



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

March 2, 2022

From Pastor Tom

“Seeking God’s Ways”

Today is known on the Christian calendar as “Ash Wednesday,” the first day of the Season of Lent, a period six and a half weeks before Easter (or forty days, not counting Sundays). Lent is considered “a period of penitential preparation,” says the internet. But preparation for what?

“Penitence,” of course, implies not just confession of one’s sins, but penitence for them, as a sign of one’s genuine sorrow. And “preparation” implies that there is something even more important to follow. And what might that be? The Resurrection of Christ? The new life implied and enabled by the Resurrection? Yes.

Preparation also implies work, and effort. Sacrifice, even. Which is why many Christians adopt the habit of “giving something up for Lent.” Something to which one is ordinarily (and extraordinarily?!) attached. Ice cream, perhaps? (Sigh.)

And yet, shouldn’t the point of such discipline and sacrifice be about more than what one loses? Shouldn’t it be about what one gains?

The theme for this year’s Lenten worship curriculum, published by *Leader* magazine, on behalf of our denomination, is “Seeking God’s Ways.” The writers (who this year are from our own Western District Conference) say the theme emerged from one of the season’s lections or Scripture readings, namely Isaiah 55:8, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.” As the writers explain, “We realized that the Scriptures of each Sunday reveal a truth about the ways of God, as well as the many ways God’s people get it wrong. Scripture after Scripture is about how people think God offers one thing (privilege), but what God really offers looks quite different (inclusion); how we think the world works one way (scarcity), but really it works a different way (abundance); how we think power means one thing (control), but it is really found in something else (solidarity).”

I like the verb “seeking.” As in, “looking for.” It definitely requires effort. But the implied hope is that at the end of it, one will have found something, not merely lost something. In this case, something of great value. Priceless, even (see Matthew 13:45-46). Deeper insight into the ways of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, perhaps. Or how about the new life implied and enabled by the Resurrection? That definitely sounds worth seeking! Priceless, even.

For us at FMC, the Season of Lent will begin this evening with an Ash Wednesday of Service, in which we will hear scripture, sing songs, and symbolize this disciplined journey of both losing and finding by

coming forward to receive the sign of the cross, drawn on our foreheads out of ashes (traditionally made from the previous year's palm leaves from Palm Sunday). Then on this coming Sunday (the first of six Sundays of Lent) we will begin to follow the theme of this year's worship curriculum, "Seeking God's Ways." As part of that Sunday's worship we will share the Lord's Supper together.

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- ☞ Let us remember in fervent prayer the families of the two Tabor College students who lost their lives in a tragic car accident early Sunday morning, Christopher Castillo and Johnethon Aviles. Let us also remember the third passenger in that car, Jonathan Medina, who sustained significant injuries, along with his family.
- ☞ Let us give thanks to God for our new administrative assistant/office secretary Sue Buchholz!
- ☞ Please continue to pray for peace and safety in Ukraine. MCC is evaluating the situation and giving support to staff and partners as the situation allows. All international MCC staff have been evacuated from Ukraine including two SALT participants from Kansas. Aaron Ensz from Buhler has returned to the U.S. and Micah Epp from North Newton has relocated outside of Ukraine. Please keep them and their families in your prayers as well.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Please join us tonight for a fellowship meal at 6 p.m. and sermon discussion at 7 p.m.** Tonight's meal is Mexican chicken tortilla soup, tortilla chips and brownies! If you are unable to join in-person, a Zoom option is available at the following link: <https://zoom.us/j/91457452132?pwd=UXU5U3VWSXViSFpyUUR4cW03aFBxdz09>
- ☞ **Mennonite Church USA webinar:** Learn about the **Accessibility Resolution** that will be voted on at the Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) Special Session of the Delegate Assembly, May 27-30. Clare Krabill, COO of MHS (an agency of MC USA), and Jeanne Davies, executive director of Anabaptist Disabilities Network, will discuss this resolution during a webinar on March 7 at 7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT. Register today: mennoniteusa.org/webinar-accessibility
- ☞ **All are welcome to join the fun at 14th annual MCC Comforter Blitz on March 7, 8 and 9 at the Journey Yoder Campus,** one mile north of Yoder, KS. Times are Monday and Tuesday 9-5, and Wednesday 9-4. Come and have a good time while helping others. No sewing skills required. Lunch is available by donation each day, or you may bring your own sack lunch. You can bring snacks to share during the workday. Masks are highly encouraged and plan to practice social distancing. This event is hosted by Kansas Friends of MCC, to make good quality, beautiful comforters for MCC to send for warmth, comfort, and love all around the world. Please contact the MCC Central States office with questions at #316-283-2720, or check the Comforter Blitz Facebook Page, "MCC Comforter Blitz for Kansas."
- ☞ **Everence will hold an informative Medicare webinar on Tuesday, March 8, starting at 6:30 p.m.** Topics will include, when and where to sign up for Medicare, what Medicare does (and doesn't) cover, Medicare Parts A, B, C and D in clear, understandable language plus budgeting for health care costs in retirement. There will also be time for your questions. Information will be presented by staff from the Everence offices in Central Kansas. To register contact Everence at

316-283-3800, 877-467-7294 or central.kansas@everence.com. Attendance recommended for those approaching retirement or those ready to sign up for Medicare.

- ☞ **The WDC Executive Board will host a zoom gathering on Thursday, March 10 at 7-8:30 pm for congregational delegates, pastors, and other congregational leaders, to share information and conversation to help prepare for the upcoming Special Session of Mennonite Church USA Assembly in May 2022.** Glen Guyton, Executive Director of MC USA, will be present to engage with questions from participants, and Spanish/English interpretation will be provided. Register for the zoom forum by March 8 by completing this online registration form at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSesxcq5d9-o_xG65j-2d97ShewcHielQ9iD6fmLjmg07RJELw/viewform?usp=sf_link or contact WDC at wdc@mennowdc.org or 316-283-6300. The Zoom link for the gathering will be sent in advance. *NOTE: The Special Session of MC USA Delegate Assembly is May 27-30, 2022. Congregations are encouraged to appoint delegates as soon as possible. Registration for the assembly is open February 1 - May 16. For more information see <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/special-delegate-session-22/>*
- ☞ **Registration is now open for MC USA's Special Session of the Delegate Assembly, May 27-30, 2022, in Kansas City, Missouri.** All conferences, congregations and Racial/Ethnic groups are encouraged to send representation. This is an in-person event. No Zoom option will be available. The fee for registration is \$250 per person (for delegates and non-delegate attendees). Childcare is available for children up to age 2 for \$50. Lodging information will be in your registration confirmation email. See the FAQ for frequently asked questions about delegate representation, Delegate Assembly hours, meals, scholarships and more. Visit the Delegate Assembly Resource Hub for everything you need to know about the Special Session.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Needed: part-time custodian-** once weekly cleaning routine and as needed for occasional other events throughout the year. If interested, contact Neal at 620-755-4636, Bob at 620-381-4355, or the church office at 620-947-5662 or respond by email at secretary@fmchillsboro.com.
- ☞ **A signup sheet for preparing Wednesday night meals is posted on the white board in the hall.** Please consider volunteering to prepare one of the only four meal slots open.
- ☞ **Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale Quilter's Corner:** Quilting donations are welcome and needed i.e. quilting fabrics, quilting supplies, vintage linens, unfinished quilting projects, etc. Donations may be collected by Sale liaisons at their churches and brought to Sale meetings or brought directly to the MCC Center with the indication that they are for Quilters' Corner. If you have questions contact Ann Yoder Smith, 919-604-3282, rws.ays@gmail.com.

Verse of the Week

" I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4 (NRSV)