

# Vital Signs

*Of Lombard Mennonite Church*



LMC game night on February 17.

## Journey with Christ to the Cross

—Joe Hayward

More than a third of what we read about in the gospels takes place during the final week of Jesus' life. It is fitting, then, that we have several special events to mark this important time. The week begins with Palm Sunday on March 24, which will feature a children's palm procession.

On Good Friday on March 29, we'll hold a combined Seder and Good Friday Tenebrae service. Anyone who wishes to help cook in any capacity from cutting, stirring, or pouring can join us between noon and 6 PM. The Seder will begin at 6:30 PM. The Tenebrae service will start around 8:30 PM and last about an hour. Please sign up by contacting the church office if you're planning to attend so we know how many participants to prepare for.

Our Easter morning celebration will begin with a special early service at 8:30 AM, followed by a potluck community breakfast. The 10:00 AM worship service will include communion as well as the joyous flowering of the cross.

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## Spring This Year

—Barbara Krehbiel Gehring

Spring seems to have arrived early this year with above-average temperatures and little green things

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poking out of the dirt. It's Chicagoland, so we could get another hard round of winter, but it feels like spring as I write this.

At LMC this spring, I see many possibilities for building connection, community, and care. In addition to our usual Sunday activities, opportunities include shared meals, recreational activities, and the extra experiences surrounding Holy Week and Easter. They also include the work of discernment.

We'll gather for a number of meetings over the next couple months to discuss and discern LGBTQ+ inclusion. I have heard voices eager for these discussions for a variety of reasons, and from those anxious or even dreading these discussions for a variety of reasons. Good discernment requires a high level of commitment and involvement in terms of both time and vulnerability. That's a big ask in a world that already demands so much of us. But as any athlete or actress will tell you, it is only through significant commitment that satisfying rewards flourish.

Lent arrives in spring. One Lenten practice I want to suggest to myself and to anyone willing is to enter into each LMC discussion with the attitude that this is an opportunity to build connection, community, and care. I hope developing this habit over Lent will make it a practice I hold for much longer than 40 days.



Ash Wednesday



## Introducing our Discernment Consultant

—Melissa Miller and Sharon Ewert, for the Discernment Planning Team

We are very pleased that Janet E. G. has agreed to be our consultant for our discernment process related to LGBTQ+ inclusion. You will have a chance to meet her on March 3, when she will be preaching and helping to facilitate discussions

at LMC, but we thought you might like to know a little about her before she comes. Here are some highlights from her extensive experience.

Janet grew up in Paxton, IL. An experience as an exchange student in Denmark during her senior year of high school especially influenced her. She went on to earn a BA in English from the University of Illinois, an MA in Germanic Languages and Literatures, and a PhD in Scandinavian studies at Harvard.

Janet had a long career in academia, including as a humanities faculty member, a dean, a vice-president for academic affairs, and a university president. She also

provided start-up leadership for the Wang Center for International Programs at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

After leaving academia, Janet felt God calling her to ministry. She earned an MDiv from AMBS in 2008, and served as lead pastor at First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana from 2008-2016.



*Another scene from the Game Night.*

Janet writes that her “passions include the biblical witness for peace and justice, empowering women leaders, and intercultural and interfaith bridge-building.” These days she is especially interested in racial justice advocacy and support for the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery.

She currently works as a spiritual director, a role that certainly lends itself to leading congregational discernment. Janet said the following in an interview for Mennonite Church USA in 2012: “I learned a lot in academic leadership about the importance of communication. The importance of listening. The importance of slowing down when things heat up. That’s one of the paradoxes that provide a faithful way to walk with others and reach collaborative decisions.”

In her free time, Janet enjoys the performing arts, reading, hiking, travel, and cooking for friends. She lives in Urbana with her husband Mark.

The Discernment Planning Team has already enjoyed working with Janet and has found her very helpful. We think you will, as well.



*Menno Haven's Family Camp.*

## Apply for a Matching Grant!

—Rebecca Huff

The Mission Commission is eager to support your giving to ministries that are doing faithful and important work locally and globally! Are there organizations or initiatives you would like our congregation to financially support in 2024? If so, consider applying for a matching grant through the LMC matching grant program.

Each year, the Mission Commission invites groups of at least three LMC regular attendees to submit a grant application to increase their support of a local/ international ministry or organization that aligns with LMC’s mission and values. Accepted applicant groups then raise funds for the ministry they are supporting.

These funds are matched by a grant (between \$500-2,000) from the LMC mission budget.

In 2023, we awarded matching grants to support the good and creative work of Ten Thousand Villages Glen Ellyn, Radical Hospitality, Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center, and Corazones Conectados (Hearts Connected). The Mission Commission is eager to extend your giving and invites you to prayerfully consider an organization you would like to extend financial support to in 2024.



[APPLY NOW](#)

Applications for matching grants are due by April 1, 2024. Please feel free to contact Rebecca or Jamie Huff (LMC Lay Ministers of Mission) if you have any questions about the LMC matching grant program.



*Mcc.org.*

## Comforter Knotting Bash

—Mona Richards

Do you know how to tie a square knot? Would you like to learn? Would you like to help provide comfort to a person facing hardship somewhere in our world? Then join us for a Comforter Knotting Bash on Saturday, March 9. We'll enjoy a simple meal of soup and bread at 5:30 PM, then knot from 6-8:30ish.

To make a comforter, you sew together scrap material for a top, then add a center of batting and a piece of material for backing. Once laid out together, pinned, and stitched, thread tied in square knots holds the three parts together. That's where you come in on March 9.

LMC is just the first stop on an international journey for our finished comforters. We'll drop them off at the MCC Depot in Goshen, IN. MCC will then send them to people in vulnerable situations around the globe, places like Syria, Guatemala, Iraq, and Ukraine. The blankets provide not only warmth but a tangible reminder to the recipients that we have not forgotten them.

Come join us for fun fellowship doing a project that will benefit others around the world!



*Knotting comforters at Menno Haven, 2021.*

4; March 2024



*The downstairs Sunday school wing, a space crying out for a reno.*

## Update on Improvement Projects

— Jeremy Kropf

As our church facilities age, it is important to maintain the property and to adapt to our changing use patterns. We have taken considerable time to

understand the priorities of the congregation as well as what the property requires.

Unlike recent renovations, which were in somewhat self-contained areas, we intend our next proposal to encompass three priorities that overlap, sometimes in surprising ways. These are (1) the parking lot and water handling, (2) the education wing, and (3) energy efficiency. We have design teams for each of these areas and they will work in parallel for several months before gathering with the Administration Commission to determine an integrated project scope.

Jeremy Kropf leads the parking lot design team, Carlen Sellers the education wing team, and Paul Reimer the energy efficiency team. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Some of our meetings will be open to anyone interested, with virtual attendance often possible. Look for information in the weekly e-news.

A few weeks ago, we had an initial conversation with architect Tony Ronning. One of the next steps, especially for the parking lot, will be to meet with the Village of Lombard building department to discuss our project goals and to learn about the Village's requirements. I am looking for one or two more people to join the parking lot team. Please talk to me if you would be interested in joining.

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## Illinois Mennonite Relief Sale

The 66th Annual Illinois Mennonite Relief Sale is set for Saturday, March 16 at the Interstate Center in Bloomington. The pancakes and sausage breakfast opens at 6:00 AM; the grand auction—including the quilt auction—kicks off at 8:30 AM.



If you're interested in baked goods, including an array of pies or meat and cheese, the Dutch Market and the Butcher Shop open at 7:00. Other booths include a variety of food offerings, children's items, plants, and other arts and handicrafts. All proceeds of the sale go to support the work of MCC around the world.—Sharon E.