



First Mennonite Church Midweek E-Newsletter September 28, 2022

From Pastor Tom

The Importance of Lament

Gospel is “Good News.” God’s salvation is a time of great joy. And yet real life often comes with bad news. God’s Kingdom can sometimes seem nowhere to be found. We think of the biblical book of Psalms as the pinnacle of the believer’s unwavering trust in God, forgetting that two-thirds of the psalms are psalms of Lament. And yet, there they are, a permanent part of our scriptural canon.

In the Worship Leader Edition of *Voices Together* we read: “God invites us to express honestly the fullness of human experience, including grief and anger, in our corporate worship. The Psalms include lament as well as praise. Jesus turned to the psalmist’s words when he cried out on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1). We need to create times in corporate worship and personal prayer to speak hard truths and give voice to disappointment, despair, and anger. Although we have hope through the risen Christ, it is crucial not to rush to resolutions or provide easy answers. God meets us in our lament and stays with us in our pain . . . Coming together in God’s presence is an invitation to share in one another’s joys and sorrows. Those who are not experiencing loss in their own lives can still participate in lament in solidarity with those who are” (Worship Leader Edition, #96).

It's not hard to come up with reasons for lament. We or our loved ones may be facing life-threatening disease. Even when it is not life-threatening, illness can sometimes seem like it lasts forever, and saps every last ounce of our vitality. When loved ones die, the sense of loss feels like a pit or hole from which there is no escape. And when reading, watching, or listening to the daily news, it often seems as if there is way more bad news than good news in our world.

In the readings for this coming Sunday in the Revised Common Lectionary, a pastor is caught completely off guard by their emphasis on lament. Five of the seven readings either express lament directly or present hard teachings that are lament-like in their tone. Two are from the Old Testament book of Lamentations written in response to Israel’s exile in Babylon (Lamentations 1:1-6 and 3:19-26). One of the Psalms (137) is probably the single darkest and most disturbing unit of scripture in the entire Bible. And the prophetic reading (Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4) expressed the prophet’s dismay at the grim task given him by God. And the reading from the gospel (Luke 17:5-10) promises Jesus’ apostles no praise for their hard work. How do I preach any of these? Where do I find gospel good news to share with First Mennonite Church this Sunday?

The truth is, we have been dealing with an inordinate amount of bad news in recent months. Several of our loved ones are struggling with life-threatening illness. We have lost several loved ones to untimely deaths. World news has seemed exceptionally discouraging, as the war in the Ukraine becomes increasingly global in its threat, and the extreme effects of climate change seem to pile on, one on top of another. In periods such as this, perhaps it is only in naming the bad news that the

Good News can find an opening through which to work. This Sunday, in addition to excerpts from the day's lections, our worship service will draw upon additional resources (in particular hymns) which remind us that just as lament is so often part of our day-to-day lives, it can also find meaningful expression in our worship. The fact that it is also World Communion Sunday will provide an additional opportunity to lament the brokenness in our world, even as we can be reminded of the ultimate Gospel message that the ritual of Communion reenacts. May Gospel beacons of light break through the layers of darkness we find ourselves facing.

Verse of the Week: Ephesians 2:21-22 (NRSV)

“In Him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”

Among Our Friends and in Our Prayers

- ☞ “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 4:2)
Continue praying through our directory this week.
- ☞ Pray for those in rehab and therapy to make effective progress and healing to continue!
- ☞ Our most recent **Covid patients** are all on the mend. Pray for others with this condition.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **World Communion Sunday** celebration this coming Sunday!
- ☞ **Tabor College Musical this week!** Don't miss the production of **“Into the Woods”** held during Tabor homecoming weekend. Shows are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings at 7:30 pm. Cost: adults \$15, Seniors \$12, Students \$5. Pastor Tom will be a part of the musicians. How nice to have the light of one of our family members out in this community event!
- ☞ **Sunday October 9:** Designated offering for MCC Meat Canning! Special thanks to those who are participating in this ministry.
- ☞ **Bethel College Events:**
 - **Women's Association** will appreciate donations of homemade baked goods for Market-in-the-Round and Pie-By-the-Slice at Fall Festival. Zwieback, cinnamon rolls, fruit pies and poppyseed rolls are especially needed. Please bring to Room 141 in Luyken Fine Arts Center 2-5pm on Friday Oct 7, or 7-9am on Saturday Oct 8. Pies may be delivered to Seminar A in Schultz Student Center. Email bcwa@bethelks.edu with questions.
 - **Fall Festival is Oct. 6-9, with most activities taking place Saturday, Oct. 8, on campus.** Features include music, food, class reunions, football, Children's Park, the play *Quiet in the Land* by Anne Chislett and the STEM Symposium honoring Professor Emeritus of Psychology Paul Lewis. See <https://www.bethelks.edu/alumni/events/fall-festival> for the complete schedule.

- **Sat., Oct. 8 – As part of Fall Festival, Larry Dunn and Christine Crouse-Dick will present “Grieving, Celebrating and Loving Seth: Exploring Unexpected Paths and Connections on the Mysterious Journey of Remembering,” poetry reading and reflections, 10:30 a.m.,** on the lawn south of Luyken Fine Arts Center. Seth Dunn died in an accident in 2011 right before starting his senior year at Bethel College.
- ☞ The **Kauffman Museum October bird walk** will be on the **second Saturday** to coincide with Fall Festival (Sat., Oct. 8, 8 a.m. start time).
- ☞ **Theater Presentation** – Theatre artists Ted Swartz & Michelle Milne will be weaving the biblical story and personal stories in a unique blend of humor and insight at two productions to be held on Wednesday, November 2, at 10 am and 7 pm, Shari Flaming Center for the Arts, at Tabor College. They will explore the lasting, relevant power of story, both ancient and current, around themes of justice, belonging and home. The morning show will be during Tabor chapel and “We Own This Now” is the evening production. We are helping to sponsor this theater troupe, so come and join in!
- ☞ **MennoCon23, Mennonite Church USA’s largest faith formation gathering**, will be held July 3-8, 2023, in Kansas City, Missouri. There will be programming for all ages, including a one-day Climate Summit for youth and young adults. See the tentative block schedule here: mennoniteusa.org/mennocon-schedule

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Thanks** to all who gave input at the **Arts and Crafts Fair evaluation** time. Feel free to call or email any other ideas that may have still come to mind.
- ☞ Sunday School continues the study on **Simple, Just Living**. Our topic this week will be on “**stuff**”. This should add on to last Sunday’s sermon nicely; recall I Tim 6:8!
- ☞ Remember to **check your mailbox** if you haven’t picked up your copy of Vision Council’s 2nd Term priorities for Pastor Tom!
- ☞ **WDC budget information** for 2023 as well as a congregational giving chart for the past three years has been shared and is posted on the bulletin board across from the office. **Here is an excerpt from the letter:**
 We hope your congregation is utilizing the many benefits of being part of WDC: • WDC Resource Library’s large collection of resources for Bible study, spiritual growth, theology, current issues and faith formation for all ages • Resources for safe-church policies, healthy communication and congregational discernment processes. • Credentialing for ministers, with grants for continuing education and sabbaticals, pastor peer groups, healthy boundary training, and assistance with pastoral transitions and reviews • Partnerships that revitalize congregational witness through supporting a new church plant or working for justice and peace. • Opportunities to grow in faith and love by building relationships with other congregations in diverse contexts. • ...And much more! See news and announcements from WDC at <https://mennowdc.org/>
- ☞ **Invitation to Join Anabaptist Bible Project** - Work has officially begun on the first-ever Anabaptist Bible. During August 26–28, a group of 45 “Bible ambassadors,” diverse people

from various Anabaptist communities, met at the Casa Iskali retreat center in Des Plaines, Illinois, to kick off the historic project. Five hundred Bible study groups are invited to participate in the project and to consider what other components might be included in the Bible. Study groups in Anabaptist faith communities will be assigned portions of scripture and asked to share their insights with the project. Shall we form a Bible Study group and register?

☞ **Camp Mennoscah News:**

- The Camp Mennoscah online store has been refreshed and is ready for you to fill your need for that newest Camp Mennoscah tee shirt or water bottle. We suggest wearing camp gear to every event and outing! Only water bottles and stickers will be at Bethel College's Fall Fest. <http://camp-mennoscah-store.square.site/>
- **Work and Play Day on October 15!** Share a few hours of your time for the satisfaction of improving camp grounds and some free time wandering the trails, fishing, or whatever your favorite camp activity is. The day starts at 8:30am at the maintenance shed. If you are coming from a distance, ask about an overnight stay. Let us know you're coming, so we can plan for you and your friends. Call 620-297-3290 or email olivia.bartel@campmennoscah.org!
- **We're taking out the dam on October 16 at approx. 2:30pm!** Everyone is welcome to join in or to watch. Gather at the shelter. (The actual removal of the boards is not for young ages.) The event will go forward, whatever the weather, unless deemed unsafe.
- **Camp Mennoscah is considering moving camps to a Sunday to Friday schedule.** We'd be interested in hearing your thoughts--parents, campers, weekend groups, everyone! Please reply to olivia.bartel@campmennoscah.org or call 620-297-3290.