



The Midweek Wednesday
2020

Mennonite Church of Normal

May 6,

Worship

Join us for worship each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom. This Sunday's worship service focuses on John 14:1-14: "You will do even greater things, now that I am going back to the Father" (v. 12). How can this be? Jesus was the "before" picture. Jesus said the "after" picture of the Body of Christ, taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit, would be even better. Jesus' resurrection power enables MCN to do "Greater Things." Additional lectionary texts: Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; and 1 Peter 2:2-10.

Milepost 127 Looking down the road, continued

"...for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

In our lifetimes we can recall many crises which brought systemic injustice and racism to the front page. And after a week or two of lament, society quickly forgot, and status quo prevailed. COVID-19 is a crisis with potential for a different outcome.

The "a lot of less for a long time" of this crisis, is an invitation for our society to restructure its values. There will not be funds available in the national economy for all the things many enjoyed in the past.

Society will have very difficult choices to make. But I believe equal access to

quality health care and education, will win out. Care for the environment will win out. Adequate salaries for many in essential services who have been neglected (day care, nursing homes, etc.), will win out. To do that, many less essential, but popular areas of society, will have much less of the pie. Perhaps the enduring campaign adage, “Are you better off today, than four years ago?” will fade, and be replaced with “Is the nation better off today, than four years ago?” Depending on my financial status, what’s best for the nation can be quite different from what’s best for me.

MCN is already advocating for such societal re-ordering, in providing a mechanism for direct funding to immigrants who have been left out of government assistance. But what are the implications for congregational life, if the tectonic plates in society are shifting beneath us? We too, face significant re-ordering of congregational priorities, because MCN will also have “a lot of less for a long time.” What essential services have been undervalued within MCN? What systemic issues result in some feeling marginalized? What available resources are under-utilized, or not even known?

The Apostle Paul makes it sound simple in writing to believers experiencing extreme persecution, in Phil. 2:5: “Just think like Jesus thought.” But Paul doesn’t leave us with that seemingly impossible challenge. A few verses later (v. 13, paraphrased): he reminds us that God is enabling us to desire what God desires. We simply need to be aware of God at work within us. Jesus taught his disciples on the night he was betrayed (John 14:12): the Holy Spirit will make this all possible. -Gary Martin



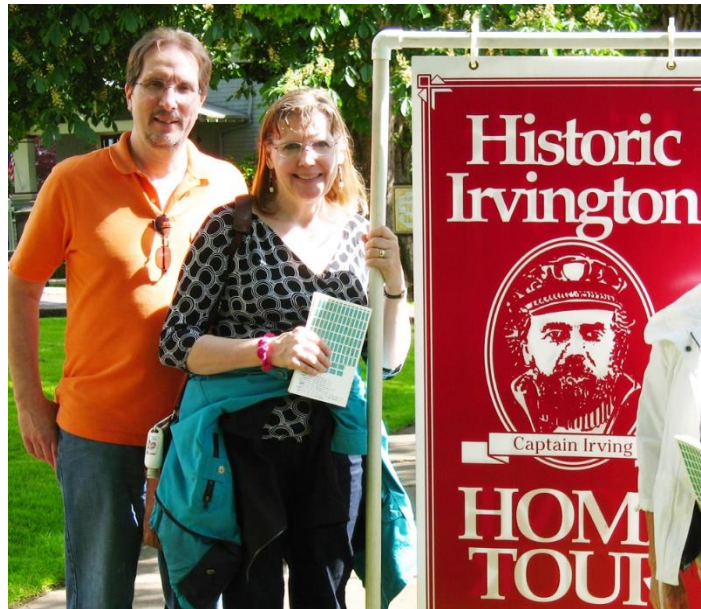
MCN Social Hour Every Wednesday

Every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. the Mennonite Church of Normal will gather via Zoom to socialize with each other. Leroy Loepp said he wishes he could make great coffee for everyone. You will have to provide your own coffee, tea, hot chocolate or whatever but please connect to Zoom and connect with each other. Experiment with different views **but gallery view is probably best**. Mute your microphone except when you are talking. If you are on a laptop hold down the spacebar while you are talking. The host will break you up into smaller groups to allow more conversation, if needed.

Topic: MCN Social Hour

Time: Every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. Central Time

MCN Household Profile



Mike Ball & Laurie Vial

We have come to appreciate Laurie's expertise in keeping things running at MCN during these unusual times but may know little else about her. You are about to learn why we are fortunate to have access to her business experience and organizational skills.

Laurie, raised on a grain and livestock farm north of Pontiac, IL, was active in 4-H and Z-Club, a high school service club. She developed an early interest in the field of communication and was editor of the high school paper and yearbook.

At the University of Illinois Laurie majored in agricultural communications. Her first job was working in Special Projects at The Pantagraph including a videotext service (a precursor to the internet) for several years. When The Pantagraph bought The LeRoy Journal, Laurie was promoted to editor of that newspaper.

Laurie then worked for Evergreen FS. Next she established her own communications business while also engaged in farming for the next 13 years. She would farm in the spring and fall, and free lance in summer and winter.

Her father, a major influence in her life because of his commitment to social justice, owned a farm management business. The plan was that Laurie and her older brother would take over that business after shadowing their Dad for a few years. That all changed when her father unexpectedly died young and she and her brother took over the business with little training. To manage those responsibilities Laurie also earned a real estate license. At that point she was running a farm management business, owned her own business, was involved in real estate sales, still farming and was a mom to two children. Talk about multi-tasking!

As adults, her daughter is a communications manager at the University of Illinois with the Institute for Genomic Biology, and her son is a swine veterinarian who lives in Bloomington. Both plan to marry in 2020.

When their stepfather (Emily Petri's grandfather) died suddenly, Laurie helped her brother farm their family farm for two years. She also did green energy

consulting for the Presbyterian churches in northwest Illinois. She became the executive director of the Illinois Conference of Churches, the ecumenical body of 14 denominations. And she worked part-time at the U of I plant sciences department. She loved that work for eight years, but it ended due to financial cutbacks. We are fortunate she accepted an offer to serve as MCN's office manager!

Laurie lives with her husband, Mike Ball, in Champaign. He is retired from Kraft Foods. They belong to St. Luke Union Church in Bloomington and have lots of friends in Bloomington-Normal. For ecological reasons they make the trip to church here only every other week.

Laurie is passionate about preservation of buildings, is a member of the Old House Society, and has known Ron Ropp for over 25 years through the Barn Keepers group. She and Mike have lovingly restored their 1919 craftsman style house to its original splendor. Only the front porch is left to do.

Fun activities include camping in a pop-up camper, hiking, kayaking, and long-distance biking with Mike. Her love of travel takes her to Europe every year. She and her daughter traveled Italy by themselves by train. A special memory is a visit to the Vatican where she stood about 20 feet from Pope Francis. Laurie, we're glad you are here!



This Week at MCN

Wednesday

7:30 p.m. Social Hour (Zoom)

Thursday

6:30 a.m. Next Man Bible Study (Zoom)

Saturday

3 p.m. Worship Rehearsal (Zoom)

Sunday

9:30 a.m. Worship (Zoom)

10:35 a.m. After Worship Options (Zoom)

Tuesday

5:30 p.m. Church Board (Zoom)



Since the last issue:

--Joe Culpepper said 22 MCN members volunteered at the Midwest Food Bank on May 1. He said it was joy working together again and that they practiced safety guidelines as much as possible. They loaded 29 pallets of food in two hours.

--Louise Reeser also shared a joy that seeing Baltimore orioles and hummingbirds reminded her that God is right here with us.

Then and Now

By Ron Ropp

By the time dad had started farming the Great Depression hit and with his father on his death bed, the sheriff came to serve notice to foreclose on the family farm. With consideration for the situation the foreclosure was withdrawn. But dad spent many years with that debt, as did many others. Some years he was only able to pay interest on the loan because of bad crops or bad prices. Before he was 40 the Second World War began, drawing in family, neighbors and friends. Some of them died.

Dad and mom were born in 1905 and 1904 and before they were teenagers we were at war (1914-1918). As the war ended the world was hit by the Spanish Influenza. 500 million people were infected and between 20 to 50 million people died. Dad was 13. He, along with his mother and brother and sister all became ill with temperatures up to 103. Several in the area died. There were no drugs, respirators, or intensive care units, only loving family and neighbors to give care at risk to themselves.

This pandemic is like nothing we have ever experienced and has us in a state of anxiety with fear driving our daily activities. So many other things like terrorism, war and economic fears create a climate of panic. It might be helpful if we could be reminded of what our ancestors went through to bring us to who and where we are today.

Faith, hope and love sustained them, their families and friends. We are blessed by their legacy.

Prayer for the Week

May we who are merely inconvenienced
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
remember those who are most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
remember those who must choose between
preserving their health or paying their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children
when their schools close
remember those who have no options.

May we who have had to cancel our trips
remember those who have no place to go.

May we who are losing our investments,
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time, when we can not physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us each find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

Amen.

By [Cameron Wiggins Bellm](#)

Submitted by Wayne Hochstetler



Zoom

If you need training or help call Laurie at 309-452-6622. The following four people have also volunteered to help Ross Hershberger, 309-660-0710; Lydia Hedberg, 309-660-9232, Terry Wiebenga, 309-452-6159 and Glenn Wilson 309-310-5468.

Staff Contact Info

Virtual Office Hours M-F 9 to 4

Deadline for Midweek items is noon M-W-F

Gary Martin, Transitional Pastor gmartin5@comcast.net cell 574.238.5475.

Ron Ropp, Pastor of Visitation is providing pastoral care for those who are ill or hospitalized. Barry and Marge Weaver and Wayne and Lois Hochstetler are assisting with visitation with those in care facilities or homebound. This care will be done by phone calls.

Laurie Vial, Office Manager; church@normalmennonite.org or 309.452.6622 will forward to the new church cell phone 217.255.2119.

Bryan Oyer, custodian

Lauren Satchwell, Youth Ministry Leader; satchwell.lauren@gmail.com or 309.830.6827.

Our Members in Care Facilities

Please remember in your prayers, or with cards, the following members in care facilities:

Ruth Marquis

Heritage Manor, Apt 111
700 E. Walnut St.
Bloomington, IL. 61701

Jo Ropp

McLean County Nursing Home, Apt 451
901 N Main St.
Normal, IL 61761

Evelyn Bertsche

McLean County Nursing Home, Apt 329
901 N. Main St
Normal, IL 61761

Deborah Spacek

Evergreen Village, Apt 292
1701 Evergreen Blvd
Normal, IL 61761

Roy Jiles

Welbrook at Bloomington, Apt 122
1402 Leslie Drive
Bloomington, IL 61704

Joyce Schmucker

Luther Oaks Assisted Living, Apt 2110
601 Lutz Rd
Bloomington, IL 61704-8624

Lloyd Combs
Martin Health Center, Apt C130
2025 E. Lincoln Ave
Bloomington, IL 61701

Voice of the Day

We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbors' safety. - Barbara Glasson

Today's Chuckle

A man goes to the doctor with a swollen foot. After a careful examination, the doctor gives the man a pill big enough to choke a horse.

"I'll be right back with some water," the doctor tells him.

The doctor has been gone a while and the man loses patience. He hobbles out to the drinking fountain, forces the pill down his throat and gobbles down water until the pill clears his throat. He hobbles back into the examining room.

Just then the doctor comes back with a bucket of warm water, "Okay, after the tablet dissolves, soak that foot for about 20 minutes."

Reminder of MCN Building Policy

The Church Board reminds everyone that Shelter in Place in Illinois has been extended through the end of May. The MCN building remains closed. No one is to enter the building without permission from the Church Board. The Board thanks the congregation for adhering to this policy.

MCN Forms Another Partnership to Help

MCN and B-N Welcoming have established a fund to help undocumented families who are not eligible for government assistance or stimulus funds. The Outreach Committee will approve and distribute monies from this account according to requests that come from B-N Welcoming for rent or other larger monthly expenses. They will be paid to the vendor.

Helen Brandon shared that many families are at risk because they are not able to advocate for themselves due to a lack of documentation and fear. She said that many people who would like to donate money to support undocumented families in our community. Funds would come from the community and possibly from church attendees/members.

Community members donating to the fund will not receive a tax letter. This program was approved by the Church Board on a six-month trial. To donate send a paper check to the church with B-N Welcoming in the memo line. Please write a separate check from other giving. You may also donate on the church website using

the Give tab. If you choose the checking account option there is a tiny fee taken. If you give by credit card almost 3% is taken so you could consider covering that in your donation.