

Assembly Mennonite Church  
July 19, 2020  
Small Acts of Remembrance



Link to the full service: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jz\\_w6SXTA5M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jz_w6SXTA5M)

If you'd like to watch only certain parts of the service, you will find links to that portion of the video at each section below.

[Prelude](#) – Mitch Rhodes  
HWB 16 God is here among us

[Call to Worship](#) – Mitch Rhodes

[Peace candle](#) - Jan Siemens

**[Offering Prayer](#)**

You may send a check to the church office, transfer money electronically through your bank, or through a [PayPal link on the church website](#).

*When Giving Is All We Have*

*We give because someone gave to us.  
We give because nobody gave to us.*

*We give because giving has changed us.  
We give because giving could have changed us.*

*We have been better for it,  
We have been wounded by it-*

*Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,  
Big, though small, diamond in wood nails.*

*Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,  
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:  
Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,  
Mine to yours, yours to mine.*

*You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.  
Together we are simple green. You gave me*

*What you did not have, and I gave you  
What I had to give-together, we made*

*Something greater from the difference.*

*-Alberto Rios*

Children's time: Magdalena and Isai Horst

Scripture Reading: Aaron Sawatsky-Kingsley  
Joshua 4: 1-7

Storytelling: Kim Kurtz  
(see text below)

Music of Response: Rachel Hostetler, Scott, Leah and Aaron Hochstetler  
SS #121 Nothing is lost on the breath of God

## **Prayers and Sharing**

Share prayer requests by filling out the online form [at this link](#). You may continue to do this throughout each week. Prayer requests are sent out to the congregation via the Assembly listserv on Wednesdays, and are also included in the Pastoral Prayer each Sunday.

## **Pastoral Prayer**

(The pastoral prayer was not included in the pre-recorded video of the service. If you are worshipping at home or with a small group, you are encouraged to share requests and pray together. You may choose to read the text of the pastoral prayer included here. Or: if you join the “Virtual House Church” meeting on Zoom, Sunday at 10 AM, one of the pastors will lead live sharing and will offer a live pastoral prayer as part of that Zoom meeting.)

### **Pastoral Prayer by Scott Coulter**

God of mercy and healing,  
you who hear the cries of those in need,  
receive these petitions of your people  
that all who are troubled  
may know peace, comfort, and courage.

We pray for the sick  
whether with COVID-19 or with more familiar illnesses  
that they would be surrounded by loving care  
and that they would know healing and wholeness

We pray for health care workers  
that they would know the support of their communities  
that they would be cared for themselves  
even as they dedicate themselves to their vocation to care for others

We pray for our children  
for their education and for their social and emotional development  
and that they would be formed into a generation that cares for justice  
justice for our shared ecosystem and for our shared political community  
justice for all, including for those lives that far too often are overlooked because they  
supposedly don't matter

We pray for teachers  
that their voices would be heard  
and that they would be cared for  
as they are such highly valued members of our community  
and that they would be able to have meaningful, positive connection with their students in the  
coming months

We pray for those who have lost their security, and who face great uncertainty in the time ahead  
especially for those who are suffering joblessness, homelessness, a loss of income, or a loss of  
health,  
we pray for hope for them, for a hope that is tangible, for a hope that is not too far off to seem

real.

We pray for the oppressed, and for the unjustly imprisoned  
we pray that you would empower them and bring them liberation  
we pray that you would raise up allies for them,  
allies with energy and wisdom who will support the work of their liberation over the long haul

We pray for local, state, and national government officials  
that they would have access to good information  
that they would have wisdom to make good decisions  
that they would have accountability to make decisions that are good for all people in their  
charge, including the least of these

We pray for the church in all its forms  
that we would be faithful to our calling in trying times  
that we would continue to deepen our knowledge of You  
that we would embody Your love to our neighbors  
that we would be adaptive to new circumstances

Steadfast God,  
teach us your way and your truth.  
Root us in you alone,  
help us to grow in grace and love,  
that we may fulfill our role and our work  
in the reign of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Benediction:** Mitch Rhodes

You hardly imagined  
standing here,  
everything you ever loved  
suddenly returned to you  
looking you in the eye  
and calling your name.

And now  
you do not know  
how to abide this ache  
in the center  
of your chest  
where a door  
slams shut  
and swings open

at the same time,  
turning on the hinge  
of your aching  
and hopeful heart.

I tell you  
this is not a banishment  
from the garden.

This is an invitation,  
a choice,  
a threshold  
a gate.

This is your life

calling to you  
from a place  
you could never  
have dreamed  
but now that you  
have glimpsed its edge  
you can not imagine  
choosing any other way.

So let the tears come  
as anointing,  
as consecration,  
and then  
let them go.  
Let this blessing  
gather itself around you.

Let it give you  
what you will need  
for this journey.

You will not remember  
the words-  
they do not matter.  
All you need to remember  
is how it sounded  
when you stood  
in the place of death  
and heard the living  
call your name.

**-Jan Richardson**

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**Thank you to everyone** who contributed to the worship materials for this week!

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**Other Assembly ongoing events:**

For All Events: Zoom Meeting ID: 999-527-5153, password: AMC

**Call to prayer:** Join us on Zoom at 12 noon, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, for a brief time of reading this week's psalm (from the lectionary) and prayer.

**Sunday Worship: "Virtual House Church"** – Join us Sundays at 10 am on Zoom if you'd like to join a live group of Assembly participants online in watching that week's pre-recorded worship service together. We will also have a time of live sharing before the pastoral prayer. We will wrap this up in time for the online fellowship break at 11 am (see below).

**Community building:** Join us for an online fellowship break, Sundays at 11 am, via Zoom (you'll need to provide your own coffee).

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Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday to Rylan Morris! You can read more about Rylan in the AssemblyLine



Happy 13th Birthday to Leah Hochstetler! You can read more about Leah in the AssemblyLine



Happy 90th Birthday to Sue Burkholder! You can read more about Sue in the AssemblyLine

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### **Small Acts of Remembrance**

**By Kim Kurtz**

Given this summer series of SMALL THINGS, I have been tasked to share my thoughts on “Small Acts of Remembrance.” I believe we often equate remembrance with a loss but I would like to suggest that acts of remembrance should be not only paired with loss but also with moments of significance.

In formulating my thoughts, I decided it might be helpful to define “Acts of Remembrance”. So, I went to the internet. My favorite definition for the word remembrance is “something that serves to keep in or bring to mind.” This resonates with me as a visual learner who often resorts to symbols or objects to “hold what is.” I have found that it is important to mark and hold moments...joyful or painful...as a strategy for navigating, learning, and growing.

I love this poem by an unknown author...” The tide recedes but leaves behind bright seashells on the sand. The sun goes down, but gentle warmth still lingers on the land. The music stops

and yet it echoes on in sweet refrains...for every joy that passes, something beautiful remains.” I would even venture to say that “for every joy or sorrow that passes, something beautiful remains. And therefore, I feel that it is important to “hold what is” in outward acts of remembrance.

Here are a few stories...

As a young mother living in Philadelphia, I loved the city but longed for and held dear to my heart my childhood memories of farm life in Yoder, Kansas. According to my parents, I was a city slicker by day but a farmer in my heart. In the heat of Philadelphia summers, I would pack up our kids and make our way to a nearby farm, orchard, or farmer’s market to pick or buy fresh fruits and vegetables. These fruits and vegetables became a way of holding on to my past...peaches perfectly placed in jars for canning and husked and cut off corn kernels for freezing.

**Jars of peaches and zip lock bags of corn kernels...small acts of remembrance to hold the values of farm life.**

In the fall of 2014, after taking a year leave from Goshen Community Schools, I was hired to teach special education at Goshen College. I was ready and eager for this year of change. What I was not expecting from this transition was my physical and emotional exhaustion due to teaching and parenting that quickly led to a diagnosis of clinical depression. In a matter of weeks, I was flying high in my new role and then found myself plummeting to the bottom of the depression pit. I lost all confidence in my ability to teach, parent, cook, and just navigate life. My perspective was skewed and activities that were engrained in my psyche and part of my daily routines became challenging and impossible to navigate. Every year salsa making had been a joy and a life-giving activity preformed without much thought. My family loves salsa so growing my own tomatoes, peppers, and onions was part of the tradition. That year when salsa making time rolled around, I was depressed. My mom who came from Kansas to help me during my low time decided it was important to continue with my “normal” activities, so she orchestrated the salsa making day. Given my depression, this beloved activity was too overwhelming and anxiety producing and literally measuring out a tablespoon of mustard seed was painful and challenging. During this time, I had no appetite and for some reason, my mom decided that hamburgers from McDonalds was the food for me. Thankfully, my depression came on fast and left fast as my body does respond quickly to medication and support. Several months later, when life had returned to normal, I felt the need to remember and hold my experience with depression. I wanted to remember how debilitating my depression was and celebrate the good health I was again experiencing. My depression taught me about the fragility of life and not to take for granted joy and happiness and the importance of celebrating the little things. So...for lunch one day, I celebrated with Yabi. We got McDonalds hamburgers, placed a jar of mustard seed on the table, lit a candle, and thanked God for salsa making and the ability to measure out a tablespoon of mustard seed. We also relished in having good appetites and ate our hamburgers. I do need to say that if I ever find myself in a similar situation, I might need to request Impossible, plant based burgers from Burger King instead. 😊

**Mustard seed, hamburgers, and a lit candle...small act of remembrance for the gift of life including depression and happiness.**

During the 2017-2018 school year, I had 2 girls and 6 boys in my Life Skills classroom at Prairie View Elementary. My two girls Lorelei and Mya communicated fiercely...not with words but

through their eyes, smiles, and laughter. Both girls relied on their wheelchairs for mobility and had medical needs deeming them medically fragile. On March 22, 2018, Lorelei died after a lengthy hospitalization and a several week stint in hospice. A little more than 3 weeks later on April 14, 2018, Mya died unexpectedly after a successful hip surgery. The deaths' of Lorelei and Mya, within weeks of one another, left us shocked and heartbroken. With family involvement we had two separate memorial services in our classroom. We held the girls close to our hearts as we celebrated their lives by holding Lorelei's favorite blanket and Mya's favorite stuffed purple horse. We looked at pictures of them and listened to the reading of their favorite books. We sat in silence as each ones favorite song played. Patrice Karst's book the Invisible String was read and served as a reminder that "People who love each other are always connected by a very special String made of Love"...an invisible string.

Tears, laughter, the blanket and stuffed purple horse, and photos helped us to hold Lorelei and Mya close...not physically but in our hearts during those spring days of sadness. We continued to remember our girls and in the Fall as trees were planted in their memory while the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class placed pinwheels in the chain link fence. Lorelei and Mya's families helped to plant the trees by adding shovels of soil until the trees were secured in a new home of fresh dirt. A "Buddy Bench" was also built and placed in the playground as a reminder of their lives. The words of remembrance on that Fall day....

"We have come together to celebrate the life of Lorelei and Mya. These two girls gave us the gifts of true presence. Their smiles, eyes, and laughter drew us in and melted our hearts. They were not worried about how we performed, what we were wearing, how we looked...they just wanted us to sit or cuddle with them, hold their hand, read to them, and to be present...simply present. We were always enough...just as we were. They helped us to learn that sometimes the best gift in life is the ability to just be with one another without judgement and with pure acceptance and love.

Lorelei and Mya you are loved and cherished and will be remembered."

**Blankets, stuffed purple horses, trees, and a bench...small acts of remembrance for precious lives.**





The summer of 2019 milk weed popped up in my rain garden. I was so very excited and babied these tall, stately stalks that bore light pink clusters of flowers and had a distinctively sweet smell. I was hopeful that these stately stalks would provide a home and nourishment for monarch butterfly eggs that eventually would hatch into caterpillars. And...Yes...sometime in June caterpillars were spotted munching away on the green leaves. We as a family harvested several caterpillars and strategically placed them in a butterfly net that sat in our dining room. Daily, all six of us would observe the movement of the caterpillars and re-place fresh milkweed leaves. We expectantly watched and waited as the caterpillars turned into a chrysalis. On the morning that Hannah, our daughter, was leaving to begin a Gap year with MCC serving in Bolivia, we noticed that the green chrysalis tainted with a gold lacing had turned black. With tears and hugs we said our goodbyes and well wishes for Hannah...Eric and Hannah headed to Pennsylvania and the boys and I headed to school. After returning home from school, I went directly to the butterfly net and found that the butterfly had crawled out of its cocoon, stretched its beautiful wings and was flitting around the net. This emergence of our butterfly was reason to celebrate. Our three sons, Yabi, Seth, Kia, and I carefully carried the net outside. We said words of blessing and gratefulness for this miracle of transformation. We released our butterfly and watched her gracefully fly away into the tree leaves. Go safely butterfly...go safely Hannah. The symbol of the butterfly continued to give Hannah strength and courage throughout her 8 months of living in Bolivia. She loved deeply her Bolivian family, her work with children, the culture and language, and even though her daily life there was not always easy it was life altering and life changing. Two weeks ago, as an act of remembrance, Hannah had a butterfly tattooed on her arm.

**Transitions, butterflies, and tattoos...small act of remembering, letting go, and believing in transformation and new life.**



We have a small hill that unites our back yard and our garden fields. This hill has been what I affectionately call my “therapy” hill. I find weeding and planting on this hill very therapeutic. I can cry, scream, laugh, throw dirt, pull weeds, dig holes, plant, replant, and mulch all while watching the miracle of life as bushes and flowers have grown and matured over the years. Planting plants has always been form of “marking” important moments. These plantings can be just for the pure joy of it or in response to a disappointment or loss. These intentional plantings have been helpful to me...a way to acknowledge what is, feel the emotions of anger, sadness, disappointment, or joy, and then move forward in ways that are healthier and more productive than harboring and becoming resentful. The growing plant or bush serves as a reminder of “that” moment in time.

With Covid, Jacque, a dear friend of Hannah’s, who was studying at the University of Indy when institutions of education shut down came to live with us. She became a beloved family member and helped us welcome Hannah home from Bolivia when her term was ended early due to the virus. She supported Yabi and Kia through e-learning and family quarantine and became big sister to the boys, a second daughter to us, and a confidant and support for Hannah.

When Jacque was 9 years old she lost both her parents to murder and suicide. She is a survivor. She has defied the odds and this Summer we celebrated her graduation, as an honor student, from the University of Indianapolis. Her positive outlook on life, fun and energetic

spirit, and her ability to foster healthy relationships with others has given her the edge to keep going in the midst of deep pain and loss.

She holds her parents close to her heart, speaks about them often, and grieves deeply. She has created strategies for dealing with her feeling of loss and sadness. She is a runner, a poet, an artist, and invests deeply in relationships with peers and their families. Her birth parents are no longer living but given her ability to build meaningful relationships, she claims 4 moms and 3 dads (parents her friends) as her own.

On Easter Sunday, our family had a service of remembrance...planting sunflowers on the hill. Jacque planted a flower in honor of her parents. We placed stones of gratitude and also remembered Yabi and Kia's birth parents who are also no longer living. We held each other in the moment through our tears...a holy moment to remember and feel.

Last week, as we anticipated Jacque's transition and move back to Indy where she will be searching for a job and waiting to hear if she was accepted into the Peace Corps, Jacque's 4 moms, 3 dads, and her closest 4 friends joined in a celebration of transition and sending service. We gathered, showering her with words of blessing and words of gratitude for the young woman she has become. Of course we also had yummy treats!

And,,,the flower Jacque planted on Easter Sunday for her parents three months ago? Believe it or not, on the day we celebrated and blessed her upcoming journey back to Indy, that plant, the one we thought had died because of the late frost, had bloomed...beautiful yellow petals. I choose to believe that this was a sign from her mama looking down at her smiling reassuring her that she is going to be just fine.

**Flower blooms and stones...small acts of remembrance that help us to hold "what is" and mark our sacred moments.**



Again..."The tide recedes but leaves behind bright seashells on the sand. The sun goes down, but gentle warmth still lingers on the land. The music stops, and yet it echoes on in sweet refrains...For every joy and sorrow that passes, something beautiful remains.

In closing may we remember Wendel Barry's encouragement to celebrate the "holiness of life." And "how small a thing can be pleasing, how little in this hard world it takes to satisfy the mind and bring it to its rest."