illinois Mennonite Relief Sale

By Sharon Ewert

The upcoming annual Illinois Mennonite Relief Sale on March 20 and 21 in Bloomington will be a special one. Not only will there be the traditional quilt auction, Dutch Market, Friday evening chicken dinner, and Saturday pancake breakfast, but this year there will be a big celebration in honor of Mennonite Central Committee’s 100 years of ministry in the name of Christ in over 50 countries around the world. Proceeds from this sale—and many others across the country—provide ongoing support to the important work of MCC.

As a church, we have been invited to participate in several ways. First, help to spread the word to family and friends. There are brochures and flyers at the church for you to take and distribute.

Second, plan to go down to experience the sale and help support the work of MCC. You’ll have a chance to sample borscht and zweiback, grilled pork sandwiches, ice cream, and homemade pie. [Editor’s note: don’t forget the homemade donuts!] You’ll also have a chance to bid in the auction or purchase items from the many booths throughout the sale.

Third, consider if you have anything you might donate. They would be happy to receive baked goods for the Dutch Market, quilts and comforters for the auction, handmade arts and crafts for babies and children, toys, plants, and other items for the general auction.

Norm and I will be donating a dollhouse. If you have something you’d like to contribute, please let us know; we would be happy to deliver it for you. But even better, take it yourself and experience this unique Mennonite event.

Supporting the Deaf Children’s School in Peru

By Nina Balmaceda

The LMC family and Peace and Hope International are joining efforts to support the Deaf Children’s School in Nueva Cajamarca, in the Amazon region of Peru.

This Peace and Hope program teaches sign language to deaf children and youth, their families, public school teachers, medical personnel, and the police. The program also leads prevention efforts against sexual and other forms of abuse against deaf people. It advocates for appropriate public policies to promote their inclusion as equal citizens in the community, and the affirmation of the fundamental rights of all children, youth, and adults with different abilities.

Please join us for a fundraising luncheon in the LMC Fellowship Hall on Sunday, April 5. Enjoy delicious food and Peruvian music, and learn about the school’s important work.

There is still time to donate food dishes for the luncheon. Just contact Roberto at rchia@peaceandhopeinternational.org. Everyone is welcome!

Looking Ahead at LMC

- April 5: Palm Sunday; Peace and Hope fundraiser
- Apr 9: Maundy Thursday service
- Apr 10: Good Friday service
- Apr 12: Easter Sunday, including early service and breakfast
- May 3: Congregational meeting, potluck
- May 24: Hosting PADS
- May 31: Pentecost Sunday
- June 7: Switch to summer schedule; worship begins at 9:30 AM
- September 12-13: Church retreat

March Nursery Schedule

1 Mary, Bart
8 Paul, Ken G
15 Cherith & Phoebe, Caroline
22 Melissa, Jeremy S.
29 Chelsea, Pam

A LMC small group Christmas gathering, including Nina and Roberto in the middle. Katharine wishes she had sent this out with the small group survey!

Vital Signs
Editor: Katharine Richert

March 2020; Volume 38, #2
Deadline for April Issue: March 24, 2020