



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

December 30, 2020

From Pastor Tom

...and a Happy New Year!

Although I have never used it, there is actually an entry in the Revised Common Lectionary for New Year's Day. (In case you're wondering, on the rare occasion January 1 falls on a Sunday, I typically use either the First Sunday after Christmas, the Second Sunday after Christmas, or Epiphany Sunday.) One of the texts for New Year's Day is Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, which includes the famous passage beginning "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." The passage looks realistically at the nature of life, expressed in a set of opposites: a time to be born/a time to die; a time to plant/a time to pluck up what is planted; etc. All these, the passage states, are unavoidable parts of the life God has granted us, and all have their place. The "wise" person will therefore embrace these opposites, live as stoically through them as possible, and otherwise "be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live," because "it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil."

Since Friday is New Year's Day, traditionally a time to "turn the page" from the previous year to the new, I invite you to take a few minutes to consider the following questions, based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

- What was born during the past year, and what (or who) died?
- What was planted, and what was plucked up?
- What (or who) was killed, and what was healed?
- What was broken down, and what was built up?
- What were some times of weeping, and what were times of laughing?
- When were some times of mourning, and when were times of dancing?
- What "stones" were thrown away, and what stones were gathered together?
- What (or who) was embraced, and what was not?
- What was sought, and what was loosed?
- What was kept, and what was thrown away?
- What was torn, and what was stitched together?
- What words were spoken, and what were left unspoken?
- What (or who) was loved, and what was hated?
- Who fought with one another, and who made peace?

In last week's E-Newsletter cover piece, I wrote about the meaning of the words "Merry Christmas," so I thought I'd add a few about their counterpart "Happy New Year." As we look back over the past year, whether through the lens of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 or any other lens, it is pretty obvious that life doesn't always bring happiness. Sometimes (perhaps as much as half the time) life brings its opposite, whether we call that sadness, misery, pain, discouragement, depression, disappointment, or any one of at least

686 antonyms of the word happiness I found in an on-line thesaurus. So tomorrow night, at exactly 12:00:00 am, when the ball drops, 2020 expires, and 2021 begins counting down, what are we really saying to one another when we say, "Happy New Year!"? How about something like this? "During the coming year, there will be times when your lives seem absolutely awesome. And, there will be times when they are awful. Either way, my prayer for each one of you is that you may live every day and hour and second in the presence and embrace of God, your Creator. May every moment of every day be a step on the journey toward Jesus, who continues to redeem you. And may all of 2021 be soaked in the healing, empowering, beautifying, cleansing waters of the Holy Spirit, who will sustain you through it all. Amen."

Ways to Help

- ☞ **It appears** that our faithful microwave in the church kitchen no longer works. If you would like to share one with FMC, we'd love that!
- ☞ **This week is the last week for MCC Hygiene Kit donations.** You may place them on the table in the Narthex.
- ☞ **MCC Comforter Blitz update:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Kansas Friends of MCC Comforter Blitz in Yoder, KS has been canceled. However, the Blitz committee still has a goal of collecting at least 300 comforters between February and April. We need your help to meet this goal! Fabric kits and comforter sets to tie (top, back, and batting) are available to check out from MCC in North Newton. For contactless drop-off of completed comforters the 24-hour donation room is always available. To arrange drop-off or checkout materials, contact Kate at katemast@mcc.org, or 316.804.8432

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Save the date!** FMC's annual meeting will be Sunday, January 17. Plans still being made about how and when best to convene on that day. More information to follow.
- ☞ **January 14:** Ministries Council meeting
- ☞ **Kauffman Museum at Bethel College** is partnering with Humanities Kansas to host the Smithsonian traveling exhibit "Crossroads: Change in Rural America" through Jan. 17. Accompanying it is a local companion exhibit, "Of Land and People: Our Community at the Crossroads," created from the museum's permanent exhibit "Of Land and People." The museum is open 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Tues.-Fri (early close at 1 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 24, and Thursday, Dec. 31); 1:30-4:30 p.m., Sat.-Sunday; and closed Mondays and major holidays (Friday, Dec. 25, Friday, Jan. 1). Admission to the "Crossroads" exhibit is free on Saturdays.
- ☞ **Mon., Jan. 18, 6:30 p.m. – Bethel College's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration will feature spoken word artist M'Vyonne Payne and former pro athlete and motivational speaker Chris Singleton.** The event will be held in *Krehbiel Auditorium in Luyken Fine Arts Center*, with COVID protocols in place, and will also be live-streamed via YouTube at bit.ly/bethelks-mlk2021 Sponsors are the Bethel College Diversity Council, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Student Life Office, with support from the Bethel College Women's Association.

- ☞ **Join MCC for a series of “MCC and me” webinars to hear more about service opportunities.** Are you ready to step out and into service? To gain new skills and experiences while working for relief, development and peace in the name of Christ? MCC is working to adapt our programming as the situation with COVID-19 develops. All sessions relate to anticipated service needs, though timing and some other details may be subject to change. For more information and to register: mcc.org/mcc-me-webinar-series-service-opportunities.
 - January 13 at 3 p.m. EST: Summer Service leadership program
 - February 25 at 10 a.m. EST: Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP) summer staff
 - February 25 at 8 p.m. EST: International service worker
 - March 6 at 12 p.m. EST: International service worker
 - March TBD: Mobile Meat Canner

Other Announcements

- ☞ **A BIG Thank You** to all the Christmas Eve decorators and participants. Your hard work and creativity made the Christmas season at FMC memorable!
- ☞ **Area Director for Central Southern Asia:** MCC is seeking applicants for the position of [Area Director for Central Southern Asia](#). The Area Director will be responsible to coordinate MCC's resources in impactful and mutually transformative programming. For more information and/or to apply, please visit serve.mcc.org.
- ☞ **MCC Representative for Haiti:** Are you looking for opportunities to use your leadership skills? The [MCC Representative for Haiti](#) provides programmatic direction to the work of MCC in Haiti within the MCC Latin America/Caribbean region. This position provides team leadership and support for all MCC workers in Haiti. For more information and/or to apply, please visit service.mcc.org.
- ☞ **Canner Operator :** MCC is looking for new canner operators! This two-year service term is unique and offers the opportunity to travel around the U.S. and Canada, working as a team while meeting new people! Check out mcc.org/canning for details!
- ☞ **The WDC Garden December 2020/January/February 2021 issue** is now available for viewing at: <https://mennowdc.org/wdc-garden-december-2020-january-february-2021/>. Learn about how WDC is engaging with racial justice and cultural diversity, the impact of Covid-19 on Hispanic churches, an announcement about Sandra Montes-Martinez as the new WDC Associate Conference Minister (Texas-Based), and more!
- ☞ **Applications for Camp Mennoscah Summer Staff** positions are now being accepted! Although there is a chance positions will change to meet the needs of pandemic-impacted summer youth camps, the current summer staff leadership positions are naturalist, crafts leader, lifeguard, grounds/maintenance, music leader, office, and all-round/media. For those 21 years old or older, there is also a Director of Support opening. Find the application and information online at www.campmennoscah.org under Summer Youth Camps!
- ☞ **Youth Venture** is accepting applications for summer 2021! Discover and experience the work that God is doing in the world with a team of other young people as you serve, learn, worship, and build relationships. Visit MennoniteMission.net/YouthVenture to learn more!

Weekly Inspirational/Encouraging Bible Verse

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.” -- John 14:1-3