



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

October 6, 2021

From Chaplain Nadine

A Matter of Team Spirit

I'm not what you'd call a sports fanatic, but I do enjoy watching basketball. My interest in the game started early; my big brother was my first basketball star. A fan ever since, I've always been impressed by the devotion and loyalty team members have for each other and that fans have for their teams.

As much as I like basketball, though, I'm a bigger fan of the church. Through the years, I've noticed some similarities between the two. For instance, basketball and the church are both "team" activities that require the full contribution of every player. Both are successful to the extent they carry out the game plan of the Coach. Both have a clear goal: outplaying the opponent.

Some would add, somewhat cynically, that both are primarily spectator events. That is, a few people do all the work while everyone else sits around and watches. To say that, though, is to have too narrow a definition of "team." Sure, a few people with certain gifts are more visibly involved than others. But for many schools, committed fans are as much a part of a successful program as the players.

Having said that, I have to admit basketball seems to have a leg up on the church when you consider the enthusiasm and devotion it generates for the cause. Imagine what would happen in our churches if we applied the same level of support to the local body of Christ as we do to our basketball teams.

For instance, what if we in the body of Christ rose to our feet in applause whenever someone successfully exercised his or her spiritual gift?

What if we gave pats on the back or "high fives" when we passed each other— simply because we are on the same team?

What if, to ensure a good seat and because our anticipation of worship was so high, we adjusted our schedules so we could arrive three or four hours early to wait on hard, backless benches for the service to begin? (And waiting would be a joy because of our fellowship with the other fans!)

What if the prospect of the worship service going into overtime only increased our attentiveness and sense of expectation?

What if the body of Christ expressed obvious support and encouragement to each other regardless of the win-loss record?

What if the body of Christ delighted in getting together simply to talk about improving the game plan and to develop our skills?

What if the body of Christ had some people who dedicated themselves to being cheerleaders— people who make a point to rally encouragement for the players and go to workshops on topics such as "Keeping spirits up when the chips are down," "Increasing enthusiasm as the hope of victory grows dim," and "Celebrating victory without reserve"?

What if the body of Christ invited friends, offered rides, saved seats for others because we wanted to help as many people as possible to experience the life and ministry of Christ and his church?

What if the body of Christ participated in worship and spiritual growth opportunities because of our loyalty to the team? Even when it would be easier to stay home, we would say to each other, "But our team is playing and we need to be there!"

What if we could count on our fellow team members to help us to our feet when we fall? Would we go after the ball with more abandon?

What if the body of Christ would beg to be allowed into worship services, even if we had to stand and watch the service after the seats were sold out?

What if the body of Christ was willing to travel long distances, leave work early, lose some sleep, spend money and give up other activities— all for their love of the team and their eagerness to support it?

What if the body of Christ was constantly looking for opportunities to score a point for our team and were willing to take some risks to do so?

What if the body of Christ wore ribbons, hung posters around town, decorated our cars and painted our faces to let the world know whose team we're on?

What if the body of Christ supported each other through the disappointment of a loss and affirmed the fact that a team is still a winner if it plays hard and fair— even if it isn't in first place?

What if the enthusiasm of the body of Christ was so contagious that even our quieter members found themselves shouting, clapping and jumping because of their spiritual joy?

If we supported the body of Christ in the same way we now support our basketball teams, and supported our teams in the same way we now support our Christian mission, would our basketball coaches be writing articles envying the attraction of Christ?

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Wednesday Evening:** Come at 6:15 p.m. to enjoy a meal together! This week is pizza night! Come for sermon discussion about "The Wisdom from Above" in the chapel. Youth will meet.
- ☞ **Pastoral Term Vote.** The FMC membership voted this past Sunday, October 3, to extend a call to Pastor Tom for a second three-year term. He is reflecting whether to accept this call and will let us know when he has reached a decision.
- ☞ **Alive Sunday School Class Study:** The Alive Sunday school class is meeting in the chapel each Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. This fall we are reading and discussing the book *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear*, by Scott Bader-Saye (2d ed., 2020). Come join us!
- ☞ **Hartland Pregnancy Care is hosting its Hartland Fundraising Banquet Tuesday, October 19 at 6:30 p.m. at the Wild Prairie Event Center in Newton, KS.** Outlaw BBQ is catering the meal. This year's fundraiser speaker is David Williams. David shares the devastation of abortion and the forgiveness and healing of Jesus Christ that has transformed his life. David's story is so important for all to hear. Registration is open! Call 316.283.7333 now to reserve your seat.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **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%.
- ☞ **The 2021 Worship and the Arts Symposium at Bethel College, "Joining Voices Together," originally scheduled for Nov. 5-8, has been postponed** due to COVID precautions. The

symposium will be rescheduled for fall 2022, with a new date to be announced soon. The “Voices Together” art exhibition will still take place as planned, with original artwork from the *Voices Together* hymnal on display Oct. 29-Nov. 19 in the Regier Art Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center on campus.

- ☞ **MCC in North Newton currently has over 800 sets of comforter tops and backs that need to be tied**, as well as kits of fabric that can be sewn into more tops. MCC’s partners all around the world value these handmade comforters as useful, beautiful and tangible expressions of love. If you or your sewing group would be interested in tying or sewing for MCC, or if you have questions and are curious about how to make a comforter, please contact Kate Mast at the MCC Material Resources Center at katemast@mcc.org, or 316-283-2720.
- ☞ **On Aug. 14, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti**, leaving 2,000 people dead and over 600,000 people in need of emergency relief. With help from our partners, MCC was the first to deliver supplies to the southwestern region of Saint-Jean-du-Sud. "Thank you for not leaving us alone," said one woman as she received canned meat and a relief kit. [Learn more about how your support is helping to meet the immediate needs of earthquake survivors.](#)

Verse of the Week

“Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!” –Psalm 97:11-12 (NRSV)