



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

November 23, 2022

From the Pastor

The Holidays are Coming!

First things first. What are your plans for Thanksgiving? Do they include spending some time with friends or family? Will you be traveling (“Over the river and through the woods to grandmother’s house we go!”)? Enjoying some good food? Watching some football? (That’s tongue-in-cheek; I know not everyone even likes football. ☺) Will you spend some time giving thanks?

For my part, Lois and I will be driving over several rivers and through a beautiful part of the Kansas prairie to Winfield, KS, to spend Thanksgiving with our youngest daughter, her fiancé Alex Munoz, and his family. We’ll be bringing the potatoes. Anna is baking a large turkey (at least partly for her dad; I was surprised to learn recently that she has never liked turkey all that much!). Lois’ mom and step-dad are bringing pies. Beyond that, I haven’t paid attention to who is bringing what, so I guess it’ll be a surprise! I also don’t know if there are football fans in Alex’s family (Alex himself isn’t). But I suspect there will be some intentional times of giving thanks, of naming our many blessings even amidst life’s hardships.

And then, a mere three days after Thanksgiving, the season of Advent begins! Which, when I was a young boy, was always a big deal. In effect, it marked the beginning of the Christmas season, my favorite time of the year. Decorations began going up around town (of course, in stores they will have been up for a month already) and in residential neighborhoods. Including of course outdoor Christmas lights (which I have always loved). At our house, we held off on putting up the lights for a bit, but my mom would always get out certain items like the Advent wreath in time for the first Sunday of Advent. And sometime on that day (often later afternoon, right before supper), we would gather together as a family, light the first Advent candle, and have a brief family devotional together. I totally got that Advent was a time of waiting, in part for the coming of the Christ child into the world. Of course, for me, more importantly, it was waiting for Christmas. Which, I admit it, meant one thing: presents!

As an adult, the delight of giving and receiving gifts has faded, but the annual importance of waiting for the Christ child has only grown. And to be sure, as a pastor, leading our church through the season of Advent is both a joyful part of my job and a joyful part of my life. This year at FMC we will once again follow the denomination’s Advent worship curriculum, and its theme “Restoration Is Near.” Here is what the curriculum writers have to say by way of introduction. *“Advent and Christmas are active seasons. Advent itself means “coming.” The primary actor is God, emptying Godself and being born in human likeness. But humans have their share of action in the stories surrounding Christ’s birth: angel visits, travel, pilgrimage, and escape. And we are active in our time too: longing, seeking, reconciling. In these weeks of Advent and Christmas, together we will cry out for restoration. We will watch for restoration to take place among us. We will join in the restoration process with all creation . . . ‘The coming day’ is an important theme in the season of Advent and in this year’s scriptures in particular. Each week’s scriptures include language about time: what has been foretold, what is about to take place, what has finally occurred. Experiencing the passage of time*

through Advent and Christmas is important, because we, too, long for God to act—and we can see God act in our time” [Leader, Fall 2022, p. 37].

This year as we walk together through the season of Advent, may we ponder the ways in which we long for restoration in our world, in our lives, and in our church. And may we recognize and rejoice over the ways God is already bringing restoration to us!

“Restore us, O God: let your face shine, that we may be saved” [Psalm 80:3].

Tom

Verse of the Week: Psalm 107:1

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

☞ Praying for our brothers and sisters through our directory.

☞ **Did you hear the Christmas Carols coming from our FMC rooftop last Saturday?** Similar to heavenly angels, it was 3 of our men singing as they put up Christmas lights on our roof! Thanks guys!

☞ **From our college students:**

- A student at Tabor reports, “I’m really loving college and the experiences I’ve had here. My favorite class is definitely Intro to Justice. It’s so fun to learn about that field and figure out if that’s something I want to do for the rest of my life. My primary sport is softball, and we started practicing outside in September. Now since it’s colder we just lift and hit in the indoor facility. Then we have intramural sports like volleyball, flag football, basketball, etc., so that’s also really fun to participate in.
- A student at K-State says, “Of course I’d be willing to send an update! School has been going really well. I’m in some tougher classes this semester than I’m used to but if I finish strong, I should be able to get all A’s. I’m living with three of my friends in the dorms still, and it’s been awesome getting to try and share our faith on our dorm floor and on campus. Also, I have grown a lot personally this semester in my walk as well; by the grace of God, he’s shown me a lot of my strengths and weaknesses in my faith, which has been cool to see how I can utilize my strengths and let God grow me in my weaknesses.

Upcoming Events

☞ **The church office will be closed** on Thursday and Friday for the Thanksgiving holiday.

☞ **This is the last week to sign cards and fill boxes for College Students:** Please add your name and possibly a few words of encouragement to the cards!

☞ **Advent begins this coming Sunday – November 27th.** As you enjoy your leftovers from your Thanksgiving feast, dust off your advent wreath. Get your candles ready. It will be time to celebrate

again. A simple guide to help you celebrate in your homes is on the table in the foyer (a blue sheet for this first week). Join your FMC brothers and sisters in daily unified worship and prayer.

- ☞ **Dec. 3rd**, we are pleased to host a portion of our Hillsboro “**Down Home Christmas**” community event in our Fellowship Hall. Enjoy the vendors who will be here from 9 to 3 and share your friendly hospitality if you come. That evening, our building will also host the Et Cetera Shop volunteers Christmas celebration. Praise God for providing these events!
- ☞ **Your personal invitation** is out on the foyer table to a sit-down luncheon “**Christmas Giving Gala**” hosted by our youth group. Your donations will be used for sharing gifts with families at Main Street Ministries for Christmas. An RSVP sheet is on the whiteboard to let us know your choice of entrees. Our very own Joshua Diener will be our head waiter as well as the DJ, sharing Christmas music during your dining. Please RSVP by Dec. 1st.
- ☞ The **Christmas Eve Service** (at 6:30 p.m. on December 24) will be a service of lessons and carols that together tell the Christmas story. **Christmas morning** (Sunday, December 25, at 10:30) we will have an informal worship service of carol singing and storytelling. (There will be no Sunday School that day.)

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Ministry Team Happening:** *(A few of the highlights from our last ministry council meeting)*
 - **Nurture:** making advent adventure bags for children and delivering them to their homes.
 - **Worship:** Planning a theme of “Restoration is Near” for advent. Jan Amstutz is coordinating the making of an advent wreath wall hanging. Judy and Bob Jantz will be setting the ambiance with an emphasis on simplicity in our sanctuary.
 - **Stewardship:** Have gotten 3 quotes now from 3 sign companies to update our outdoor sign on the corner of Ash and Grand. (Pray for discernment)
 - **Vision:** After hosting Michele Hershberger with interesting new ideas for the future, continuing discussion is needed. Please consider your part in these discussions and watch for the next opportunity that will be coming up.
- ☞ **Sunday mornings at 9:30am** we are continuing to watch and discuss the video series, “**The Chosen**”. Extra copies of the DVDs for season 1 are available to borrow if you are interested in seeing them. There is also a Chosen App now which you can download for free if you want to rewatch any of the videos. Don’t miss this opportunity to see the New Testament stories of the life of Jesus come to life.
- ☞ **Michele Hershberger’s message** from November 13th is now available in print in the foyer. If you would like an electronic copy, call or email the church office. She offered us a lot of thought-provoking ideas on which to “chew” as we consider our future. I apologize if I didn’t clearly communicate that all were invited to the Wednesday evening follow-up time with her also. We have that session available now as a YouTube link. If you didn’t get a chance to hear Michele’s ideas and our discussion of our questions, we hope you will still listen to these and share your input.
- ☞ **Check the Doors!** If you have keys to our building, as you come and go, please be aware that some of our doors don’t shut well without an extra little pull. Be sure doors are closed and locked when you come in and out. Thank you for attention to this!
- ☞ **Save the Date:** Annual Congregational meeting - January 22.

- ☞ Two new magazines have arrived at our magazine rack in the east hall:
 - **The Marketplace** by Mennonite Economic Development Associates
 - **Anabaptist World**, an independent journalistic ministry serving the global Anabaptist movement.

- ☞ **LIGHTS! ACTION! LIGHTS!** When you come to do your ministry work in our building, please feel free to turn on the lights, enjoy our facilities, and then TURN OUT THE LIGHTS! As we watch our electric bills, please help us out and be mindful of turning off lights as you leave the room.

- ☞ Do you share family stories at your holiday reunions? Do you know when many of your ancestors came to America? 1874. This is 2022; that's almost 150 years later. The Schweitzers and their descendants want to celebrate. We've scheduled August 23-25, 2024, at Eden Mennonite Church near Moundridge KS as the place. We're calling this event "Schweitzers and Friends" to include others with similar history. Put the date on your calendar. You are invited. You can be a part. Coordinator Danielle Goering would like to hear your ideas (wgdg@cox.net or 602-448-7215). This celebration may include learning more about our history, telling stories, singing, eating some favorite foods, watching wheat harvested, and much more as well as being with relatives and friends. What a celebration we will have! - Kathy Goering

- ☞ New Hope Shelter: News came to the office about what is happening in November at the New Hope Shelter in Newton. Their mission is to provide a sanctuary for those experiencing homelessness in Harvey, Marion, McPherson and Butler counties by uniting the local church into a nurturing community which restores hope through a growing relationship with Christ. It is through the love of Christ they share with those in need of hope. To find out more go to www.newhope-shelter.org