

WELCOME TO ALL who are guests this morning. We hope you feel warmly received and experience a time of worship. Please feel free to contact Pastor Susan if you would like to visit.

HISPANIC GROUP IS HOSTING a piñata celebration at Tabor College this afternoon at 4:30 p.m. Pray for a good time of fellowship with Spanish speaking Tabor students. Our FMC Mission and Service Fund provides funds for food for this event.

FMC ADVENT CHOIR REHEARSES at 7 p.m. All are welcome to join the music fun which becomes worship together. Choir sings Dec. 18.

OFFERINGS DURING ADVENT will be received per our regular offering schedule. In addition, during the offering time each Sunday, the children will collect infant receiving blankets from those who bring the blankets to the worship service. You may purchase receiving blankets in stores, or you may purchase one or more any Sunday morning prior to worship at a table in the foyer. The blankets will be our contribution to MCC infant kits. **Please note MCC infant kit guidelines:** Receiving blankets must be lightweight fleece or flannel and minimum length of 36 inches. Our Christmas Eve offering will be for the work around the world of MCC.

A LARGE ADVENT POSTER is located on several tables in the fellowship hall. All ages are invited to color portions of the poster anytime throughout Advent! Let's complete the poster by Christmas Eve!

REHEARSALS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE Worship Service will be Sunday mornings from 9:30-10 a.m. (Dec. 11, 18) in sanctuary and Wednesday evenings from 6:30-7 p.m. (Dec. 7, 14, 21) in sanctuary. A small group of 3rd - 7th graders will remain on Wednesday evenings to rehearse from 7-7:45 p.m.

BOB AND JUDY JANTZ have chosen their parent's memorial money to provide a beautiful rustic nativity scene for the "west lawn" of our church. Bob Jantz' father, Art, loved the Christmas season, especially the carol, Silent Night. Art and Linda's memorial also provided us with the white tables you can now see within our building. Rest in peace, Art and Linda.

JIM AND SUSAN JANTZEN will have their younger son, Robert, around for two weeks, working on house projects. Pastor Susan will be present in the office during her regular morning office hours, but will be taking some time off in the afternoons these two weeks.

OUR CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP will again be a time of open sharing. We invite you to share moments of meaning and/or joy. Our service will begin at 10 a.m.

CHANGES FOR FIRST THRESHINGS. December will be Pat Bartel's last issue as compiler and editor of FMC's First Threshings. For the past 26 years, Pat has generously gathered church news, devotional thoughts and interviews of those among us. There will a time to thank Pat later for her service to us in this faith family. For now, Ministries Council is interested to know if someone among us might be called to create a communication piece for our congregation. Please be in prayer about this. If you have questions feel free to speak to Doug Miller, Pat Bartel, Pastor Susan, or any member of Ministries Council. Thank you for your ideas and thoughts.

THE ADVENT BANNER:

The advent banner incorporates a color gradation from the bottom to top that suggests a rising sun and its outstretched rays. This portrayal of dawn symbolizes a new day, new beginnings – certainly one of the messages of advent. The sun is also a traditional symbol for Christ, based on the prophecy of Malachi 4:2: *But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.*

The three trumpets formed near the bottom remind us that musical instruments frequently symbolize praise and joy – heralds of good news. Colors also have symbolic meaning. The strongest color in this banner, the golden yellow of the sun, has traditionally symbolized divinity.

The undulating bottom edge of the banner evokes our rolling prairie landscape. The advent events did not only occur in some distant time and geographic location. They occur in our own time and space.

THIS YEAR'S ADVENT BULLETIN COVERS are made from satellite images of various locations around the world, from Somalia to Michigan. Advent is a time of year when we take a step back to look at the beauty that God wants us to participate in, even when the immediate landscape seems remote and bleak. We hope the imagery helps you reflect during this season. Katherine & Derek Hamm

FMC WILL HOST A COMMUNITY CAROL SING on Friday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Holly Swartzendruber, Jen Stephenson, Emily Sternfeld-Dunn, and J. Bradley Baker will lead the caroling. The evening will also feature a performance of Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*. Join us in celebrating the Christmas season with song!

YEAR-END GIVING: please consider your year-end giving to First Mennonite well in advance of the last days of the year. This helps our treasurer be less swamped – it is the treasurer's holiday as well as ours! Thank you for your support of our congregation!

TONIGHT, HOLLY SWARTZENDRUBER will be singing a solo in Tabor College's Oratorio Chorus and Community Orchestra presentation of Handel's *Messiah*, conducted by Dr. Bradley Vogel. Watch this beautiful experience unfold at 7 p.m. at Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church.

ANNUAL REPORTS: We are gathering all the data for the 2016 annual report. If you lead a committee or have a report to share with us, please do so as soon as possible. If you would like to get a copy of your report last year to use as a reference, please let Becky know. Annual reports are due **December 15!**

MENTAL HEALTH: Holidays bring mental health struggles for many of us, men and women. The following link takes you to Prairie View's quarterly periodical – full of helpful material. Copies of the magazine are also available in the narthex.

https://issuu.com/prairieviewinc/docs/a_new_view_fall_2016_winter_2017_fi.

LAWRENCE HART, who is a Cheyenne Peace Chief and Mennonite minister, and his wife, Betty, were honored October 8 for their many decades of service to the Mennonite church. Lawrence's life-long spirituality intertwined Mennonites' and tribal people's peace positions. At the celebration were representatives from MCC, Northern Cheyennes, MC USA, Canada's Native Ministries, WDC and Bethel College (Harts' alma mater). There's an article detailing the celebration on the bulletin board north of our photo board.

THE YEAR-END REPORT from Ciara Cox, director of the Main Street Ministries Food Bank is posted on the bulletin board. It provides some interesting data from 2016 including the amount of food received, the number of households served, etc.

THE KANSAS MENNONITE MEN'S CHORUS invites men, 8 to 80 plus, to "Sing So That Others May Live!" Concert offerings raise money for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) projects in relief, development and conscience raising activities around the world. Music style ranges from gospel, folk, and hymn arrangements for 4 part male choruses. Men of Hillsboro are among early organizers and leaders in creating this mission outreach which utilizes a unique tradition and ability among us, that of singing praises to God in four-part harmony. Join the hundreds of men who give a few hours of time to make such a wonderful experience possible. Practices begin in late Feb. and concerts are in April, May and June. See bulletin board for more details.

THE MCPHERSON COMMUNITY BRASS CHOIR under the direction of Jerry Toews will be giving a CHRISTMAS BRASS CONCERT in the Historic Alexanderwohl Church Sun., Dec 11 at 7 p.m. Alexanderwohl is located 1 mile north of Goessel on K-15 highway.

Among Our Friends

We lift in prayer: Mieka & Casey Bartel, Susie Kliever,
Nadine Friesen, Jim Jantzen

BETHEL COLLEGE:

TODAY (Sun., Dec. 4) – 31st annual Lighting of the Green at Bethel College, 8 p.m.

Kauffman Museum at Bethel College seeks artifacts, letters, photos and documents that tell the story of conscientious objectors during World War I. To learn more, or if you have an item for donation or long-term loan, please contact museum director Annette LeZotte at alezotte@bethelks.edu or 316-283-1612.

Each year, the Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship, or ICPF, holds its annual conference at one of the Mennonite or affiliated colleges or universities in North America. This year, the conference will be at Bethel College, Feb. 10-12, 2017. Since 1953, ICPF has aimed to “promote the cause of biblical nonresistance by providing various channels for sharing ideas among college peace groups,” according to its constitution. **Bethel senior Jacob Miller has the following request:** “I am the food planning coordinator for the ICPF conference that will meet at Bethel. Would members of your congregation be willing to donate snacks or breakfast items to supplement our conference’s food needs? Anyone interested should contact me (jacobmiller@bethelks.edu or 785-477-1820), or the conference coordinator, Sharon Kniss (skniss@bethelks.edu), at any time with questions or for more information.”

MCC:

You're invited to the MCC Christmas Soiree! Please join MCC for a delicious and fun holiday celebration on Thursday, December 15 from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. at the MCC Center in North Newton (121 E. 30th). At 6 p.m. we will hear from MCC International Volunteer Exchange Participants about the work they are doing in Kansas and to hear about Christmas traditions from their home countries of Laos and Egypt. Good food, live music and great fellowship - everyone is welcome to join in the fun!

Take chances. Make mistakes. Get messy. Be challenged. Learn some things. Teach some things. Spend a year living somewhere that you never dreamed you'd go... Start now at salt.mcc.org, find answers to frequently asked questions, assignment options and apply!
Contact sharonnelson@mcc.org for more information.