



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

December 7, 2022

From the Pastor

Singing the Songs of Advent

Advent, and even more so Christmas, are seasons when it is especially meaningful to sing beloved and familiar hymns—or as they are called uniquely at this time of year, carols. Of course, we have been hearing many of our favorite Christmas songs for weeks already on radio, television, and in stores. Some are secular (“Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”), some are sacred (“Hark the Herald Angels Sing”), but all have become solidly associated with the season. As the Mennonite church has become more attentive to the Christian calendar and to following the lectionary in Sunday worship, we are more attuned to how Advent is distinct from Christmas. Christmas Day is not yet here; the Christ child has not yet been born. And so as beautiful and beloved as they are, it is not yet time to sing “Hark! The Herald” or “O Come, All Ye Faithful” as part of Sunday morning worship. Whereas hymns (“carols?”) such as “O Come, O Come, Immanuel” and “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” fit the season perfectly, with their sense of longing, yearning, waiting, and hope.

One way to come to a fuller understanding of Advent and how it is different from Christmas is to page through those two sections of our hymnal (in *Voices Together*, the Christmas section is referred to as “Birth of Jesus”). In the Advent section, in addition to the two hymns mentioned above, one finds such songs as “Hope is a Candle” (VT 211), “Comfort, Comfort, O My People” (VT 212), “Savior of the Nations, Come!” (VT 214), and “Oh, How Shall I Receive Thee” (VT 215). It is certainly true that most of these are not yet as well-known or beloved as those in the “Birth of Christ” section. But they are well worth singing—or simply reading—nonetheless. They put the birth of Christ into proper perspective.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the Advent season of the Christian calendar has become culturally front-loaded with music that celebrates Christmas, with little or no regard to the preparation and waiting that must precede it. This means that anyone who observes Advent more than casually will be out of step with our culture. Some Christian traditions and denominations have worked hard to delay the celebration of Christmas and singing of its hymns until after Christmas. This in fact is the background of the concept “the twelve days of Christmas,” and the song by that title! For them the Christmas season officially begins Christmas Day and ends on Epiphany (January 6—which technically is not twelve but thirteen days!), which celebrates the coming of the Magi to the Christ Child.

While the annual Advent Worship Curriculum put out by the Mennonite Church and the last several hymnals similarly strive to keep the two seasons separate, it is probably not realistic (or even completely desirable) to avoid singing Christmas songs during Advent. It may in fact be all the more meaningful to simply remain aware of the difference. So go ahead, feel free to sing Christmas songs! ☺ But let's also be sure to sing Advent songs alongside them, and to remember that the joy we're singing about in songs like "Joy to the World" (VT 240, which happens to be the first hymn in the "Birth of Jesus" section) is precisely what we are waiting and longing for.

Tom

Verse of the Week:

Isaiah 40:3

"In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

☞ Focus your prayers for one another through our directory.

☞ WDC Request: In this Advent season, give thanks for God's gifts of justice, peace and restoration offered through ministries of WDC congregations.

Upcoming Events

☞ **Jesus brings peace!** We are in the second week of Advent. Yellow sheets are still available on the table in the foyer if you would like to join your FMC brothers and sisters in daily unified worship and prayer.

☞ This coming Sunday our **special offering** will be for our Local Budget.

☞ **Jeff Wintermote will be preaching on Sunday** on "Redeemed, Restored, and Encouraged." In preparation you may read the following scriptures: Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146; James 5:7-10; and Matthew 11:2-11.

During the worship service there will be an opportunity for you to **bring an offering of an ingredient for a vegetable soup**. Possible ingredients are: diced potatoes, diced carrots, diced onion, chopped cabbage, diced tomatoes, salt, pepper, thyme or whatever other ingredient you would put into a vegetable soup. You may want to bring an ingredient that has special meaning to you or something you have grown in your own garden. The ingredients should be prepared to be put directly into the soup as part of the offering. We would like for each person to bring something to contribute. There will be extra vegetables available if you are unable to bring something.

Those who would like to gift some soup to a friend, neighbor, or community member as an encouragement to them, please bring a container with you. During the sharing time, there will be an opportunity for you to share how you have been encouraged by others or a time when you encouraged someone else that was particularly meaningful to you.

- ☞ **Sunday School this week:** We completed session 3 of Season 2 last Sunday, so will be on session 4 this week. (there is an app to watch if you need to catch up to join us) There is also a special Christmas episode which we might consider if and when we would want to watch it. It is not part of the series.
- ☞ **The summer Food4Kids program** currently being run out of the Trinity Church building is needing to relocate. FMC has been offered the opportunity to run this program out of our building. This will involve primarily the kitchen area plus some storage of supplies. The congregation will have a brief meeting after church on Sunday December 18 to provide more information and to answer questions. We will have a vote at the conclusion of the meeting to accept or reject the opportunity to serve the community by bringing the Food4Kids program to our building.
Doug Bartel, Church Moderator

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Thanks** to all who so generously gave to Main Street Ministries at our youth lunch last Sunday. The fellowship and fun made special memories for the season! A few even went home with the added bonus of a party noise maker or some cherry moos! 😊 A few of you asked for the recipe for the “Coconut Lentil Curry” which was served. Here is the website for the recipe- <https://www.theendlessmeal.com/crock-pot-coconut-lentil-curry/> Two families at Main Street Ministries enjoyed the same meal on Monday evening since we had leftovers to share!
- ☞ **Bethel College events coming up:**
 - Weds., Dec. 7 – Singalong to Christmas portions of Handel’s *Messiah*, 11 a.m.**, with chamber orchestra and soloists, *Bethel College Mennonite Church*. Scores provided.
 - Fri., Dec. 9 – Christmas Gala Jazz concert, directed by Joel Boettger, 8 p.m.**, *Krehbiel Auditorium in Luyken Fine Arts Center*
 - Sun., Dec. 11 – 37th annual Lighting of the Green , 8 p.m. on the Bethel College campus**
 - Now in the Regier Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center at Bethel College – annual Senior Art Exhibit**, featuring the work of Capri Bisom, through Fri., Dec. 15. Gallery hours are Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 2-4 p.m.
- ☞ **Save the Date:** Annual Congregational meeting - January 22.
- ☞ **WANTED:** Your stories. To share at the "Schweitzers and Friends" 150th celebration of Swiss Volhynian Mennonites coming to the U.S. in 1874, planned for August 23-25, 2024. Everyone loves the stories Grandma told us about days gone by. This event gives us opportunity to collect ancestor stories. Gathering for Christmas reunions? Great places to hear stories from the cousins.

Brian Adams from Massachusetts would like to edit stories for a Swiss Volhynian book with the help of his daughter Casey Adams (cpadams992@gmail.com). Brian says no stories are too small or inconsequential. He has heard stories from his Grandfather Jacob (Red Jake) Krehbiel from Moundridge. Think of a story you could share and send to Brian (smoltz123@yahoo.com). Themes could be family, faith, agriculture, language.... Or phone him (413-586-3063) and he could interview you by phone. We would all love to read those stories. Maybe at the celebration event in 2024.

--Kathy Goering for the planners

☞ **January 11 to May 8 - Missional Leadership Class**

The “M” word - you’ve heard it, you’re intrigued, but what does it really mean? Join Michele Hershberger to learn what “missional” means and how a proper understanding of this concept can transform your congregation. As part of the class you will see the Bible through a missional lens and learn great tips for starting your church on a journey of spiritual renewal and growth. You can join the class in person on Hesston’s campus or online via Zoom on Monday evenings starting January 16 through May 8, 6:30 to 8:45 p.m. CST. Contact Michele Hershberger at michele.hershberger@hesston.edu for more information. Register online by January 9, 2023.