

ISSUE 13 · MAY 2026

NORTH VALLEY FRIENDS CHURCH

Official Newsletter

Goodness Reflected in an Online Listserv Meet NVFC's Lisa McMinn

The North Valley Friends Church listserv can sometimes be the target of kind-hearted jokes. Where else can someone in our community unload Timbers tickets, find crutches for a sprained ankle, get recommendations for a plumber, and request post-Thanksgiving turkey carcasses, all on the same day?

For Lisa McMinn, the petitioner for a turkey carcass that's now central to NVFC mythology, the listserv symbolizes the goodness of our church. "It's hard to say what I like best, but maybe it's captured by what the listserv represents," Lisa said, "a community expressing its faith in love."

That's clear not only in the largess of a community group, Lisa added, but also in the ways NVFC cares for folks by sharing meals, volunteering to work with houseless folks each week, standing in front of Iglesia Los Amigos Sunday mornings, conveying safety to our immigrant friends .

"What I like best is how NV invites me to enter a contemplative loving space with God, and then encourages me to move from contemplation to action—faith expressed in love," Lisa said.

Lisa and her husband, Mark, have been coming to NVFC for about 8½ years, and Lisa now serves as the Minister of Pastoral Care & Spiritual Formation, a role she's held since the fall. Their journey to NVFC might have been circuitous, though through that journey, they have found the place that feels like home.



MEET NVFC'S LISA MCMINN, CONTINUED

Their original encounter with Quakers was less comfortable, Lisa said. The couple moved to Newberg so Mark could begin teaching at what was then George Fox College. They tried Newberg Friends Church, but Quakers seemed weird—or, as Lisa put it, the “Quakers felt foreign to our Conservative Baptist, Plymouth Brethren, Evangelical Free Church backgrounds

“That an ‘Inner Light’ was in everyone, and you all ‘worshipped’ by listening together in silence and (maybe most of all) affirmed women as ministers . . . well it was too different, too much, and not altogether trustworthy at first,” Lisa said. As the McMinnns started getting to know Quakers, they learned to love the “contemplative, simple, peaceable, yet compassionate and justice minded spirit of Friends.”

After eight years in Newberg, Lisa and Mark moved to the Midwest to take teaching jobs at Wheaton College, where they stayed for the next 13 years, returning to Newberg and to Newberg Friends Church in 2006. After the Northwest Yearly Meeting split in 2017, they began worshipping at Wayside Friends, but Lisa said “we increasingly felt drawn to the breadth and depth of North Valley’s mission.

“We’d always respected how NV seemed to put action to words around peace keeping, tending creation, and care and justice for people living at various margins,” she said.

Those values are especially important to the McMinnns, who live out the principles of creation care, peace, and justice on their farm and retreat space, called Fern Creek. They’ve written about their farm and the virtues their work embodies in several collaborative projects, including *Dirt and the Good Life* (Barclay Press, 2012) and *An Invitation to Slow: Resist the Speed of Now, Make Space for the Quiet, and Cultivate an Intentional Life* (Cascade Books, 2024).

Lisa has also authored several books across a number of subjects, from raising strong daughters to human sexuality to the “art of savoring life.” Before her retirement, she served for over twenty years as a professor of sociology at Wheaton and then at George Fox University.



MEET NVFC'S LISA MCMINN, CONTINUED

She's only "technically" semi-retired, though, as she continues to offer spiritual direction two times a week, hosts retreats at Fern Creek, and serves part-time at NVFC. She also keeps a small herd of Nigerian Dwarf goats, including breeding them, milking them, and making cheese and goat milk soap. She and Mark have vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens, and every summer they share their blackberry bounty with NVFC at a Fern Creek gathering.

The rooted life Lisa leads is somewhat different than the one she had growing up. She was the daughter of an Air Force pilot, and although she spent most of childhood at the Davis Monthon Airforce Base in Tucson, Arizona, friends came and went. In the ninth grade, her family moved to Forest Grove, into the house her great-grandfather had built at the beginning of the 20th century.

Even though her family had visited Oregon often before the move, Forest Grove didn't initially feel like home. "It took a good while to adjust to small town civilian life, and to feel like Oregon was my home," Lisa said. "But now, some 50 years later, my roots are deep, and I can't imagine living elsewhere."

The first Sunday after her family's move to Oregon, she met Mark. "I raked hazelnuts and picked up walnuts at his family farm, just outside of Forest Grove," Lisa said, "dreaming of one day living on some sort of farm myself. Maybe often enough dreaming Mark would be part of that."

He has, of course, been part of her dream and life on the farm. The couple married 48 years ago, and have three grown daughters, three sons-in-law, and six grandkids between the ages of 12 and 16. Her grandchildren enjoy overnights at the farm, and who wouldn't, especially when there are goats to cuddle, blackberries to eat, and good conversation with Lisa and Mark.

"I love the relationships I have with my adult daughters and our grandchildren," Lisa said, "who bring me joy, and help me stay flexible and asking good questions about how I'm living in the world the way I am." Part of that living now includes ministering at NVFC, where she said she has an excuse to get to know people individually.

She encapsulates her role at NVFC this way: "As an introvert, a staff position gives me the bump I needed to sometimes barge into your lives as I have. What I don't like is sensing that being a 'released minister' sets me apart from you in some way. I want you to see me as you always have: a fellow pilgrim walking this life journey with curiosity, wonder, a desire to be whimsical, and ALSO one prone to trip up from time to time, drop a ball, and not be whatever you expect or imagine I ought to be as a 'released minister.'"

NVFC is grateful for Lisa's willingness to journey alongside us with curiosity and wonder, for her wisdom, and for her legendary request on the NVFC listserv, where a turkey carcass can become an invitation to community, in the best way possible.

**PRACTICING SURRENDER: ENTERING THE FLOW OF ABUNDANCE
(FROM LISA MCMINN'S BLOG, REFLECTIONS ON THE ORDINARY)**

Late last year I began taking a daily walk through what we still call the Young Forest (planted with ten-inch pencil-thin seedlings 20 years old, now reaching toward the sky at 70 plus feet). It takes less than five minutes to walk unless I linger, which I sometimes do. I slip out of my garden shoes and make my way barefoot.

Silly, I suppose, this hankering to connect to God and pray in this way. But it feels like an invitation into something unexpected--both uncomfortable and glorious--and I'm curious what I might experience and hear from God as I come in my tender-footed frailty, whispering prayers along the way. Tender-footed or not (and less so as the weeks unfold), it seems a simple grounding practice to adopt when the world atop of this good earth feels ripply and uncertain.

Of late, I wonder what is mine to do in uncertain times. Into what faithful action am I being invited to participate? Sometimes the way seems clear, and other times not so much. I wonder if Abraham, when following God into the desert with Isaac to make a sacrifice became increasingly troubled by the lack of one, something Isaac at least expressed. Abraham had chosen to trust God, to walk in faithfulness to the present moment, to surrender to and rely on God. He walked, I imagine, trusting in a God of abundance, and not letting fear of scarcity send him down a different path.

I was reminded of an old book that shaped me more than 20 years ago, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*. I found my little copy tucked into my great-grandfather's wood and glass bookshelf, and spent a morning revisiting it.

Caussade, like so many contemplatives before and after him, reminds us to begin simply with trusting God's abundant outpouring of grace in the universe, a love which pervades all things. The "secret" to living in the present moment is simply allowing ourselves to be borne along the tide of God's outpouring grace. What this looks like, Caussade says, is attending to the task of the present moment with simple, faithful obedience. Just now it is adding wood to the fire. Now it is standing watch in front of a building where a group has gathered to study English as a second language. And now it is to hold the hand of friend who is grieving, bearing witness to her loss.

Sometimes what is in front of me interrupts my well-laid plans. It's the unexpected phone call asking if I can help with this or that. It is the car that breaks down on the way to Someplace Important, the lost dog that wanders into the yard and wants to be found. If I am willing to see them as such, these interruptions are invitations into a sacred encounter with God, as all moments are.

Even if tending to the present moment is refreshingly simple, I find it frustratingly hard to put into practice. Maybe I want something that requires special education, skills or gifts, rather than merely a willingness to turn toward--to surrender to--whatever is before me in this moment. Especially when that means turning away from what I had planned.

PRACTICING SURRENDER: CONTINUED

I find it challenging to turn away from the plan I've made for the day to tend to something else. Maybe I assume sticking to my plan will help keep me safe from that which is uncertain and ripply in the world because it represents control. Maybe I'm living from a posture of scarcity so controlling my minutes and dollars and possessions assures I'll have enough.

Even if I believe that whatever I'm asked to relinquish in the moment pales in comparison to the abundance I fall into (assuming surrendering means I will be borne along in the flow of God's prodigious love and able to be a conduit of that love), *still*, surrendering to the present moment takes an intention I need to practice. And daily. So I wondered, today, if coming barefoot to the woods is perhaps a primal invitation to practice surrendering. To fall into foolishness, as it were, trusting I'll be caught and held as I attend to a deeply-earthly satisfying moment (albeit uncomfortably cold sometimes). My need for control and comfort are relinquished for a few moments as I take off my shoes and make my way into the woods.

Just now I'm soaking up warmth from the earth while standing at the far edge of the woods looking out at the winter sky, my feet grounded in wild geranium that grows year round. I sense a certainty that God's invitation to surrender comes nestled in abundance.

And prayers are whispered and gratitudes spoken.



Image and blog post from Lisa McMinn's blog, which you can find at FernCreek.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO NVFC MEMBERS FOR THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS!



Nathanael Ankeny ran a personal best time of 3:04.45 at the Eugene Marathon on April 26. To achieve that time, Nathanael had to average 7:03 miles over 26.2 miles, and from his official race photo, he made that pace look easy. The time also qualified Nathanael for the Boston Marathon next April, a significant achievement for any runner.

Photo courtesy of the Eugene Marathon.



Joel Mayward received this year's George Fox University's 2025-26 Undergraduate Research Award, which was announced on April 21. Just this year, Joel has published two books, with two more forthcoming. On his award citation, his chair said "when Joel puts pen to paper, he aims to bring out something good, true, and beautiful." Joel also writes for his movie criticism site, Cinemayard, from which this picture was taken.