

# Vital Signs

*Of Lombard Mennonite Church*



Photo by Paul R.

## Jesus' Faithful Model of Time

—Richard Gehring

"I'm so busy!" It's a common refrain that we hear these days. From students to families with children to retirees, it seems that everyone has so much on their schedules.

Such busyness has a detrimental effect on our spiritual lives. A survey done a few years ago found that nearly half of Christians agreed with the statement, "I struggle to find community with other Christians since the pace of my life is so busy." An almost identical number said that they "often get distracted when trying to spend time with God."

We tend to think that we don't have time to stop and reflect—that we won't get enough done if we're not always doing something. Yet the result of our busyness is that we rarely take time to focus on what is really important. We neglect to spend time with each other, and with the One who gave us the gift of time in the first place.

Jesus provides a more faithful model. Throughout his ministry, Jesus regularly took time to spend time with God in prayer. He then spent most of his time with the small group of disciples who constituted his community of faith. Ultimately, he was able to do all the things that he did because he bothered to take the time to focus on what was truly important.



# Four Three More Years!

—Sharon Ewert

It seems hard to believe that Nathan has been at LMC for three years already, but such will be the case in July. You will recall that he started in the middle of Covid (I can still remember interviewing him outside on the back lawn).



During his time here, the Review Team (consisting of the PCRC Chair and Co-Moderators), have used several means to solicit feedback from the congregation, the lead pastors, and Nathan himself. We have affirmed strengths, helped to identify growth areas for Nathan, and suggested strategies for him as he continues to grow in his role as Pastor of Christian Formation.

When Nathan arrived at LMC, Illinois Mennonite Conference licensed him for a two-year period. Often a new pastor requests that the congregation recommend him for ordination at the end of the licensing period. Because Nathan was engaging in personal discernment about future ordination at the time, the church asked for renewal of his licensing for another two years.



As a part of this process, the Ministry Team also voted to extend him another three-year contract. The next step will be mutual discernment about ordination, sometime within the next year. We are grateful for the many gifts Nathan brings to the church and want to encourage him as he continues to grow and discern.

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# Keep Up the Good Giving

—Jeremy S.

I am happy to report that we've had good giving to our General Fund so far this year, with donations totaling almost \$120,000. That is over \$10,000 more than last year at this time. Our net income is \$7,881.

Thank you to those who have given so generously to the General Fund in 2024. In the coming months, we can help our church financially by being consistent givers.



April game night.

## **Profit & Loss as of 4/30/24.**

General Fund Giving	\$119,973
Other Income	<u>1,422</u>
Total Revenues	121,395
Total Expenses	113,514
Net Income	<b>\$7,881</b>

We offer several donation methods that make it easy to give to LMC on a regular basis. The First Fruits Giving program allows for easy withdrawals from a bank account. The church can also receive donations through Zelle or PayPal, either from your bank account or a mobile giving app. We will be adding a Stripe option soon, as well. Please keep LMC's finances in your prayers. Thank you!



## Set a Course for Changemakers Lab!

—Nathan Perrin

Vacation Bible School is just around the corner on June 3-7, 9-11 AM. I'm excited to share a special week with the kids learning about the Gospel and having fun together. Our theme is Changemakers Lab from MennoMedia, focusing on Anabaptist values of peacemaking and learning how to make a difference. We'll also enjoy games, delicious snacks, and fun artsy activities together.

As usual, we can't pull off a week of VBS without volunteers. I'm open to wherever you'd like to contribute, be it teaching, leading games, providing snacks, donating money to help cover costs, etc. Youth helpers (middle school age and up) have made a vital contribution to our VBS programs over the years; let's keep the streak going!

Registration is now open; please sign up ASAP if you'd like to come. Tell your friends and family too— a few folks from other churches will be joining us and the more the merrier. The deadline to register is May 23.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions about registering, volunteering, or other kid logistics. VBS is a blast for kids and a great invitation into a larger faith journey.





Photo by Bob E.

## Register Early for Church Retreat and Save!

—Mona R.

Do you enjoy being outdoors? Do you long for a weekend away from the hustle and bustle of suburbia? Do any of these things refresh your soul: hiking, boating on a lake, chatting on a hayrack ride, tackling a climbing wall, or eating s'mores? Then reserve your spot today for our fun-filled church retreat weekend on September 7 and 8 at Camp Menno Haven. Register by June 2 and save \$5!

Gathering for a fall retreat at beautiful Camp Menno Haven—located about 115 miles west, near Princeton, IL—is a longstanding LMC tradition. You pay for your lodging and a \$5 per person meal contribution; LMC covers the rest. There are numerous lodging options: hotel room (\$162), sharing a dorm room with 4-5 bunk beds (\$35/person), campsite (\$25), RV site (\$35), or you can stay offsite and pay a day use fee (\$11/person; \$33/family). You can sign up with the button; the registration link will also make cameos in LMC communications throughout May.

We look forward to experiencing 231 acres of God's sanctuary with you. For more information, see Evan or Mona R.

[SIGN UP](#)



## Working Together to Welcome the Stranger

—Laura L. and Celine W.

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared on [bridgefolk.net](http://bridgefolk.net), a movement of like-minded Mennonites and Catholics.*

The Texas government began bussing asylum-seeking migrants from Texas to Chicago in August 2022. By May 2023, shelters were at capacity and authorities were placing migrants in Chicago police stations, including a station near Oak Park.

I (Celine) joined a volunteer team that quickly responded with blankets,

clothes, toiletries, and snacks. Having recently learned a new word (NAG-VOCATE), I arranged for those we call our “new neighbors” to take showers at the closed rectory of a Catholic parish. We recruited volunteers and supply donations from local Catholic parishes.

As the summer progressed into the fall, the number of migrants at the station swelled from a few dozen to almost two hundred. Our new neighbors needed more: a wider variety of clothes and toiletries, a full breakfast, and, as the weather turned cooler, coats and blankets.

My (Laura’s) heart was aching for the migrant men, women, and children struggling to survive in Chicago without adequate housing and resources. Volunteering to help with the relief work of the Oak Park Catholic Parishes seemed like a no-brainer. When our Mission Commission shared that assisting asylum-seekers was a high priority for LMC, I suggested we partner with the Oak Park efforts.

Working with our Catholic brothers and sisters was a natural fit because both our traditions place a strong emphasis on compassionate service and justice. The Migrant Ministry became our Advent giving project and the congregation enthusiastically responded, donating \$2950 and piles of warm coats, clothing, boots, and blankets. Several individuals volunteered.

The Catholic Parishes of Oak Park provide the space for what is now known as the Migrant Ministry at Centro San Edmundo, but the effort is beautifully interdenominational. Volunteers come from a wide variety of faith traditions, including those of no religious affiliation. We have served thousands of our asylum-seeking brothers and sisters, and have found joy and fellowship with the other volunteers.



Mennonites and Catholics—we are cut from the same faith-motivated, hope-filled social justice cloth!

*Left: Good Friday gathering. Photo by Kristin C.*

## Remembering and Mourning The Lives Lost in Gaza

—Jamie H.

On Good Friday, around 22 LMCers (ages 2 to 72), gathered together at the Chicago Federal Plaza to remember and mourn the victims of violence in Gaza at a vigil hosted by the Mennonite Action Committee. Volunteers carefully lined up 1,400 pairs of shoes in the plaza to represent the estimated 34,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023. At midday, more than 100 participants of diverse faith traditions and political



Photo by Mona R.

backgrounds began to lament, sing, pray, and protest together.

Several LMCers shared how the vigil was significant to them. Kristen, who brought along her sons, said, “I had just taken my boys on a Civil Rights tour to Georgia and Alabama, where they learned about MLK's peaceful ways to take a stand for justice. I felt grateful that we could put into practice some of these peace and justice themes; I appreciate the way that LMC models this important work for my children.”

Vina was especially moved by the visual and aural elements of the gathering: “It was a beautiful and striking event, especially the display of shoes, the mournful reading of names, and the prayerful walk and placing of flowers.”



Photo by Vina A.

Dave, who helped organize the event and led the group in songs of worship and lament during it, said, “I learned that people of faith can sometimes step outside their comfort zones to create stirring public witness for peace. And that people of goodwill, from many

(L): Photo by Kristin C.



political perspectives, are hungry to hear people of conscience speaking out against the heartbreak and genocide in Gaza.”

It was the first time that Kristin had participated in an event like the vigil. She said, “It was encouraging seeing so many come together in this way.

Specifically, I was touched

by multiple people stopping to talk who couldn’t stay but were moved to give money to help in whatever way they could.”



Photo by Kristin C.

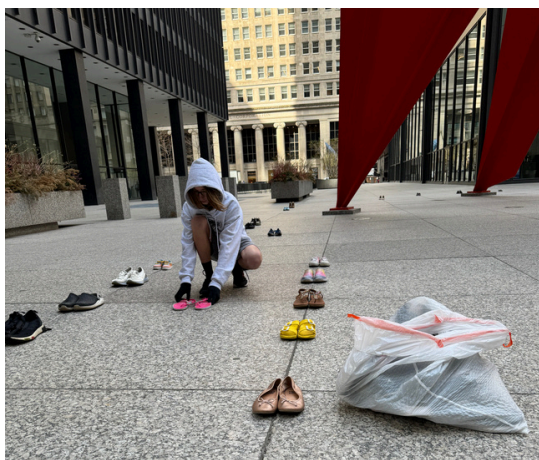


Photo by Evan R.

Mona and Evan, who quietly worked along with many others in laying out and collecting the 1,400 pairs of shoes, said: “Laying out the shoes of adults and children was a solemn and moving experience, knowing they represented actual people who have needlessly died in Gaza. We set down pair after pair until it felt like we had laid a sea of shoes. With each pair, we felt a connection to the person who could have worn them and a sense of loss that they were gone.

We grieve with the Palestinians who have lost loved ones and the Israelis who have lost loved ones.”

## Bringing Light to the Wilderness

Camp Menno Haven lost their internet provider and were having to use dial-up! LMC’s CJ and Spencer said, “Not on our watch.” They worked for months to bring fiber internet to the camp, which finally went live on April 20. Thanks, CJ and Spencer!

