



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

November 16, 2022

From the Pastor

The Reign of Christ

This Sunday, in addition to being our annual Mission Sunday, is known in the Christian calendar as “Christ the King” or alternatively “The Reign of Christ” Sunday. (It also happens to be the final Sunday of the Christian liturgical year—the Season of Advent begins the following week, and is considered the beginning of the Christian year). This designation was first established in 1925 by Pope Pius XI for the Roman Catholic church, initially to counter the secularization of society and the world as a whole. But after Vatican II, the focus shifted “toward the cosmic and eschatological character of Christ’s reign over the world.” (How’s that for theological language? 😊) It’s from *The Services of the Christian Year*, Robert Webber, editor, 1994, p. 481).

So why are Mennonites observing a “feast day” initiated by Pius XI? I can think of at least two reasons. One, because our denomination, in addition to claiming our theological distinctives, has also sought to be more ecumenical, to have brotherly and sisterly relationships with other denominations. And one of the ways we do that is by following the Christian calendar. The *Revised Common Lectionary* provides a wonderful resource for worship planning and preaching that incorporates not just the best-known Christian holidays (or “feast days”) such as Christmas and Easter, but the entire year. And by taking advantage of that resource, we become part of a community of churches that is not just national but worldwide.

But two, for Mennonites the “Reign of Christ” is more than just one Sunday of the year. It is one of the centerpieces of our faith. The final article in our Confession of Faith is Article 24, “The Reign of God.” Its first paragraph deserves quoting: “We place our hope in the reign of God and in its fulfillment in the day when Christ our ascended Lord will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. He will gather his church, already living under the reign of God according to the pattern of God’s future. We believe in God’s final victory, in the end of this present age of struggle between good and evil, in the resurrection of the dead, and in the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth. There the people of God will reign with Christ in justice, righteousness, and peace” (*The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 1995, p. 89).

In other words, the reign of Christ is one of our theological distinctives! In some ways, every Sunday should be “The Reign of Christ” Sunday (and indeed is). But as the final Sunday of the Christian year, it

both sums up the significance of the year being concluded, and points forward to the new year and specifically the season of Advent, when we tell the story anew of Christ's coming into the world, and of our waiting for Christ's final coming and for the consummation of God's Kingdom. Theologians call that "cosmic and eschatological." We can simply think of it as the most important story ever told!

Tom

Verse of the Week:

Psalm 27:1

" The LORD is my light and my salvation;

whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold^{of} of my life;

of whom shall I be afraid?"

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- ☞ Praying through our directory, lift to the Lord our brothers and sisters.
- ☞ Pastor Tom checked in with our college students. We have heard from three so far and all are doing well. Stay tuned for updates from our other college and graduate students: Continue to pray for them as they end this first semester well.
- ☞ Continue to pray for those with health issues.
- ☞ Pray for our friend who is making a move to a new living space.
- ☞ Praise God for miraculous recovery that no one saw coming. The doctor said, "God heals, doctors send the bill. That is our arrangement."
- ☞ **WDC Request:** Pray for credentialed ministers in WDC as they provide leadership, guidance and care for congregations, church institutions and community ministries.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Tonight!**
 - Pizza is available for supper at 6:15 if you would like to come and eat together.

- Meet in the chapel at 7 pm to join the discussion of our vision for the future with Michele Hershberger. All are welcome! Perhaps you have some new ideas after Michele's stirring message last Sunday.

☞ **Mission Sunday – November 20th**

Larry and Margaret Goering (Sandy Hiebert's parents) will be our special guests, sharing twice with stories you won't want to miss!

- 9:30am - the story of their MCC adventure in Mexico in 1968 – 1970 with Mexican treats in the Fellowship Hall.
- 10:30am – the story of their return trip in 2016 when they went back to Mexico almost 50 years later and got “The Rest of The Story” which will be shared during our worship service.
- Lunch (following worship) – authentic Mexican enchilada lunch with all the fixings.
- Extra bonus: If you want recipes and to learn to cook the authentic Mexican dishes, come on Saturday, the 19th at 1:00pm. Please let Sandy Hiebert know if you are interested so she can plan accordingly. (920) 650-4364 [*Help would be appreciated even if you come for an hour or two.*]

☞ **Sign cards and fill boxes for College Students:** Next Sunday will be the last day to bring your gifts for our 7 undergraduate college students. Please add your name and possibly a few words of encouragement!

☞ **Thursday, November 17, - 7:00pm - Jazz in the Black Box** featuring Tabor College Jazz Band and Theatre of Voices in the Shari Flaming Center for the Arts – Prieb Harder Theater. Free admission – donations accepted.

☞ **Advent begins on November 27th.** Dust off your advent wreath. Get your candles ready. It will soon be time to celebrate. The nurture committee will be sharing a simple guide to help you celebrate in your homes that will go along with our worship time here. We will have special bags for children to use also.

☞ **Special Invitation** to arrive soon. Watch for your personal invitation to an extravagant luncheon at our “**Christmas Giving Gala**” hosted by our youth group. Your donations will be used for sharing gifts with families at Main Street Ministries for Christmas. Mark your calendar to get into the Christmas spirit on December 4th following our worship time.

Other Announcements

☞ Bethel College Women's Association invites bakers and crafters to make items for **Five Places of Christmas**, the annual holiday open house, which includes Kauffman Museum and Goerz House on the Bethel College campus, Saturday, Dec. 3 from 10

a.m.-4 p.m. *No charge for admission.* To donate items, bring them on the 2nd from 1:30 – 4:30pm or the 3rd from 8:30 – 10:00am to the Goerz House.

☞ Our adult Sunday School class is continuing to watch the video series, “The Chosen”. Extra copies of the DVDs for season 1 are available to borrow if you are interested in seeing them.

☞ Mennonite Church USA News

The Executive Board voted unanimously to present an organizational resolution to the Delegate Assembly to make the appropriate bylaw changes and policy switch from a biennial Delegate Assembly to a triennial Delegate Assembly, beginning in 2026.

Executive Director Glen Guyton presented the proposal, along with the staff’s recommendation to also hold the [MennoCon](#) convention every three years beginning in 2026.

Guyton pointed out the benefits of a longer three-year Delegate Assembly/convention cycle:

- Allows Executive Board staff and agencies more time and resources to respond to Delegate Assembly decisions and to explore new ways to engage youth and adults.
- More appropriate for the smaller size of the denomination and the Executive Board staff.
- May increase attendance, as the decreased frequency may make it more economical for congregations to participate.
- Reduces financial risk for the denomination.
- Eliminates conflicts with the Mennonite World Conference assembly schedule.

“What we heard at the last Delegate Assembly is that people want more opportunities to be together for discussion and discernment, not just for decision making,” said de León-Hartshorn. “The three-year cycle will give us the space to do that. If we have regional events, for example, anyone can be part of those conversations, not just delegates,” she added.

Dr. Nelson Okanya, chair of [Global Mission Fellowship](#), shared a presentation on trends in missions work, noting a paradigm shift from a colonial “mission to” philosophy to a more collaborative “mission with” approach.

“The Anabaptist story is a missional story,” Okanya said. He shared his vision for the future in which “local churches will recover their nature and their rightful role in the mission of God” and “national church leaders will become integral partners in ‘mission with.’”

Moderator Linda Dibble led a follow-up conversation that addressed the future of mission in MC USA as well as questions about how this relates to derived and international congregational membership.