



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

December 1, 2021

From Pastor Tom

How do you celebrate Advent?

When I was growing up, the season of Advent was always a big deal. Granted, this may have been because for my mom all holidays were a big deal; she would always put up at least a few decorations for such holidays as Halloween and Thanksgiving (and especially for the most important ones like Christmas and Easter). But Advent made a particularly lasting impression on me. Just prior to the First Sunday of Advent (which often was the last Sunday of November), Mom would unpack our family Advent wreath, and display it somewhere prominent with a fresh set of candles, and some evergreen to add some festive color. Then, each Advent Sunday evening, she would gather our family together around the wreath for a brief devotional (usually with Scripture, a prayer, and sometimes even a hymn), and the special, ceremonial lighting of the candle(s). For the latter, we always took turns from week to week (and there were four of us, so it worked out well ☺), but I always loved it when it was my turn! Whoever's turn it was, there was always something holy about that candlelight, with the rest of the room in darkness. As if that flame was God's very Spirit at work, preparing us for the next coming of Christ.

Another tradition my mom always had our family celebrate was the Advent Calendar. This was hung on a prominent wall (or sometimes the refrigerator door), and there was a little flap or door to open for each day in December. Again we would take turns, and part of the fun was trying to find the door with the right, tiny number on it. The other fun part was opening it to see what we would find. Some years the calendar would feature tiny Christmas-related images (tree ornaments, for example), but other times each window would include a brief Scripture reference. (And some years we would re-use an Advent calendar from previous years, but we didn't mind!) The net result was once again a building of anticipation toward the birth of Christ. How exciting it was to open window #22, 23, 24 . . . and finally, 25!

How do you celebrate Advent? Let's hear your stories, memories, and ideas!

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Come at 6:15 tonight for the Youth Soup meal!** Proceeds will go to help Christmas Angels or MCC kits. Menu: chicken corn chowder, chili, bread, veggies and a dessert! See you tonight!
- ☞ **Fri., Dec. 3 – Opening reception for the senior exhibition by Bethel College graphic design major Oscar Gonzalez, 6-8 p.m., Regier Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center. Please note that**

this date may differ from some previously printed calendars. Bethel's current COVID-19 protocols require physical distancing to the extent possible and mask-wearing indoors with groups of 10 or more.

- ☞ **Sat., Dec. 4 – Five Places of Christmas, the annual holiday open house, includes Kauffman Museum and Goerz House on the Bethel College campus, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.** No charge for admission. The Bethel College Women's Association (BCWA) is the host at Goerz House, where there will be baked goods and other items for sale. Please plan to wear a face covering indoors and follow all COVID-19 protocols requested by the venue. (Other locations: Warkentin House, Harvey County Historical Museum and Carriage Factory Gallery, all in Newton.)
**Bakers and craft makers are invited to make items for the event. Please bring any donated goodies to Goerz House Friday, Dec. 3 from 1:30-4:30 p.m. or Saturday, Dec. 4 from 7-9 a.m.*
- ☞ **You are invited to a Hymn Sing Sunday, Dec. 5 at 6:30 p.m. at Parkview MB Church!**
- ☞ **Wed., Dec. 8 – Singalong to Christmas portions of Handel's *Messiah* returns in-person, 11 a.m., *Memorial Hall*,** with chamber orchestra, soloists and student conductors. Scores provided. Bethel's current COVID-19 protocols require physical distancing to the extent possible and mask-wearing indoors with groups of 10 or more.
- ☞ **The McPherson Community Brass Choir under the direction of Jerry Toews will give their Christmas Brass Concert Sunday, Dec. 12 at 7:30 p.m. in the Goessel HS gym.** This event is sponsored by the Goessel Ministerial Alliance. Note the location change accommodating for social distancing. Come and enjoy a festive brass Christmas concert!
- ☞ **Have yourself a honkin' good holiday, December 17 from 4-6 p.m.!** MCC is thrilled to host this drive-thru event again this year. Order your charcuterie box(es) today to enjoy in the comfort of your home, spread Christmas joy and order extra to give as gifts! Suggested donation per box is \$25. We're also collecting items for [MCC hygiene kits](#) at this event. **Place your order by 5 p.m. on December 9.** [Details and order form are on mcc.org.](#) Questions? Please call 316.283.2720.
- ☞ **Camp Mennoscah Christmas Gathering** is Dec. 18 at 2:30 p.m.! Join us in the Dining Hall at Camp Mennoscah for afternoon fun—bring games to play indoors or out. Camp will provide popcorn and generic pop. (Masks recommended and encouraged for inside activities.)

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Please bear with the church office as we undergo some technical difficulties regarding our email list.** If you notice that you have not received some emails that you should have received, please check your spam folder.
- ☞ **Poinsettias:** You are invited to share poinsettias for Advent! Please place plants in the Fellowship Hall south window area. Plants can be taken home after the December 24 Christmas Eve Service. Thank you!
- ☞ **FMC Advent Ensemble will sing during the Dec. 19 worship service. We will rehearse Dec. 5 and 19 from 9-9:30 and will prepare one or two songs.** We will rehearse with masks and will hear from the FMC Covid Task Force about singing without masks during the service. Paper/disposable masks are, in Holly's opinion, easier for singing. Please join us as we make a joyful noise!

☞ **'TIS THE SEASON FOR ANNUAL REPORTS!** The deadline is **December 15** this year for your annual reports to be submitted to the church office. Thank you for your hard work throughout the year, committee and council members!

Verse of the Week

“For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” –Hebrews 2:11-12 (NRSV)