



# First Mennonite Church

## Midweek E-Newsletter

September 22, 2021

### From Pastor Tom

#### “Bless the Lord, O My Soul!”

This phrase appears at the very beginning—and ending!—of exactly two psalms: Psalm 103, and Psalm 104. The verb “bless” is grammatically speaking an imperative. A command. To oneself. Or rather, to one’s soul. It doesn’t get any more comprehensive or complete than *nephesh*—“soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, and passion” (Brown Driver Briggs lexicon). The command, in other words, is from oneself, to oneself—warts and all.

The command itself is to “bless the Lord.” In the context of ancient Israelite worship, this actually infers “bending the knee”—that is, bowing in homage to one’s sovereign. In other words, it’s not enough to say it. One must also do it.

We don’t worship with our bodies nearly enough. Most of the time we barely use our jaw muscles—in combination with our larynx and diaphragm—to make half-hearted sounds supposedly conveying a message of some sort. (And this is what we call worship?) Occasionally we stand (but then we would do that anyway—to leave, for example; or perhaps to go to the restroom). And a scant few sometimes raise an arm and a hand heavenward (a gesture that symbolizes . . . what? Giving something? Or merely receiving something?)

The object of our fully animated blessing is to be “the Lord.” Known personally and reverentially by God’s name: “Yahweh.” Two syllables responsible for (and therefore worthy of thanks for) all that is. The earth and the sky. Water and land. Grass and trees. Beast and bird. Adam, and *adamah*. (In biblical Hebrew, *adam* means “man” or human being; while *adamah* means dirt. Literally.) Genesis 1 tells us that God formed man and woman out of the inanimate dust of the ground. And then God breathed God’s *ruach*, God’s breath or spirit, into their nostrils. Upon which they and we became *nephesh*, living beings. And the rest, as they say, is history. (Or rather, His story!)

It’s as if the very first thing we were ever to do—and to do first thing every day—is bow before the Lord our Maker. Of course! To whom else would we possibly want to bow? Psalm 103 and 104 both affirm that everything—all of life—belongs to God. The first (and last) grace-gift. The one and same God not only creates. He also provides. Forgives. Renews.

This past Sunday we participated in “A Service of Psalm and Song.” All of that service’s worship resources, both spoken and sung, were from the Psalms. And not surprisingly, Psalms 103 and 104 appeared more than once. This evening at 7:00 in the chapel (following a meal in Fellowship Hall) we will take another, closer look at these two psalms. Come join us, O my souls!

## Upcoming Events

### ☞ **Pastor Term Vote:**

The FMC Ministries Council has **set Sunday, October 3**, for a brief congregational meeting following the Sunday worship service. At this time, a yes or no vote of members will be taken answering the question: Do you wish Pastor Tom to be affirmed for a second three-year term as lead pastor of First Mennonite Church? Our constitution specifies: "A lead pastor is called by affirmation of at least a two-thirds majority of the members present at a congregational meeting and the absentee ballots." Those members who anticipate they cannot be present for that meeting should arrange now to submit their ballot during the week prior to October 3 by contacting Kara Unruh at the church office or their Care Committee member. In anticipation of this vote, FMC members are encouraged to review the Pastor/Congregation Review document by Marv Zehr (April 15, 2021), the Amended Final Assessment Report by KIPCOR (August 19, 2021), and the KIPCOR transcript of the congregational meeting on Sept. 8. These are available in the church office.

### **Note Kara's office hours and the evening hours available on Sept. 29:**

Monday 9:00-12:30pm

Tuesday 3:00-5:00pm

Wednesday 1:00-5:00pm (but on Wed. Sept. 29, 3:00-7:00pm)

Thursday 3:00-5:00pm

Friday 9:00-12:30pm

Doug Miller, FMC moderator

- ☞ **FMC Wednesday Night TONIGHT!** Come at 6:15 p.m. to enjoy a meal together! At 7 p.m. in the chapel, Pastor Tom will lead a Bible study on Psalms 103 and 104.
- ☞ **Church Retreat:** This weekend we are having our church retreat out at Camp Mennoscah! If you have signed up to spend the night Saturday, please arrive by 4 p.m. Dinner will be ready around 5:30. We will have fellowship time then a campfire at 8:30. Pop and ice-cream will be provided to make floats. Please feel free to bring other snacks you would like to munch on throughout the evening. Breakfast Sunday morning will be served at 8 a.m. Sunday morning worship will begin at 10 a.m. with a lunch following the service. This year will be a relaxing fellowship time. We're excited for everyone to spend time together!
- ☞ **Central Kansas Community Foundation is holding their "Rural Matters" CKCF Summit 2021 Thursday, Sept. 23 from 4-6 p.m. at the Wild Prairie Event Center**, 1610 SE 3rd St, Newton, KS 67114. This free event is hosted by CKCF Board of Directors. Annually we gather to bring like-minded individuals together to share experiences, contemplate opportunities and celebrate local and regional successes. Marci Penner, Kansas Sampler Foundation, will be our keynote speaker. Also hear from Carol Duerksen about her and Donley's reasonings behind a planned gift to their community through Goessel Community Foundation. We will have individually wrapped snacks and be in a facility that will allow for social distancing. Table talks will be also be facilitated throughout our time together. Plus for those in attendance, there are two chances for a \$100 Operating Fund grant and two drawings for the Kansas Guidebook.
- ☞ **Enjoy the Bethel College Chamber Orchestra concert** Tuesday, September 28 at 7:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall.
- ☞ **Marion County Core Community** invites you to its graduation Thursday, September 30 at 6:30 p.m. at Trinity Mennonite Church of Hillsboro. Please join the celebration to congratulate the graduates! A reception will follow the ceremony.
- ☞ **Bethel College's Fall Festival is Sept. 30-Oct. 3, with most activities taking place Saturday, Oct. 2, on campus.** Features include music, food, class reunions, football, the comedy *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, and the STEM Symposium honoring Professor Emeritus of Chemistry Richard Zerger. See <https://www.bethelks.edu/alumni/events/fall-festival> for the complete schedule.

- ☞ **Bakers and Crafters Needed!** Help support Bethel College Women's Association by donating pies for BCWA's Pie-By-The-Slice booth or any baked item or craft item for the Market in the Round at Fall Fest 2021. Peppernuts, zwieback, cinnamon rolls, and coffee cakes are popular items! Bring your pies (no refrigerated or custard pies please) to Seminar A in Schultz Student Center 4-6:30 p.m. Friday, October 1 or 8-11a.m. on Saturday, October 2. Baked goods and craft items can be dropped off at the Luyken Fine Arts Center Rm 140 on Friday 1:30-4:30pm or Saturday 7-8 a.m. All proceeds go to support Bethel College.
- ☞ **The Gospel Echoes Teams will be holding their annual prison ministry banquet** Tuesday, October 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the Journey at Yoder Activity Center, 3605 E. Long View Rd., Haven, KS. This program is a collaboration of multiple teams coming together for this special presentation. The song arrangements were put together for a recent video produced for prison broadcast. The theme includes songs about the cross, Christ's resurrection and the victory we have in Jesus. The evening will include a homestyle dinner, music, and a prison ministry presentation. For tickets, contact Dale and Miriam Lehman at 620.694.9823.

## Other Announcements

- ☞ **The FMC ministry fund** is currently running a deficit of approximately \$10,000 with fiscal year to date income of approximately \$70,000 and expenses just shy of \$80,000. Please keep this in mind as you plan your giving over the several months.
- ☞ **COVID-19 protocols:** The FMC Covid response team is urging the following regarding the Covid virus: 1. Masks are required when we gather indoors, 2. FMC should reduce capacity in the sanctuary and fellowship hall to 50%.
- ☞ **Our hearts go out to the people of Afghanistan.** The compounding effects of drought, displacement, decades of conflict, and COVID-19 are creating a massive humanitarian emergency. This devastating situation has led to a near-collapse of the healthcare system, the destruction of family livelihoods, and the threat of mass child starvation. An estimated 18.4 million men, women, and children need life-saving aid.

It's critical that essential services continue, and we need your help. World Vision is committed to serve in Afghanistan long-term, aiming to help 1 million people over the coming months through interventions such as food and nutrition assistance, healthcare, child protection, and access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene programming. [Your support matters. Please join us by donating today.](#)

## Verse of the Week

"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Romans 15:7 (NRSV)