



Sowing Sisterhood

Honoring Our Past, Inspiring Our Future

Discussing... 'Boundaries'

-Mary Kennell, Roanoke

I'm in a group that is reading and trying to practice the tenets found in a book called **Boundaries** by Cloud and Townsend. A mental picture helped me to understand what it's about.

Imagine a city of gold. The city is encircled with a strong wall, the first line of defense against enemies. The wall must have gates or doors to let in the good and keep out that which would harm. In the very center of the city is where the treasure is carefully guarded. Now imagine that your heart is the treasure and the walls and gates are your boundaries, or more simply, what you say 'yes' or 'no' to in life.

Everyone in the group is being asked to do the hard/good work of both determining what our treasures are (core beliefs, talents, gifts, passions) and also, like Nehemiah, to carefully walk around the city walls and look for places...
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Sister Care Seminar

Equipping Women for Caring Ministry

May 15-16 2015

Lombard Mennonite Church is excited to host a Sister Care Seminar on May 15-16, 2015. Sister Care seminars provide women with tools for ongoing personal healing, for recognizing and celebrating God's grace in their lives, and for responding more confidently and effectively to the needs of others. Topics for the weekend include: claiming my identity as God's Beloved, caring for self and others, compassionate listening, and transforming loss and grief.

Sister Care seminars are a ministry of Mennonite Women USA. The seminar schedule is 7-9 PM Friday and 9 AM - 4:30 PM Saturday. The cost is only \$45.

For more information, contact Deborah Wetherill and Linda Hayward at sistercare@lombardmennonite.org or call the church office at 630-627-5310 (*registration form on page 5*)

'Boundaries' continued...

where the wall needs major repair, or where broken gates need to be repaired. We all have repair work to do, and it's important to realize that the bedrock or foundation of our city is God's love and truth, the only reality we can trust to build our lives upon.

If I had to boil it down, I would say the book (practiced in community) is an opportunity to take responsibility for our own lives and choices. It is hard work because truth always has an edge to it, but it is also satisfying, because God created us to grow and stretch. Working at it with friends makes it more fun, because we practice extending lots of grace to each other and it is a safe place to laugh at our own frailties.

My hope is to discover more of what Jesus meant when he promised that he came that we might have life, and have it to the full, no matter the circumstances around me.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life..."
Proverbs 4:23



Sowing Sisterhood -Freeport Mennonite Women

The first Thursday of each month, ten women gather to spend the day together--a time we anticipate. We share the activities and concerns of our lives as we work together on activities like tying comforters, quilting, and filling school kits. A devotional time follows using the Mennonite Women USA Bible study guide. Our time of fellowship results in us leaving feeling deeply satisfied. --*Leota Mann, Freeport Mennonite*

Last year, one of our sisters spent several weeks at the University of Wisconsin hospital for chemotherapy treatments. We knew that she would be in isolation, so we presented her with a crocheted prayer shawl, made by one of our members. This shawl proved to be a great blessing, as she used it each day that she spent in the hospital. --*Janet Lubbers, Freeport Mennonite*

It's Not Me...or Is It? -Shannon Unzicker

About five years ago, the mother of one of my son's classmates invited me to join a prayer group that was being formed for our elementary school. She explained that she would be one of the group leaders, and that the group of mothers would be meeting two mornings per month in her home to pray for our children, their teachers and the other students.

I was flattered that she had asked me, and thanked her for the invitation. I told her I would let her know in a week or so, but in my head, I was already thinking, "Nice of her to invite me, but I just don't know if that's 'me'. I will probably have to pray out loud in front of a group...not something I am very comfortable with."

Later, other reasons to justify turning her down ran through my head. "Praying with others who I don't really know all that well? Too intimate." I thought. "No one else in the group is Mennonite... I'm sure that some of my beliefs are a lot different than theirs, and that would be awkward."

But, as I took more time to reflect, I remembered that my pastor had told me a few years ago about how just such a group had been important to her when her children were young.

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'It's Not Me...or Is It?' continued

I began to reconsider. It would be a way to meet other women in our community, something that was difficult for me, since I was still at home with my youngest child most of the time. And I felt I never had enough time for prayer, especially being at home with young children.

Then one morning, God presented me with this idea: "This new thing may not be "you", Shannon, but what if it's Me? Would you be willing to try something that is Me?"

I wrestled with that for a while. Saying no because an idea made me uncomfortable--that approach made sense in relation to something destructive, hurtful, or in direct opposition to my beliefs. But this could be an opportunity to encounter God in a new way, and to serve God in a new way.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that the Bible offers many examples of how God's calling for action or following Jesus' teachings made people uncomfortable. We are often uncomfortable with what God calls us to do, because it is not our way, or our will, but God's. I decided to give it a try.

As you can probably guess, saying yes to this new thing that I didn't think was "me" has profoundly impacted my life. I have seen God at work in many ways, both big and small, through prayer and my connections with this group of women.

In fact, I even ended up starting (and leading) a similar prayer group for our junior high school that following year. None of those "what ifs" that ran through my mind ever materialized, and even if they had, I am confident that God would have provided what I needed to negotiate any bumps in the road.

I had a similar experience with Mennonite Women USA. In 2009, the Mennonite Women group from my congregation (Mennonite Church of Normal) received an invitation to attend one of the first Sister Care seminars, to be held in Elkhart, Indiana.

Our MW group encouraged any interested women from our congregation to attend, and to then share more about the experience after they returned. So although I was not able to participate in our group's regular monthly meetings, and felt like I didn't really "qualify", they assured me that I was going with their blessing, and I am deeply grateful.

The seminar was very powerful, and offered many things that I knew women needed to hear. After talking with Rhoda Keener afterwards, and sharing my interest, she informed me they were hoping to offer a seminar in Illinois soon. I agreed to help make it happen, and through that process, I began to learn more about Mennonite Women USA.

The seminar was held in Normal in the summer of 2011, and a few weeks later, Rhoda asked if I would be interested in serving on the board of Mennonite Women USA as a regional representative. I was caught a bit off-guard, since my involvement with MW USA had started only recently, through Sister Care.

And again, my initial thoughts were, "Mennonite Women board member? Hmm..that's not me." And I quickly came up with my list of excuses: "I don't sew, or quilt...I don't meet regularly with a women's group...I probably wouldn't be a good fit..."

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'It's Not Me...or Is It?' continued

But as I took time to pray and reflect about the opportunity, I soon realized that this could be another example of something that “wasn’t me”, but was God, wanting to work in me and through me in a new way. You can guess where I am going with this, right? I said yes.

I am now in my fourth year as a board member, representing the Great Lakes region. I continue

to be impressed by the dedication of our staff members and board members, and humbled by the faithful giving of our donors. I encourage you to visit our website, subscribe to our Timbrel magazine, and to our monthly e-newsletter, “Postcard and a Prayer”.

Join us in learning about the new things that God is doing through Mennonite Women USA.

Inspiring Our Future

-Bethany Fosdyck & Kim Litwiller

20 ‘Craft Happy’ girls gathered for the first “Mennonite Girls Can Craft” event held November 22, 2014 at Mennonite Church of Normal. Ribbons and twigs, beads and yarn, scraps of fabric and old T-shirts seemed to move to the rhythm of laughter as 40 hands worked to craft Christmas ornaments, as uniquely beautiful as the girls creating them, for the residents of Maple Lawn.



We are eager to receive more stories of how women throughout IMC are connecting with each other and ‘Sowing Sisterhood’ within their congregations and communities. Email your stories and pictures to Illinois Mennonite Women Co-Coordinators: Kim Litwiller kiml@mennonite.net or

Shannon Unzicker unzickers@gmail.com

Or mail them to: Illinois Mennonite Conference c/o Kim Litwiller P.O. Box 3, Tremont, IL 61568





May 15-16, 2015
(7-9 p.m. Friday and 9:00-4:30 Saturday)
Lombard Mennonite Church, Lombard, Illinois

Registration information for Lombard and Mennonite Women USA:

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____
Church: _____

_____ I would like my contact information to be included on a list of participants to share with Sister Care Seminar attendees.

_____ I have special dietary needs. _____

_____ Spanish translation needed (for seminar sessions only)

Lodging arrangements:

_____ I need in-home lodging. Please make these arrangements.
_____ I will make my own arrangements. Local hotel options are below:
Crown Plaza – 630-629-6000 (ask for the Lombard Mennonite rate)
Stay Inn – 630-916-9000

Note: No childcare provided for this event.

Registration fee is \$45.00.
Please register by April 30, 2015. (Late registration is an additional \$5).
Payment may be made at seminar.

Make check payable to: _____ Lombard Mennonite Church
Send to the church at: _____ 528 E Madison
_____ Lombard, IL 60148

Note: Please write "Sister Care" on the memo line

Questions: Contact one of the committee members listed on the other side.

Sister Care seminars are a ministry of Mennonite Women USA.
This seminar is hosted by women of Lombard Mennonite Church.

Sister Care Seminar

Equipping Women for Caring Ministry

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Friday 7:00-9:00 p.m. and
Saturday 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Lombard Mennonite Church
528 E. Madison St.
Lombard, IL 60148

Sister Care seminars provide women with tools for ongoing personal healing, for recognizing and celebrating God's grace in their lives, and for responding more confidently and effectively to the needs of others.

For more information, contact:

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Linda Hayward:
linda.hayward@gmail.com
630-690-5686 (home)
Church Office:
office@lombardmennonite.org
630-627-5310

See registration form on the back.

Coming to the Chicagoland area

All women are welcome!

Presenters



Carolyn Heggen



Rhoda Keener

