

# WEST PHILADELPHIA MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

*journeying and growing together*

UPCOMING EVENTS

plug-in

**Sunday!**

**30th Anniversary Celebration**

Come early for a slideshow stocked with photos from WPMF over the years -- and stay late for a fellowship meal in Clark Park!

**Wednesday**

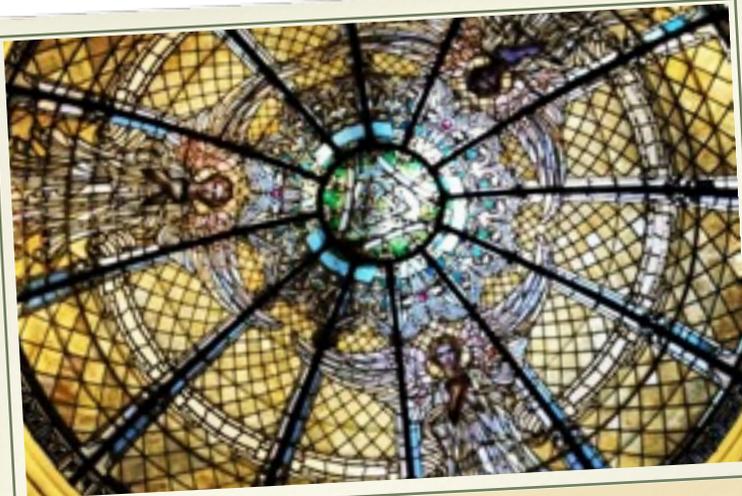
**WomenSisterFriends**

This Wednesday, we will be at Brooke Blough's home. Topic will be a compilation of diet culture, dieting, and relationships with food.

**September 12-14**

**"Black Mennonite Women Rock!"**

See WPMF for more details!



**THE CONGREGATIONAL PULSE**  
OF EARLY JUNE

the summer continues to emerge: delighting us with sticky hot days, thrilling us with thunderstorms, and hospitably offering extended light hours.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!**

**High School**

Andrew Foronda - Central High School

*In fall of 2015 will be attending Ursinus College. Before that, will be studying Spanish in Mexico; seeking internship with Philadelphia Inquirer; and baseball training*

Jacob Kurtz - Girard Academic Music Program (GAMP)

*Studying Nursing at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA in the Fall*

Daniel Sauder - Masterman High School.

*Studying Mechanical Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh in the Fall*

Franco Yugga - Girard Academic Music Program (GAMP)

*Taking year to prepare for viola auditions at various institutes of music*

**College**

Noah Brunk - Georgia Tech

*Graduating in Dec 2015 with B.S. in Mechanical Engineering*

*Taking classes this summer*

**Graduate College**

Robert Kuehl - Eastern University

Master of Arts in Counseling

*Continue working as a psychotherapist; with hopes to start a private practice*

# NOURISH the *body*; FEED the *soul*

Mid-morning on Friday the lovely Cindy Cassel welcomed me into her lush, green backyard. She offered me a seat in the shade, complete with a sweating glass of iced tea. We settled in and I allowed the surroundings to sink in: the brick walk, bird-feeders, the thriving plants, and the various decorations that embellished the fence. In the middle of the busy city, Jeff and Cindy have created an oasis: a vibrant, yet exceedingly calm space. In response to my amazement, Cindy smiles and shares that the backyard began as a simple idea that grew and grew until manifesting in its present state.

When I was first beginning to look into people that could be asked to submit perspectives to the newsletter, Cindy's name was quickly brought up. Around the community, many quickly and easily identified her as a fantastic cook. My curiosity was piqued, and I

reached out to her in the form of email. She responded with: "I love to eat tasty food; therefore, I enjoy creating tasty food. I would say that food is my favorite creative medium. I am very thankful that my family enjoys variety and experiments on the dinner table." Naturally, I wanted to know more, so I was ecstatic at the opportunity to engage with her and hear more of her story.

Fascinatingly, her experience with cooking seems very reminiscent of the growth of her backyard: beginning as sparse knowledge but flourishing through a wealth of experience. She shared that she has experienced stages of cooking, and through each stage was informed by others around her and trial and error. As a young and independent woman, she experimented with buying in bulk and seeing how far she could stretch her food and when

money became more fluid, she was able to expand her repertoire. She claims that even now she is not an expert, but that engaging in the process has been exciting and rewarding.

In her current state of flourishing in the kitchen, she loves the "puzzle of food:" figuring out how things can go together and exploring the breadth of possibilities that combinations present. She delights in the creation of her food, the ultimate presentation, and the pleasure of additional garnish. Throughout the experience of cooking, she is able to express herself and share her ultimate "craft." Through other's shared knowledge, the proximity of ethnic grocery stores, and their shared cavalier spirit, the products of Cindy's kitchen have been artful, thoughtful, and tasty over the years.



**"Once you start cooking, one thing leads to another. A new recipe is as exciting as a blind date. A new ingredient, heaven help me, is an intoxicating affair."**

Barbara Kingsolver

*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*

## NOURISH THE BODY

### The Life-Changing Loaf

- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup flax seeds
- 1/2 cup hazelnuts or almonds
- 1 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 tbsp melted coconut oil
- 1 1/2 cups of water

1. In a loaf pan combine all dry ingredients, stirring well. Whisk maple syrup, oil and water together in a measuring cup. Add this to the dry ingredients and mix very well until everything is completely soaked and dough becomes very thick. Smooth out the top with the back of a spoon. Let sit out on the counter for at least 2 hours, or all day or overnight. To ensure the dough is ready, it should retain its shape even when you pull the sides of the loaf pan away from it.

2. Preheat oven to 350°F / 175°C.



3. Place loaf pan in the oven on the middle rack, and bake for 20 minutes. Remove bread from loaf pan, place it upside down directly on the rack and bake for another 30-40 minutes. Bread is done when it sounds hollow when tapped. Let cool completely before slicing (difficult, but important).

4. Store bread in a tightly sealed container for up to five days. Freezes well too – slice before freezing for quick and easy toast!

# musings

## Rebecca Weber

### “Spying God in Life”

God came bursting through this week at the intersection of grief and hopefulness. The Ted & Company play brought up a mountain of painful memories from my own family experience. Think broken relationships, one member leaving like cousin Aaron, and no understanding grandmother to ease the pain. But as the counterpoint to these memories, were Patrick and Justin showing us what vulnerability and courage look like by having the nerve to bring this play to the stage and even being open to what might happen in the conversation after the show. The most poignant part for me was knowing that Patrick’s parents were in the audience supporting him through the challenges this play opened up and simply for being true to himself. Their presence makes me feel hopeful, and humbled to be part of this community. May the glimpses of hopefulness grow into expansive views that turn brokenness into love.

Do not ask your children  
to strive for extraordinary lives.  
Such striving may seem admirable,  
but it is a way of foolishness.  
Help them instead to find the wonder and  
the marvel of an ordinary life.  
Show them the joy of tasting tomatoes,  
apples and pears.  
Show them how to cry  
when pets and people die.  
Show them the infinite pleasure  
in the touch of a hand.  
And make the ordinary come alive for them.  
The extraordinary will take care of itself.

William Martin  
“Ancient Advice for Modern Parents”

“*Musings*” is the section where members weigh in on:

- 1.) Where have you seen God this week?
- 2.) What practices do you have, or wish you had, to invite God into your day?

*Let us uplift and learn from one another...*

## Ariel Ressler MacNeil

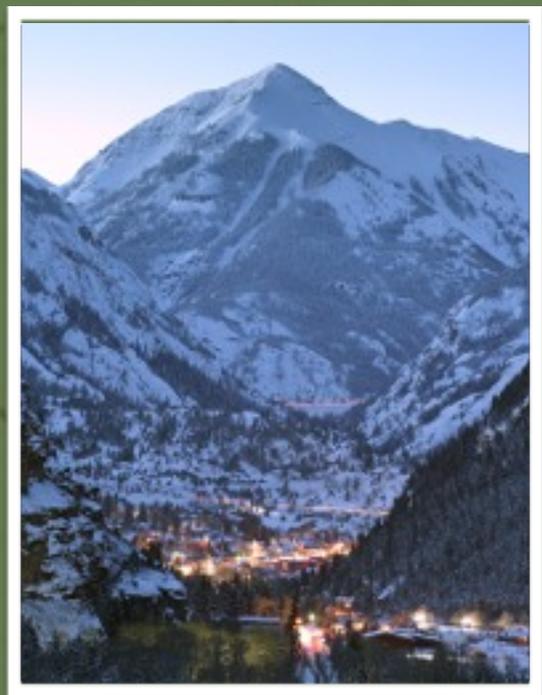
### Where have you seen God?

I've seen God recently in the miracle of life: the birth of my niece about 6 weeks ago. Also, I'm in Colorado this week, where the beauty of the snow-capped mountains makes it hard not to take notice and be amazed at Creation. And climbing up them in this altitude is humbling!

As far as spiritual practices, I feel like I haven't had many recently. If I would be dedicated to one, it would be simply paying attention and being in a state of gratitude for the little graces of daily life.

***“In order to experience everyday spirituality, we need to remember that we are spiritual beings spending some time in a human body.”***

Barbara De Angelis



# Nudges...

*what is weighing on your heart or mind?*

## “Listening for Grace”

perspective from: Brooke Blough

I, like many other Mennonites I know, grew up watching Ted Swartz. From “Armadillo Shorts” to “Fish Eyes” his videos were a favorite at Sunday School gatherings and sleepovers. When my parents were attending Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia we attended Community Mennonite Church and got to know Ted and his family. His humor and authenticity are the two things I remember most clearly about him. So, when I heard that his theater group, Ted & Company was doing a play that talked about same-sex sexuality, I was very interested to see how he would take on this complex topic. Lucky for me, my church decided to host a performance on May 31st.

I went to the performance excited, but also anxious. As I've stated before I'm quite sensitive about queer Mennonites' exclusion from the church. I didn't know what the crowd would be like, what would be said in the talk-back and whether this old, white guy I admired so much could articulate the pain and struggle of queer Mennonites. But in the midst of all that swirling in my head, I did my best to enter the space without expectation.

It's a one-man show, except it isn't. Ted is joined by Justin Yoder on the cello and Patrick Ressler on the piano. Patrick has a few lines as reluctant pianist Luke and Justin never speaks; but both of them contribute powerfully to the emotion and depth of the show with their music. The main characters in the play are Daryl (played by Ted), a Mennonite father whose wife, Grace, died of cancer years earlier, his only son Jared (represented by Justin's cello playing), who is in college and has just come out as gay when the play begins and the piano (played by Patrick), which sets the mood and often finds a way to speak for the audience. Justin is able to communicate for Jared through the music in a way that doesn't feel contrived and has a depth and insight that words could easily have missed. The addition of instruments to this piece to

lend a kind of voice for the voiceless was inspired.

The play begins soon after Jared comes out to Daryl. He is a father confused and mourning. He is still mourning the death of his wife, but now must also mourn the lost future that he had imagined for his son. He must face the fear that his son could now be excluded from something so important to both of them: church. He is wrestling with his own theology around same-sex sexuality and not finding satisfactory answers anywhere.

I recommend you go see the show, so I'm not going to recount it here in detail. But, I want to give an overview of the different opinions that this play gives voice to. Daryl first goes to his mother, who Jared had come out to first, and asked her how she handled it. She tells him that the thing

grandmothers are best at is unconditional love. Next he goes to hear someone preach on the topic of sexuality in the Bible. This preacher emphasizes the fact that all kinds of deviant sex can be found all over the Bible (incest, rape, polygamy, etc.), yet we focus in solely on these few passages about same-sex sex. The next three characters we meet Daryl compares to Job's three friends. He reminds us that, while Job's friends get a bad rap, they were the only ones who came to sit with Job on his pile of ashes. Mel comes to Daryl first and offers a traditional interpretation of how Christians should handle same-sex sexuality: "Love the sinner, hate the sin." Next is Steve, who isn't sure what the answer is, and remains open-minded. Then Daryl goes to visit his cousin Aaron who "left" decades earlier. The audience quickly understands that Aaron left because he is gay and, decades ago, it seemed that leaving was the only option for queer Mennonites. Aaron tells the story of his partner, Michael, whose parents tried to get Michael to stop being gay and, when he was unable, they burned all of his pictures and acted as though he had never been born.

I saw many things in this play: compassion, fear, honesty, love, heartbreak and healing. But, more than anything, I saw hope. Hope in an old, white guy who really could articulate the struggle of queer Mennonites

and the church. Hope in a sanctuary full of people with varying opinions coming together to listen. This hope was most clear to me in the juxtaposition of what happened with Daryl's cousin, Aaron and what is happening with Jared. Aaron left. He chose or felt forced to leave his faith tradition, his family and his life because he could not conform to what was expected of him. While it is not stated explicitly, it is clear that Jared isn't going anywhere.

This is the real strength of the inclusion movement: queer Mennonites and allies are not going anywhere. Not only are they not going quietly into the night, as queer Mennonites once did, but instead are getting louder and proclaiming that they belong. I think Isaac Villegas said it best in his article “Easter in Emmaus” that appeared in The Mennonite when he said:

"I'm grateful for you who are LGBT, because you have stayed with us even though we have official documents written against you. Your steadfast love for the church, despite rejections, bears witness to a God who loves us despite our sins— a God who overflows with patience and long-suffering, a God who loves us with a stubborn love, refusing our refusals and rejecting our rejections. You—my sister, my brother—you love us with God's love."

So often when I think of the story of the prodigal son, I view myself as the prodigal. The one who has turned their back and now returns repentant. But, for once, I'm the father waiting at the door and watching down the road. I, and other queer Mennonites and allies, are watching and waiting for our church family to come back to us. And the father did not judge the prodigal or spurn him for leaving, he simply rejoiced in the reunion. I place my joy in the hope of this coming celebration. When we all will join together and rejoice in our unity as God's children. This play showed me, once again, that if we continue to listen to each other and love each other, we will get closer and closer to this glory.



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## WPMF AT THE DIRT FACTORY

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“Wake up now, look alive, for here is a day off work just to praise Creation: the peppers, the squash, the corn, these things that ate and drank sunshine, grass, mud, and rain... and then laid down their lives for our welfare and onward resolve. There’s the miracle for you.

Barbara Kingsolver  
*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*



**Quick fact:**

If every U.S. citizen ate just one meal a week (any meal) composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country’s oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels of oil every week.

# Happenings... here and there!

## END OF THE YEAR CLOSE-OUT FOR YOUTH



## Prison Summit

“That was King’s Dream - a society that is capable of seeing each of us, as we are, with love. That is a goal worth fighting for.”

Michelle Alexander  
Author of “The New Jim Crow”

