



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

February 3, 2021

From Pastor Tom

Mercy, Lord!

I'm enjoying getting to know the new hymnal *Voices Together!* (And by the way, just because I was on the committee doesn't mean I know it cover to cover yet! ☺) For now, I particularly enjoy the section called "Assurance of Grace" (#s 156-174). It is my hope to include as many of those as possible throughout the sermon series "Shades of Grace."

This past Sunday the quartet sang for its closing song, "Mercy, Mercy, Lord." It was written and published in 1997 by American songwriters Lynn DeShazo and Gary Sadler. Which seems like a long time ago! (And is a long time ago, in the Contemporary Christian music scene.) I don't know if it's a new song for you, but it is for me. Musically, it has a relaxed gospel feel, and is one of those songs that gets stuck in your head.

But the words are what I want to talk about. The word 'mercy' is in many ways a synonym of grace. (Indeed they often go together, as in the Apostle Paul's greeting to Timothy, "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2). Like grace, mercy has a range of meanings, and can certainly mean forgiveness. But I especially think of the word "compassion" as being interchangeable with it—to say to God "Have mercy on me" is a lot like saying "Have compassion on me." The words of the song are as follows.

Refrain

Mercy, mercy, Lord, your mercy is how we are restored;
Mercy, mercy Lord, help us to show your mercy, Lord.

Verse 1

You have been patient with our offenses, you have forgiven all of our sins;
We were deserving only your judgment, but your great mercy triumphed again.

Verse 2

Lord, you have taught us, "Love one another," as you have loved us, so we must love;
Always forbearing, always forgiving, showing to others the mercy we've known.

Lots could be said here, but for now, a few comments about the word "restored." To say we are restored by (or through) God's mercy suggests at least two things. First, that God's mercy restores us to wellness, as from a state of suffering or hardship. In the Psalms, for example, a cry for God's mercy is often a cry for deliverance from persecution (see Ps 123:3-4). And second, God's mercy restores us to right relationship. Verse 1 talks about right relationship with God—specifically by God forgiving our sins. And verse 2 is about right relationship with one another—relationships of love, forbearance, and forgiveness. In sum, even a simple song such as this one can be packed with power, and rich in meaning! Mercy, Lord!

Ways to Help

- ✎ **MCC Comforter Blitz: At Home** The annual MCC Comforter Blitz is happening virtually this year from now through March! The Kansas Friends of MCC committee is challenging congregations and individuals to complete 300 comforters for MCC by the end of March! Read all the details and information on getting comforter making supplies from MCC at mcc.org/blitz-at-home. Share pictures of your work on the [MCC Comforter Blitz](#) Facebook page. Contact katemast@mcc.org or 316.804.8432 with questions.
- ✎ **Mennonite Mission Network:** Pray for 30 participants who are halfway through ENVIADOS, a 12-week curriculum used to prepare Colombian Mennonite church planters. Three cohort groups are meeting weekly.

Upcoming Events

- ✎ **The KIPCOR Film Series at Bethel College is serving up a second helping of *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code***, which focuses on the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave to illustrate how Black, Indigenous and People of Color and low-income citizens suffer the most negative impact from natural disasters. The film is an indictment of U.S. disaster preparedness and connects extreme weather, extreme disparity (income and other), and extreme racism. Go to kipcor.org, "Film Series," for a link to watch *Cooked* for free and a link to register for the **Feb. 7 virtual discussion; advance registration is required to participate in the discussion**, which will be held in break-out rooms, with leaders who include Chicagoans who experienced the 1995 heat disaster.
- ✎ **Everence will host a *Social Security and retirement income planning webinar*** on Tuesday, Feb. 16 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.
- ✎ **Enjoy a drive-thru verenike supper** complete with ham gravy and sausage February 20 at Halstead FMC, 427 W. 4th St. Cost is by donation with all proceeds to go toward local COVID relief.
- ✎ **You are invited to join the virtual MCC Central States annual meeting on Saturday, February 26 at 9 a.m. CST.** The meeting will include a reflection on MCC in pandemic times, details about what COVID-19 has meant for MCC thrift shops and a look at our financial statements. To join the meeting please email centralstates@mcc.org and then Zoom meeting information will be sent directly to you.
- ✎ Registration is open for the **Spring Scrapbook and Crafts Retreats at Camp Mennoscah** on March 5-7 and March 19-21! Once the retreats are full, sign up on the waitlist. Register at www.campmennoscah.org!
- ✎ **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. For more information and to register: mcc.org/mcc-me-webinar-series-service-opportunities.
 - 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

Other Announcements

- ☞ Nothing's better than a summer at camp! [Watch this video](#) created by Mennonite Camping Association about why you should work at camp. [Applications for Camp Mennoscah Summer Staff](#) positions are now being accepted!
- ☞ Mennonite Education Agency has initiated a search for an executive director. To learn more and for a complete agency profile and position description, see: <https://www.mennoniteeducation.org/Resources/News/Pages/default.aspx>.
- ☞ MC USA's annual Lent at Home guide is now available for download at: <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/lent-at-home/>.
- ☞ Camp Mennoscah is a wonderful space for families and groups needing space to spread out! Facilities for differently sized groups are available with a variety of gathering areas. Trails and fields are waiting to be hiked and used for fun activities, too! Contact Camp Mennoscah at 620-297-3290 or office@campmennoscah.org to reserve. You are invited to enjoy this sacred space!
- ☞ **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 to learn more!

Weekly Encouraging Bible Verse

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.”
– 1 Corinthians 3:11 (NRSV)