Phil’s Ponderings: “Peace Lab”

I spent the first full week of June here at Tabor discovering God’s way of peace along with many other children and adults who participated in Bible School this year. Personally, it was a true joy for me, along with Pastor Rosie, to tell the Bible story each morning through drama and then lead the Bible Response time in classrooms. Rosie and I had a lot of fun with the dramas as well as the classroom experiments and activities! I was very grateful for the Peace Lab curriculum from Menno Media, which focused on an important and prominent theme throughout all of scripture. Not only that, Peace is at the very core of the Good News that Jesus came to both proclaim and embody. I am energized that we spent this year at Bible School focusing on the theme of peace, and I think it is a theme we could focus on much more as a faith community.

God dreams of peace and reconciliation on earth. God sent Jesus to reveal God’s dream and way of peace and reconciliation so that all people could learn to walk in Jesus’ footsteps. God sent and continues to send the Holy Spirit into the world to empower us as followers of Jesus to live as active peacemakers each and every day.

Our world desperately needs to see and hear the message of peace and reconciliation. The dominant messages of our world are rooted in fear and violence, not peace and reconciliation. The dominant patterns in our world are domination and consumption, not service and compassion. Our world desperately needs the Good News of Jesus, the Good News of peace and reconciliation. God calls us to counter the violent narratives of our world and instead promote the way of peace through our words and our deeds. As followers of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit, we must constantly pray for peace and act for peace.

Sisters and brothers, if you are interested in deepening your understanding of God’s way of peace, I invite you to join me in reading Éric Seibert’s book, Disarming the Church: Why Christians Must Forsake Violence to Follow Jesus and Change the World. I have read about half of this book and am inspired by Seibert’s consistent encouragement for followers of Jesus to promote peace through their everyday lives. Another opportunity: if you are interested in discussing what the Bible says about peace and how we can be active peacemakers in our lives and world today, please plan to attend our Faith Formation discussions on July 8, 15, and 22, when Peter Goerzen will lead us in reflecting on Biblical views of violence and peace.

As your pastor, I invite you and exhort you to pray for peace and practice peace as much as you can. As we all do more to promote God’s way of peace, we will find our lives, our communities, and our world transformed from the inside out.

~Pastor Phil
Katherine’s Candor

In light of our summer faith formation, I have been pondering how peace is such an integral part of God’s good news to the world.

As people who are committed to follow Jesus, we are to look beyond the stories of “us versus them” and the myths of redemptive violence that are so prevalent within our world. Instead, we are called to choose Jesus’ way of costly love on a daily basis and to model and nurture actions in ourselves and others that reflect God’s deep love for all people. We are to be compassionate as God is compassionate, because compassion and love for others, even our enemies, is at the heart of who God is.

Yet the world doesn’t seem to understand this part of God’s good news. Instead, the stories around us proclaim how satisfying it is to get revenge. They tell us to fear or exclude those who look, behave, or think differently than we do. These stories would have us believe that compassion and nonviolence may be effective to a certain extent, but not when the “real problems” arise.

Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection proclaim a much different story. This is, perhaps, one of the most difficult parts of God’s good news to embody. It’s second nature to love those who love us. But loving those who mistreat us, or those we love, though not nearly as easy, is possible by nurturing a life of prayer, compassion, and creativity within ourselves and our congregation.

We can discern together ways to respond in difficult situations, such as tangible ways to extend compassion in the face of hatred, and reminding ourselves to prayerfully seek creative solutions that respect the needs of all affected. Part of nurturing creativity is to look at a situation from another’s point of view, or even pondering why someone might be acting out of hatred and violence (as, most often violent behavior stems from something else). The more we train ourselves to respond with the peace of Christ, the more this becomes a part of who we are.

We love our neighbors as ourselves and seek to respond creatively when conflict arises, not because we’re “bleeding hearts” or weak on justice, but because we have chosen to embody the story of One who redefined what it means to call someone “neighbor” (Luke 10:25-37). We follow the One whose image dwells within “the least of these” (Matthew 25:31-40). We proclaim the Gospel of the One who forgave those who were crucifying him with his dying breath (Luke 23:34). This is the story to which we’ve given our lives; may we go and do likewise.

~Pastor Katherine

“What is Coaching?”

This past Fall and Winter, I received sixty hours of coach training, and over the past eight months, I have had the honor of coaching five Tabor members for a total of seventeen hours. Over the next months and years, I would love to enter into coaching relationships with several more interested Tabor members and attenders.

What is coaching? According to the International Coach Federation (ICF), “Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” As this definition highlights, coaching is a partnership. Coaching is not advice, therapy, mentoring, or counseling. In a coaching relationship, I journey with people, listening deeply and asking powerful questions, empowering them to make progress on whatever challenge they are facing, whether it be personal, professional, or spiritual.

Personally, I have found that coaching is a good fit for me: coaching fits my gifts, my personality, and my role as pastor. As I mentioned earlier, I have been energized to coach several Tabor people, and I would love to coach several more. Please let me know if you would be interested in this possibility or if you have any questions.

~Pastor Phil

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

ROMANS 10:15, ESV
How will we finish?

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” -Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

The question before the Tabor Church family is “how will we finish our building project”? Will we have enthusiasm and hope? Will we build on the giving that we have already done? Will we take great delight in the good things we hope for with God’s help? Or, will fear and the need to preserve our personal preferences and options limit our giving? Will we step out in confidence and meet the challenges before us, not waiting on others but doing what and following where God is leading with perseverance?

The Finance Task Force, at the direction of the Church Council, seeks the opportunity to visit with every member of the Tabor Church giving community. Whether you feel your gifts are large or small makes no difference to us, we recognize that all have given sacrificially. We also recognize that we have undertaken a congregational task and we wish to discuss your view of the project, inform you of our giving status and tell you of our opportunities. To that end, we are giving everyone the opportunity to schedule summer visits at your convenience. There is a sign-up sheet in the foyer for summer visits. If we haven’t heard from you by the end of summer, we will call to schedule a visit.

It is not our intent to suggest an amount or compare your giving to others. We do not intend to focus on what has been done but rather what can we do together to complete our task. The Hebrews 12 verse does not refer to a fundraiser, it refers to our whole lives and our relationships to God and to others, but like any challenge or task, this building project is part of our lives together and for God. Let us run with perseverance the task we have marked for ourselves and our congregation.

~Myron Voth

Update from the Building Committee

The builders have been busy for the last couple months. The work on the new roof has been obvious, but there has been progress that has been harder to see. Work is nearly complete on boxing the elevator shaft. This work included cutting a much larger hole through the concrete floor to accommodate the larger elevator. Under the elevator they dug a pit to house the hydraulic tank for the elevator. Here they ran into groundwater problems despite the dry conditions. This slowed progress, but the problem was solved with a sump pump and a liner under the concrete floor at the bottom of the pit.

Work is also continuing on removing the old flat roof from under the new pitched roof, and relocating one heat exchanger from our air conditioning system that was located on the flat roof. Workers have also installed drains to make sure rainwater moves away from the new building. The dirt work has started on the new building site, and on June 27 and 28, John and Austin and others brought in tons of donated fill dirt.

During July, dirt work will continue. We expect to begin concrete work on the new fellowship hall before the end of the month. We will also be insulating under the new pitched roof, and work on the elevator shaft will continue.

The building committee has met with the builders and we are nearing a final plan for the layout of the kitchen and fellowship hall areas. Plans have been submitted to the subcontractors, and we have gotten, or will soon get bids on the electrical, mechanical, and HVAC systems. We are excited to begin on the fellowship hall part of our project. Progress has felt slow at times as the preparation work takes time, but big changes are coming soon.

~Brent Abrahams
“Burning Hearts!”

Tabor Church Family, please plan to attend and participate in as much of the upcoming Western District Conference (WDC) Annual Assembly as possible! The theme for Assembly is “Burning Hearts!” focusing on Luke 24:32: “They said to each other, ‘Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?’” The keynote speaker/presenter is Bryan Moyer Suderman, a Bible teacher and singer-songwriter who leads a workshop entitled “Reading the Bible with Jesus.” We had the privilege of hosting Bryan in the Spring of 2017 for a Goessel Community Renewal event and it will be fun to host him again in a few weeks! That’s right, opening worship for Assembly is here at Tabor on Friday, July 27 at 7pm. Everyone is welcome! On Saturday, July 28, Assembly sessions are at Eden Mennonite Church. If you are interested in attending on Saturday, please sign up on the bulletin board and also check if you are willing to serve as a Tabor delegate. On Sunday, July 29, we will join the WDC worship service at Alexanderwohl beginning at 10 that morning. I look forward to worshipping and learning together at this year’s Assembly!

~ Pastor Phil

Grant Awarded to Tabor Food Pantry

Newton Et Cetera Shop is a non-profit thrift shop with a mission to provide quality, affordable, recycled merchandise to the community; encourage volunteerism, stewardship and recycling; and benefit the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Since opening in 1976, Newton Et Cetera Shop has donated over $3,000,000 to MCC.

In 2012, Et Cetera also began setting aside approximately ten percent of its proceeds for local community giving. This year The Tabor Food Pantry applied for a grant and was awarded $1,000. We are grateful this support, as are the clients that use our resources. The use of these funds will go to help purchase vouchers to Keith’s Foods for perishable food items for our brothers and sisters who come to us for assistance. Thank you, Tabor Church family, for your continued support of this ministry. ~ Kim Funk

Peace Lab: Tabor Bible School