



# First Mennonite Church

## Midweek E-Newsletter

December 9, 2020

### From Pastor Tom

This week I share with you a piece written by Deryll Amstutz, which follows beautifully my sermon this past week featuring John the Baptist, "Wilderness Repentance."

In August 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote a letter in response to a public statement of concern and caution issued by eight white religious leaders. The statement had called Dr. King's activities "unwise and untimely." He wrote in longhand from his jail cell in Birmingham Alabama. He was imprisoned for being a leader in nonviolent demonstrations against segregation.

John, the Baptizer, was imprisoned by King Herod. I wonder if he, before being executed, wrote a letter from his prison cell to the religious leaders of his day. The leaders who failed to accept him as being of God.

Would John's letter have gone something like this?

### From prison,

I write these words, the word of the LORD!

The word which caused Elizabeth and Zachariah  
My mother and father,  
To name me John.

That word which drove me to live my life in the wilderness.

The word I proclaimed in the wilderness.  
The very word promised to our ancestors,  
and proclaimed by the holy prophets from of old;  
that we would be saved from our enemies  
and from the hand of all who hate us;  
that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,  
might serve the Lord without fear,  
that we in holiness and righteousness all our days.  
might give light to those who sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
and guide our feet into the way of peace.

So, turn away from your sins and ask for forgiveness,  
from the One who made you.

Turn from your trust that it is your heritage or citizenship that saves you.  
For the Lord can turn the stones of these prison walls  
into children of Abraham.

It is the fruit that proves the tree.

Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit  
is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Believe me, even now the ax lies ready at the root of the trees.

You have two coats;  
share with anyone who has no coat.

You have food;  
do likewise with anyone who has none.

In your business, be honest.  
Fulfill your obligations and,  
Don't take advantage of the powerless.

I cried out in the wilderness, Repent!

I washed with the waters of the Jordan,

Coming though, is the One who will purify with God's Spirit.

So prepare yourselves,

Portray the purification of true repentance.

Prepare yourselves to receive the One who though yet unseen,  
He is coming.

He is the One whose mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

The One who will scatter the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

The One who will bring down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lift up the lowly.

The One who will fill the hungry with good things  
while sending the rich away empty.

God does not see as humans see.

Whether you see yourself as the most important  
or the lowliest;

Be you pillars of your community,  
leaders of the church,  
or wealthy beyond recognition,

I tell you now that your prominence and prestige,  
your importance and stature,

your money and privilege, hold no value in the court of the Lord.

It is only as you put yourself on the road of repentance  
that you enter the Kingdom.

## Ways to Help

- ☞ **MCC Hygiene Kit** donations may be placed on the table in the Narthex.
- ☞ **Poinsettias** shared with the church during this Christmas season may be placed near the windows in the Fellowship Hall.
- ☞ **A memorable, meaningful and unique MCC gift to give this Christmas!** Grab a piece of MCC history to use in a modern day Mennonite feeding station - your home! Get one for yourself and order more for family and friends. Hang it on the wall in your kitchen or dining room, display it on a shelf or use it as a serving tray! Remember the kitchen at your church, too. Each tray was uniquely handcrafted by an artisan in Siberia using Siberian hardwood. The tray is 16" in diameter and 2" deep. Suggested donation per tray is \$150. Full details and pictures are available at <https://mcc.org/feeding-station-tray>.
- ☞ **Free resource from MCC: Learning about generosity!** Help children learn about generosity with MCC printable worksheets including activities, a story, a craft to make and Christmas gift ideas that benefit global neighbors with colorable greeting cards, find it all at [mcc.org/generosity](https://mcc.org/generosity). Explore the full list of Christmas giving options from MCC at [mcc.org/christmas](https://mcc.org/christmas).

## Upcoming Events

- ☞ **First Mennonite leaders** continue to carefully and prayerfully consider plans for Christmas Eve. If we are able to gather in the sanctuary, physical distancing and masks will be required. We also urge pre-arranged seating for all those considering attending. Judy Harder, along with Maura Wiebe are creating a seating chart. Families with children and youth plus leaders and musicians have already been assigned seats. We now urge all additional folks wanting to attend to phone or email Judy or Maura and give their contact information to be called about seating options. We respect changes in plans, even last minute changes. Do not hesitate to contact us with those tentative plans. The service will begin at 6:30 p.m.
- ☞ **All households** are invited to email a photo of your family with your Advent Wreath to Deryll Amstutz ([jmadda1974@gmail.com](mailto:jmadda1974@gmail.com)) before December 20. We will use the photos during the Christmas Eve service, and will remind us of our bond with each other during this Season.
- ☞ **Have yourself a honkin' good holiday at MCC in North Newton!** This drive-thru event on Dec. 11 from 4-6 p.m. is a unique way to safely enjoy some delicious Christmas cheer while supporting the worldwide work of Mennonite Central Committee. Each charcuterie box is composed of seasonal artisan meats and cheeses, olives, fruit, mixed nuts and seasonal treats with crackers served on the side. A box serves two generous appetizer portions. RSVP by 5 p.m. on December 4 to reserve yours! Share your Christmas joy by ordering extra boxes to deliver to family and friends. Take a moment and treat yourself this holiday season! Suggested donation per box is \$25. Email [centralstates@mcc.org](mailto:centralstates@mcc.org) to reserve your charcuterie box today! Find more information and photos at [mcc.org/honkin-holiday](https://mcc.org/honkin-holiday).
- ☞ **Join MCC for a series of "MCC and me" webinars to hear more about service opportunities.** Are you ready to step out and into service? To gain new skills and experiences while working for relief, development and peace in the name of Christ? MCC is working to adapt

our programming as the situation with COVID-19 develops. All sessions relate to anticipated service needs, though timing and some other details may be subject to change.

December 9 at 7 p.m. EST: Serving and Learning Together (SALT)

January 13 at 3 p.m. EST: Summer Service leadership program

February 25 at 10 a.m. EST: Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP) summer staff

February 25 at 8 p.m. EST: International service worker

March 6 at 12 p.m. EST: International service worker

March TBD: Mobile Meat Canner

For more information and to register: [mcc.org/mcc-me-webinar-series-service-opportunities](https://mcc.org/mcc-me-webinar-series-service-opportunities).

- ☞ **Everence** will host a *Social Security and retirement income planning* webinar, on Monday, Dec. 14 at 6:30 p.m. Attendees will learn about Social Security strategies, risks that can impact retirement savings and strategies to help income last throughout retirement. This online workshop is free. Register soon by contacting our office at 316-283-3800, 877-467-7294 or [central.kansas@everence.com](mailto:central.kansas@everence.com).
  
- ☞ **You are invited** to a socially distanced Christmas Gathering at **Camp Mennoscah** on Saturday, December 12, at 2:30pm. Camp will provide s'mores and a beautiful outdoor space. **Registration required.** Email [office@campmennoscah.org](mailto:office@campmennoscah.org) or call 620-297-3290. Bring a mask for indoor spaces and those times when you cannot be 6 feet apart. Those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Dress for the weather and don't forget to register!
  
- ☞ **Bethel College alumni and friends are invited to take part in the annual Lighting of the Green on Sunday, Dec. 13, from wherever you are.** Lighting of the Green is a long-standing Bethel Advent tradition celebrating the Light that shines in the darkness, the life and light of Christ who came into the world giving light to all humankind – normally held on the Green in the center of campus. This year, the gathering will take place virtually, **live on Zoom and YouTube** (see links below) with some parts pre-recorded. Please join the Bethel community at **8 p.m. on Dec. 13:** YouTube: <https://youtu.be/LZeLxduHoVk> or Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/98444357235?pwd=N1MzQlpiQ29HQWZlWUs2NGpNWwtlZz09>

## Other Announcements

- ☞ **The WDC Garden December 2020/January/February 2021 issue** is now available for viewing at: <https://mennowdc.org/wdc-garden-december-2020-january-february-2021/>. Learn about how WDC is engaging with racial justice and cultural diversity, the impact of Covid-19 on Hispanic churches, an announcement about Sandra Montes-Martinez as the new WDC Associate Conference Minister (Texas-Based), and more!
  
- ☞ **Camp Mennoscah** is a wonderful place for family gatherings of whatever size! A variety of facilities fit any number of family groupings. Maybe you only need a space during the day for walking the trails or playing disc golf. There is plenty of outdoor space! Contact Camp Mennoscah at 620-297-3290 or [office@campmennoscah.org](mailto:office@campmennoscah.org) to reserve! You are welcome here!

- ☞ **SOOP** (Service Opportunities with our Partners) is accepting applications! Use your gifts and skills to work alongside others in a network of ministries across the church. Flexibly designed for retirees, families, and adults over 25. Visit [MennoniteMission.net/SOOP](https://MennoniteMission.net/SOOP) to learn more!
- ☞ **Youth Venture** is accepting applications for summer 2021! Discover and experience the work that God is doing in the world with a team of other young people as you serve, learn, worship, and build relationships. Visit [MennoniteMission.net/YouthVenture](https://MennoniteMission.net/YouthVenture) to learn more!

## **Weekly Inspirational/Encouraging Bible Verse**

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. -John 14:6