

# The Vine

A newsletter of First Mennonite Church  
January 2022

## Christmas Update on Salomon and His Family

by P. Gregory Springer

I met Salomon Rafael Sebastian in late June, when I was asked to drive the 11-year-old legally blind orphan, his aunt Petrona, and a Q'anjob'al translator to Chicago for the boy's eye surgery. When it became clear that there would be no one else to attend to Salomon after the surgery, I became his unofficial caretaker, going up to four times a day to the trailer where he and his six cousins, his aunt and uncle (both under thirty), and occasionally other relatives lived.

Many of you already know this story. The surgery was successful and Salomon sees now and loves going to Franklin middle school, where he is receiving much care and assistance with his vision and an unexplained speech disorder. The most recent therapists believe his minimal speech habits are the result, in part, of confusion from the three different languages in his life, Q'anjob'al, Spanish, and English, as well as a probable past history in Guatemala of trauma and violence. Still, he has a positive attitude and is curious, active, and happy.

It has been a great joy for me to work with him and the family this year.

In February, we will return to Chicago to begin preparations for heart surgery for his atrial septal defect, a small hole in his heart. The vision and the heart problem are the result of a genetic disorder, Weill Marchesani Syndrome, which was diagnosed recently. There is nothing life-threatening in this and the pediatric cardiologist surgeon is prepared to perform the surgery in a minimally invasive way. There is no need for open-heart surgery.

As you may imagine, a household with so many children, two teenage relatives, and two adults working 12-hour shifts in night jobs has many challenges. Sometimes the children have gone to school with ill-fitting or dirty clothes or no socks or underwear at all. It is not neglect on the part of the parents. I have spent enough time with them all to recognize that this is a loving and caring family that is often overwhelmed by the enormity of their needs and their environment.

First Mennonite Church generously came together to provide this family with many gifts for Christmas. Rhonda Gibson set up a sign-up sheet that was quickly filled with people wanting to contribute. On Christmas Eve, my son Ernie, his wife Tonie, and I went to the family's home wearing Santa hats and carrying storage baskets and boxes filled with gifts and toys donated by church members.

The father, Pedro, was sleeping because of his night shift, but I eventually woke him up. And the mother, Petrona, was also resting in another room. But the children were all eager and amazed to see what we brought into the house.



*Domingo, Pedro, Augusto, Salomon and Magdalena in the living room*

Within a short time, they were all opening up their clothes, toys, socks, books, and games, delighted at everything, and making noise. The oldest, Domingo, was -- as usual -- in charge of keeping some semblance of order among the group. He and the two other older children, Magdalena and Augusto, speak English which they have quickly picked up at school. Before long, Salomon, Domingo, and Magdalena were playing the Candyland board game, as Tonie was teaching them. I was amazed to see Salomon playing and moving his token to the correct colored space on the board. His vision enables him now to do most things normally. It didn't matter who won the game. They played with excitement.



*Domingo and Salomon playing Candyland*

With Ernie's help, the boy Pedro and his brother Augusto quickly set up the Hot Wheels track and were racing their cars. They were thrilled to see the cars change color when put under running tap water. The older teenagers, Pablo and Augustin, a brother of Petrona and a nephew, came out from their back room to observe and they were very happy to find they had received gifts from the church as well. They were befuddled by the gift cards at first, until I explained to them how to use them.

I took the big Lego school bus and the big bag of clothes into the bedroom where father Pedro had been sleeping with the youngest, Otto. Pedro was overcome by the generosity of the gifts, including baskets of things for him and Petrona. He could not contain his emotion. Magdalena and the teens and Petrona joined them all on the bed as Otto played with the bus, very happy. In fact, everyone was very happy.



Otto playing with his new Lego block bus.

I'm not sure how long we stayed, but when we left the household was still abuzz with activity and joy. I cannot express enough how much this meant to them and to me as well. God's love and the grace of the season were shown and lives were renewed with hope at such an outright expression of caring.



## Anti-Racist Audit Committee Update

*report by FMC Participants*

Marcia Nelson's October Vine article launched the Anti-Racist Audit Committee co-chaired by Karen McKenzie and Bharat Patel. Please refer to this article to review why this committee was appointed and the goals of its work. Busy schedules and conflicts caused some changes to the working committee. It now consists of co-chairs Karen and Bharat, David Horst Lehman, Dianna Black, and TJ Negomo-Osagie. Pastor James Fielder is serving as the community consultant, Pastor Michael as the administrative liaison, Kaye Massanari as the Council liaison, and Melissa and Pete Shungu are the accountability liaisons.

The committee met during December to study and discuss the Widerstand training offered by MCUSA. <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/news/anti-racism-training-accessible/> This training and discussion will be completed in January and the committee will then design and implement the audit. Specific deadlines will be established for data collection, summary and reporting. A common vocabulary and analysis will be used and shared with the congregation. The committee will audit FMC's procedures, policies, practices, programs, personnel, space, mission, identity and other aspects of FMC. The goal is to complete the audit within two months from start to finish if schedules permit.

Let us begin with these two key terms from the Widerstand training: anti-racism and anti-racism audit.

- Antiracism is proactive and deliberate efforts by individuals and collectives to oppose and dismantle racism in its individual, institutional, systemic and cultural forms.
- An anti-racism audit is a focused examination of all levels of a congregation's life based on an analysis of the results of a congregation's actions rather than its intentions.

At the conclusion of the audit, a report will be prepared and submitted to Council with specific steps to help us continue on the journey of dis-mantling racism and white privilege in our congregation.

This verse of one of the advent hymns keeps running through Karen's mind as she works with this committee:

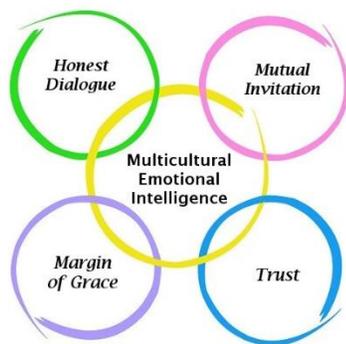
Hope is a candle once lit by the prophets.  
Never consumed, though it burns through the years.  
Dim in the daylight of power and privilege.  
When they are gone, hope will shine on.

Yes, we have begun and we have hope. Please contact any member of the committee to discuss our work and the audit.

Watch for ways that you can be involved, and please contact any member of the committee if you have questions or would like to discuss this audit in more detail.

## Multicultural Emotional Intelligence Symposium

*report by FMC Participants*



Seven of us from FMC attended Rev. James Fielder's Multicultural Emotional Intelligence Symposium on November 19-20, 2021. Karen McKenzie, Bharat Patel, Marcia E. Nelson, Deb Sutter, Jan Sabey, and Dave and Neta Jackson participated on Friday evening and Saturday. We were challenged to acknowledge our own biases, accept that we have them and work together to diffuse them. It was emphasized that the best method of inhibiting bias is honest dialogue and that conversations play a role in social justice and community relations. We learned some tools for initiating discussions, creating and maintaining safe space for open conversations and mutual respect. We practiced within a framework for cultivating an atmosphere for healthy dialogue regarding race and privilege.

One of the tools that was helpful and can be used at FMC was Mutual Invitation. The leader shares first, then invites another to share. After each person speaks, that person invites another to speak. One can pass or "pass for now" and share later.

The important thing was to listen and not immediately respond. One of the FMC participants noted that "inviting" sharing introduced a personal element and the opportunity to "pass" or "pass for now" was helpful and contributed to the sense of grace offered in the meeting. A mutual invitation was given to each participant to share in writing this article.

One segment of the symposium that was appreciated was the material and ensuing discussion on leadership and self-deception. Being "in the box" was defined as having an inability to see one's own failings and seeing those you encounter as "objects" rather than persons with their own needs. This state leads to self-betrayal on occasions when a person acts contrary to their best self, then has need for self-justification and in that process diminishes the other person to the extent that his/her view of reality becomes distorted. We tend to inflate our own virtues and inflate others' faults. A participant pointed out that the stereotyping of an individual begins with this scenario and can become group collusion in institutional or collective settings. Several FMC participants thought that more time could have been spent on helpful ways to get out of the box. Dr. Fielder suggested that we approach others not looking at what they can do, but how they suffer. Widen your lens beyond your needs and your desires.

"Margin of grace" was a concept emphasized throughout the meeting. One of the FMC participants stated that the invitation rather than coercion or shaming is both most helpful and also a reflection of God's ways. This idea came through strongly throughout the meeting.

The participants spent the most time on the photo language exercise which was the last activity of the symposium. It began with Rev. Fielder spreading at least 50 high-quality black-and white 8x11½ inch photos on the floor inside the circle of participants. The photos included a multitude of subjects, such as nature, buildings, people, street scenes, animals, objects, actions, etc. We were then asked to spend some time choosing two photos from the collection on the floor. The prompt questions had to do with our definition of racism and the impact of racism on our lives. The randomness of the photo topics and the personal nature of our answers made the act of selecting the photos intriguing and a bit challenging.

It was kind of a bouncing between having a story in mind and looking for some way to give it a visual image of seeing a photo that prompted an answer to one of the questions. Then we began sharing our

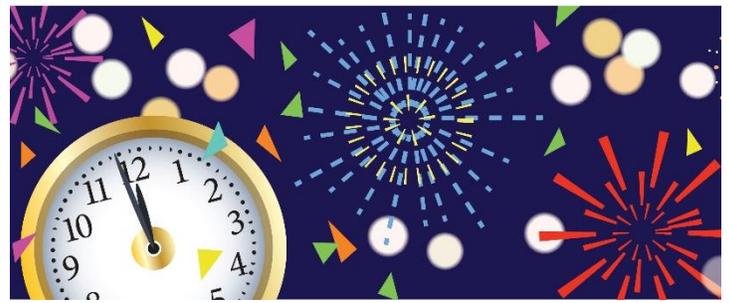
stories and usually explaining why or how the photo was related to our anecdote. As we listened to each other's narratives, we heard questions, pain, anger, fear, determination, discouragement, energy, and perhaps most importantly we heard vulnerability.

Throughout the symposium, participants were encouraged to respond to questions that got progressively deeper and more complex. We were not required to speak; we could pass if we preferred not to respond to a particular prompt. However, most of us did try to say something, and the listening seemed to also go deeper, too. So, when we got to the photo-language exercise, we had developed enough of a trust within the group that we each could talk about our chosen photos and say something deeper about our lives. Given the purpose of the symposium—to help participants learn to initiate, facilitate and participate in difficult conversations, the photo language exercise seemed like a good activity to show us how to build some level of trust among strangers and create a space to encourage taking risks with telling our truths.

Those of us who participated in this symposium were blessed by the good group of participants bringing perspective from several races and cultures. The discussions were rich. Our overall evaluations were a mix. The presentation of the material was at times hasty and the visuals difficult to read, however the caliber of the discussions and the commitment of the participants to openness and respect enriched our time together.

The emphases may have been a challenge to some of us schooled in white supremacy characteristics favoring the elevation of the word, efficiency, quantify over quality, etc. (See "White Supremacy Culture" by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun). Maybe some of us needed that. One FMC participant found the time to be "not for the faint of heart" as the intimacy and vulnerability of the group came and went quickly without the solid footing that might have come if our time together was part of longer, developing relationships. Another FMC participant found some of the "sociological jargon" (like "Multicultural Emotional Quotient" [EQ]) somewhat off-putting and suggested that terms and titles which clearly and positively describe the session objectives in plain language would be more helpful. ("Mutual Invitation" was a positive example of the latter).

This was Dr. Fielder's first attempt at presenting this material. He hopes to do so again and also cultivate leaders as part of his inter-racial dialogue and church-planting work in our community.



## Reflections

*by Jan Kellogg*

In closing out my mother's affairs and household goods several years ago I found the following prayer copied in her handwriting. Acknowledging the fact that, as someone pointed out recently, our congregation has aged and the fact that people seem drawn to New Year's resolutions every year in spite of hardly ever keeping those resolutions, this seems a good time to share it. I offer this prayer in honor of all of us past the age of ?!

*Lord, thou knowest I am growing older.*

*Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject.*

*Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs.*

*Keep me from the recital of endless detail.*

*Give me wings to get to the point.*

*Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains.*

*They are increasing with the years and my love to speak of them grows sweeter as time goes by.*

*Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.*

*Make me thoughtful but not nose; helpful but not bossy.*

*With my vast store of wisdom and experience it does seem a pity not to use it all.*

*But thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends left at the end. – author unknown*

## Central District Conference Update

by Phil Martens

### What is Central District Conference (CDC)?

As many of you know, FMC as a local congregation is a member of two different church conferences: Illinois Mennonite Conference (IMC) and Central District Conference (CDC). Both conferences are themselves a part of Mennonite Church USA, our parent denomination. So, FMC is known as a “dual-affiliated” congregation and maintains active positive relationships with both IMC and CDC, and with MCUSA.

Historically, the CDC has been a regional Mennonite conference, with the vast majority of congregations coming from the region originally covered by the Central District of the General Conference Mennonite Church prior to the Mennonite Church/General Conference Church merger in 2002. This area traditionally was Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Michigan. More recently, congregations have joined the CDC from a MUCH larger geographic area, including Minnesota, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Of the 48 congregations in CDC currently, 9 have joined in the last 6 years, and most of these have been from outside the traditional geographic boundaries.

I have had the pleasure to serve on the CDC Board of Directors as a member-at-large since 2017. Significant CDC events each year are the Annual Meeting, which happens every year, generally in July, and both in-person and remote board meetings roughly 6 times per year. Prior to Covid, we frequently held our in-person board meetings at Camp Friedenswald, in southern Michigan, which is the CDC-affiliated camp. (Many folks in FMC are more familiar with Camp Menno Haven, our IMC-affiliated camp.) We also meet once a year for a visioning session with the Board and other conference leadership to plan themes and events. Prior to Covid, smaller regional mid-year meetings were scheduled in-person in the 4 geographic regions of the conference, usually mid-winter. These have now been consolidated into two mid-year zoom-only gatherings in February and March. We will post the dates in FMC publications as we get closer to the time. These meetings are a great time to get to know other congregations, and to fellowship across the miles.

### Where are the “Cutting Edges” in CDC?

Every two years the Board chooses a biennial theme to guide our thoughts and prayers as a conference. This past August, a new theme was chosen: “Tending Transformation”. You will likely be hearing about this theme as time goes on, including seeing the theme’s logo on some CDC publications.



*This theme dovetails nicely with MCUSA's current biennial theme: "Be Transformed".*

During my tenure on the CDC Board, a number of significant changes have occurred in the conference, including adopting a policy and statement of inclusion for LGBTQ+ membership including ordination of LGBTQ+ ministers, regardless of personal relationship status, and celebration of same-sex marriages. This policy has had several notable effects at a conference level. CDC has lost a small number of congregations either directly or indirectly because of this stance. CDC has also likely had several new congregations join the conference with our LGBTQ+ inclusion policies as a drawing card. Finally, this FMC and CDC stance has put some modest strain on FMC's relationship with Illinois Mennonite Conference, due to its current non-inclusive policies.

The increasing pace of change in CDC membership has prompted the Board to begin an initiative that we are calling “Sacred Listening”. To get a better sense of who our member congregations are and where their energies lie, over the year of 2022, CDC leaders will be visiting every one of the 48 congregations in teams of three (in-person as much as allowed by the pandemic), to use the techniques of Appreciative Inquiry (somewhat akin to Motivational Interviewing) to ask how the Spirit is moving and manifesting within each church. At the end of 2022, these interviews will be used to disseminate life-giving practices, as well as to stimulate and inspire all congregations, and inform future goals and policies at the conference level. We believe that the Sacred Listening project will complement the process of “Tending Transformation” in our congregations.

An outgrowth of the desire to listen to our constituent congregations has been to have a representative of one congregation to bring us a 15-30 minute sharing during each of the CDC Board meetings. We have been blessed to hear directly from two congregations as to how they are responding to the needs within and outside their church membership.

### **What is the future of the CDC?**

The last couple of years in CDC has also brought about an awareness of what we are calling "Emerging Communities of Faith". These tend to be out-growths of existing congregations, and are manifesting as house-church-like groups, zoom-only worshiping clusters, and at least one neighborhood-based faith community. As a board we are committing resources to fostering these emerging communities with startup funding, mentoring, and finally, expanding our Conference staff to include a newly-created Associate Conference Minister position.

The new Associate Conference Minister position will be opening up in early 2022 and will seek a 30-50%-time pastor to focus primarily on shepherding emerging communities, with some off-loading of responsibilities from our current conference Minister, Doug Luginbill, if the candidate is available at a 50% time commitment. While this will definitely require an increase in conference-wide giving, the Board believes that the increase in pastoral staffing is appropriate for our growing and expanding conference.

Central District Conference is growing, financially sound, vigorous, changing, spirit-filled, seeking, nurturing, and committed to tending the transformations we see happening in our congregations.



*FMC Fall Work Day, November 2021*

## **Time and the Blessings of Widowhood**

*by P. Gregory Springer*

Pastor Michael spoke this past Sunday of the Christmas story, specifically about Anna who dedicated her life to prayer and fasting into her old age. She had been married only seven years before becoming a widow. She found meaning and calling in her widowhood.

I have been a widower now for 2,031 days. My Google Home Assistant calculated that for me in a second. He not only is good at math, he wishes me a good night by name, sets my alarm, and plays lulling thunderstorm sounds before I rapidly fall asleep every night. My daily companion now is this little round box, not a human being.

Of course, I miss Lee, and after those first few months of pain and mourning and anger and incomprehension, I began to wonder why I wasn't more unhappy. In fact, my life in the last five years has been fulfilling in many adventurous and unexpected ways.

It took me a while to consider why this might be.

I met Lee in 1968. With some times off, we were in each other's lives consistently for 17,444 days. That is a lot of journal entries and a lot of memories to sort through.

The thing is, it feels like Lee is still here. When I do things, I experience them through her eyes as much as mine. I know how she could react. I still feel her presence.

She always surprised me and had a great perspective on things. Although she was a twin, she was one of a kind. I think now about what her ideas might be. There's my initial take and then there is hers. Without even thinking about it, I take her perspective into consideration. I anticipate what her sense of humor might bring to a situation. This is a gift that I inherited after 13,274 days of marriage.

Exploring the Latin America we both loved, meeting people, going to movies, cooking, all the things I now find myself doing are inevitably for the two of us. I know the joy Lee would express and feel when I work with immigrant families. I remember and pass along her rich generosity. This way of seeing things may be akin to a pregnant woman doing things for two. Everything you do necessarily involves another person. Your other half.

Knowing each other so well, sometimes too well, we used to finish each other's sentences. We still do, in a way, because that kind of melding of character persists and is likely to last. Becoming a widower didn't automatically, instantly, give me the consciousness of a person without a partner.



*Greg and Lee*

I identified with Joan Didion as she wrote of becoming a widow in her book *The Year of Magical Thinking*. She proceeded after the death of her husband John Gregory Dunne as though he were still alive, expecting him to come through the door at any moment. It was a form of denial, but I've had things like that happen, things I expected to say to Lee when I got home, or things I wanted to buy for her in a Guatemala market, or even glimpsing her walking down the street or around the corner of the house. But, rationally, I know her physical presence is not likely to manifest.

I once wanted to hand her the baby I was holding, Mateo, my daughter-in-law's nephew. I thought I should take the baby to Lee in the next room in that split second before I remembered she wasn't actually in there. And that was just last year.

I have come to the conclusion that widowhood enables the newly single person to meditate on and appreciate more fully their partnership. You can relive and enjoy the life you chose to share again. You aren't caught up in the quotidian busyness of making new memories together. You alone can rest and assess, relive and respect the history of your relationship. That's a lot of old memories to excavate, more than I am likely to relive in the approximate 7,305 days I have left to live.

I often have quoted a line from Nick Payne's play, *Constellations*. A dying young woman, a physicist, tells her mourning boyfriend, who wishes they could have even one more day together, "Listen to me. The basic laws of physics don't have a past and a present. Time is irrelevant at the level of atoms and molecules. It's symmetrical. We have all the time we've always had. You'll still have all our time. There's not going to be any more or less of it once I'm gone."

We have all the time we've always had. I may live alone with my nameless Google box, but I don't feel alone. Not so far, at least.

This seems like an appropriate time as any to quote *Seasons of Love* from the musical *Rent*:

Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes  
 Five hundred twenty five thousand moments so dear  
 Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes  
 How do you measure? Measure a year?  
 In daylights,  
 In sunsets,  
 In midnights,  
 In cups of coffee,  
 In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife  
 In five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes  
 How do you measure a year in a life?  
 How about love?  
 How about love?  
 How about love?  
 Measure in love...  
 Seasons of love...  
 Seasons of love...



**Do you enjoy taking pictures?** We are looking for someone to serve as FMC photographer for the coming year – to take pictures of in-person events and happenings at the church. Also, to take pictures of attendees for the bulleting board on occasion. Overall, a low-key church appointment. Talk to Marcia Nelson if you're interested.



## Get to Know Sarah Little

by Norma Nelson

With fellowship time in the basement of First Mennonite Church put on hold until such gatherings are safe again, little is known about people who have visited FMC just prior to the Covid isolation period.

Such might be said about Sarah Little, who became a Champaign resident after moving from Wooster, Ohio, in the fall of 2019. She actively looked for a Mennonite church and had only a few opportunities to “check out” FMC before the pandemic literally closed its doors for worship and large gatherings.

I happened to be a greeter during one of Sarah’s early visits and heard her talking to someone about her grandson August, now five years old. My great-grandson has the same name, so it was a good conversation starter for me to employ. We enjoyed sharing a little of our family backgrounds relative to that rare name, and I also learned that Sarah’s interest in FMC had two primary foci: (1) She was glad that there was a Mennonite Church in the Champaign/Urbana area, and (2) it had a knitting group. Knit and Nurture quickly became a comforting resource for her and helped her settle in and make connections. “I’m so happy that I found FMC,” said Sarah, “and to be part of that community. The church members were immediately friendly and welcoming. I look forward to coming back and being able to sing in the congregation. I miss the fellowship and the singing.”

Sarah grew up in the Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Ohio. She can trace her dad’s Mennonite family back to Switzerland. The family settled in Pennsylvania around 1750, and then in 1830 moved to Holmes County, Ohio, which is still the seat of a large Amish and Mennonite Community. Sarah is grateful for the loving and stable family she came from. Her paternal grandmother was a person whose life Sarah greatly admired. “My grandmother, Sadie Mast Miller, was loving and affectionate. And she was an independent-thinking woman. She had to quit school at the age of 13 (because that’s what Mennonite girls had to do then), but she made sure that each of her six children had the opportunity to attend college, even during the depression.”

Sarah’s mother’s family was Methodist and Lutheran, and upon marriage, Sarah’s mother joined the Mennonite Church. One of Sarah’s mother’s ancestors came to the Americas before the Revolutionary War from England as an indentured servant; family lore says that he jumped ship along the Jersey shore with another young man, they managed to avoid shots from the ship, and ran off into the forest. He changed his name from Whitfield to Critchfield, years later fought as a Revolutionary soldier, and his grandson subsequently became Attorney General for the State of Ohio.

Sarah is the middle child between two brothers. When she was just a few months old, her parents moved from Holmes County to Wooster so that her father could start a tool and die business.

Although Sarah got her undergraduate degree in her home state at OSU, she later got her teaching credentials in San Francisco. There she met Allan Little, who became her husband of 45 years. He died in 2017. He had two daughters from a previous marriage, who remained in San Francisco when Sarah and Allan moved to Wooster in 1994. So, in addition to her daughter and family here in Champaign, she has two step-daughters who remain in the Bay Area, and five adult step-grandchildren who live in the Bay Area and/or Brooklyn, NY.

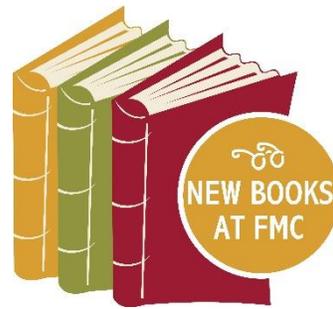
Throughout her life, Sarah has worked at many different jobs, including years at UCSF and The College of Wooster, in office and administrative positions. After their daughter left home to enter college in Ohio, Sarah attended night law school at Akron U, while working full-time as a title-searcher for a law firm. Upon graduating from law school in her 50s, she opened up her own office, where she did estate planning, guardianships of adults, and, primarily, guardian ad litem work representing children. She loved the independence of being self-employed and particularly enjoyed working with the children. She actively practiced law until her move to Champaign.

Today Sarah lives in Champaign within walking distance of the home of her daughter (Rebecca) and son-in-law, (Ben), and her three grandchildren (9-year-old Madeline, 5-year-old August, and 9-month-old Lawrence), which makes it convenient for her to be a frequent sitter. Sarah moved to Champaign to be close to family after her husband’s death. Sarah tries to be careful to not expose her daughter’s family to Covid.

Sarah has two pets, a small dog and a cat. Having pets and family nearby has helped her with the isolation of living alone during Covid. Plus, she enjoys the zoom church services and bi-weekly zoom visits with high school friends. Like all of us, she longs for an end of the pandemic and a return to a more normal life.

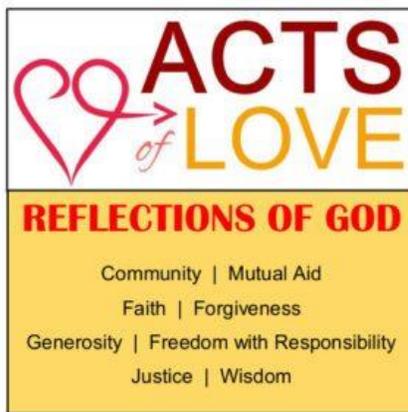
At this time, she is trying to decide what to do with the next chapter in her life. She misses the social contact that work provided, and in considering several possibilities. Time will tell.

One thing for certain is that Sarah looks forward to getting back into church and join the congregational singing. Amen to that!



Available for checkout soon!

### New Worship Series



### Books for Children

- The Little Drummer Boy *by Ezra Jack Keats*
- B Is for Bethlehem - A Christmas Alphabet *by Isabel Wilner*
- The Colors of Christmas *by Martha Nelson Phifer*
- Silent Night *by Brigitte Weninger*
- The Indescribable Gift *by Richard Exley*
- The Crippled Lamb *by Max Lucado*
- Mary's First Christmas *by Walter Wangerin Jr*
- The Legend of Old Befana *by Tomie dePaola*
- Merry Christmas Strega Nona *by Tomie dePaola*
- The Little Donkey *by Gerda Marie Scheidl*
- An Amish Christmas *by Richard Ammon*
- The Book Tree *by Paul Czajak & Rashin Kheiriyeh*
- The Cherry Blossom Tree *by Jan Godfrey & Jane Cope*
- Let's Celebrate: Special Days Around the World *by Kate DePalma*
- What is God Like? *by Rachel Held Evans & Matthew Paul Turner*
- When God Made the World *by Matthew Paul Turner*
- When Good-Bye is Forever *by Lois Rock*

### Library News

*by Lesley Deem*

We have had a lot of donations and new books added to the library. We displayed the first set during the Christmas season. We are now putting out the new books on the table in the foyer as well as some on the red cart in the library.

**We are excited offer a set of chapter books for our young readers. They are written by Dave and Neta Jackson.** They are thrilling adventure stories introducing young readers (ages 8-12) to Christian heroes of the past from around the world. They will be available in the library on the first shelf to the right of fireplace. There is also a set of dog tales available.

For adults we have new books in the following categories: church history, theology & ethics, peace and justice, family relationships, devotional and inspiration, cookbooks & community, and Christian Living. So, search for the books you've had checked for a while, bring them back and check out new ones.

### Books for Adults

- Plain Prayers for a Complicated World *by Avery Brooke*
- Borders & Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World *by Peter Dula & Alain Epp Weaver*
- Fear Not: Devotionals for Times Like These *by Dave & Neta Jackson*
- The Invisible *by Arloa Sutter*
- Reconnect *by Ed Cyzewski*
- Untold Stories of Advent *by Mark Vincent*
- Prayers for Everyday compiled *by Elaine Sommers Rich*
- Nehemiah: Rebuilt and Rebuilding *by Kathleen Buswell Nielson*
- Julian of Norwich: Wisdom in a Time of Pandemic - and Beyond *by Matthew Fox*
- Necessary Conversations Between Families and Their Aging Parents *by Gerald W. Kaufman & L. Marlene Kaufman*
- Two Longs and Two Shorts *by Mary Cender Miller*