



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

February 17, 2021

From Pastor Tom

"Deep Calls to Deep"

Approximately one year ago, the writing team for this year's Lenten worship curriculum (seven individuals from the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada) had only met in person once before things began shutting down due to the coronavirus. They write: "We had one embodied meeting, seeing the shape of each other's faces, shaking each other's hands, and then we entered the world of isolation and virtual connection with which all of us are now familiar. Suddenly the wilderness of Lent was all too real, as we were stripped of our usual resources, surroundings, activities, and circles of relationships. . . . Our team dove into the Scriptures for this season and found within them stories, songs, and promises that called us to identify what is essential, what really matters, who we are at our core, and what God asks (and doesn't ask) of us. . . . The call to go deeper can be frightening or overwhelming when we feel we are not ready and do not know what we will find. We keep much of our pain in our depths. But the theme 'Deep calls to deep' (Psalm 42:7) arose for us as we experienced God calling out from a deeper place than the areas we usually think we can plan and control" (*Leader*, Winter 2020-21, p. 36).

Does this not also describe our experience at First Mennonite Church during the past year? Isolated from our usual circles of relationships? Afraid to explore very deep, not feeling ready or not knowing what we will find? Keeping our pain buried? Straining to hear God's voice calling us amidst the uncertainties "we usually think we can plan and control"?

The Season of Lent always beckons us to go deeper within ourselves, both as we are and as God is calling us to be—and especially so this year. Our worship services, formerly taken for granted, are now significantly handicapped by the virus. Some of us still attend in person but have to wear masks, sit socially distanced, and are unable to sing (despite the exciting fact that we have our new hymnals!). The rest of us must settle for either watching the service live over Facebook (which feels way too distant to be very vital or real) or on YouTube after the fact (which, despite all our audio visual efforts, is not even close to the same thing as being there). But for now, and for the still indefinite future, that is what we have. My earnest prayer as your pastor is that our worship services throughout the next six Sundays will nevertheless speak to each of you in fresh, needed ways, and that the living Spirit of Christ will come to you and be present with you in very real ways. Come, let us go deep together!

Ways to Help

- ✎ **MCC Comforter Blitz: At Home** Read all the details and information at mcc.org/blitz-at-home. Share pictures of your work on the [MCC Comforter Blitz](#) Facebook page, and contact katemast@mcc.org or 316.804.8432 with questions.
- ✎ **Mennonite Mission Network:** Petrus and Yuliana Handoyo, of Mennonite Mission Network, live out the good news of Jesus Christ in Cambodia, which is a Buddhist country. Pray for them as they teach at all levels– from informal classes for children to the university level– and as they help provide leadership for a multicultural congregation.

Upcoming Events

- ✎ **The Hesston College Theatre department will present five performances of “Silent Sky,”** a play by Lauren Gunderson about pioneering astronomer Henrietta Leavitt in the early 20th century. The show runs through Feb. 17, 18, 20, and 21, featuring live music by faculty members **Dr. Holly Swartzendruber** and Ken Rodgers. The shows on Wednesday and Thursday start at 7 p.m. Saturday’s showtimes are at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Sunday’s show begins at 2 p.m, all to be held at the Hesston High School Auditorium. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and can be reserved online at hesston.edu/bookstore, by phone at 620.327.8105, or purchased on site. Seating is limited, and masks are required.
- ✎ **Enjoy a drive-thru verenike supper** complete with ham gravy and sausage February 20 at Halstead FMC, 427 W. 4th St. Cost is by donation with all proceeds to go toward local COVID relief.
- ✎ Join individuals from across Western District Conference via Zoom on **Thursday, Feb. 25 at 7:00pm** to talk about "**Invited: The Power of Hospitality in an Age of Loneliness**" by Leslie Verner. Email Jennie at the Resource Library to register for the discussion or to borrow a book at crlib@mennowdc.org
- ✎ **You are invited to join the virtual MCC Central States annual meeting on Saturday, February 26 at 9 a.m. CST.** The meeting will include a reflection on MCC in pandemic times, details about what COVID-19 has meant for MCC thrift shops and a look at our financial statements. To join the meeting please email centralstates@mcc.org and then Zoom meeting information will be sent directly to you.
- ✎ **Now What?! Post Pandemic Faith Formation:** Do you want to talk with other people who care about faith formation? What have we learned about new ways of sharing the Jesus story in the past year? What will we lay aside? What questions remain unanswered? Join Kathy Neufeld Dunn and Resource Library Director Jennie Wintermote for a virtual dialogue **Saturday, February 27, 9 am CST.** To register, please email wdc@mennowdc.org for the Zoom link.

Other Announcements

- ✎ **MC USA's** annual Lent at Home guide is now available for download at: <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/lent-at-home/>.
- ✎ **MDS** will be using an alternative single team model for the spring season (March and April) to minimize COVID-19 risks. This involves a group of leadership and long-term crew volunteers working together for four weeks or more at a project after isolating for 10 days prior to serving. There will not be weekly volunteer groups coming and going each week. Anyone who agrees to serve within this model will need to complete the Long-Term Volunteer application and interview process. All interested volunteers should contact Deanna Frey at dfrey@mds.mennonite.net, for further conversation and scheduling.

- ☞ **Camp Mennoscah** is a wonderful space for families and groups needing space to spread out! Facilities for differently sized groups are available with a variety of gathering areas. Trails and fields are waiting to be hiked and used for fun activities, too! Contact Camp Mennoscah at 620-297-3290 or office@campmennoscah.org to reserve. You are invited to enjoy this sacred space!
- ☞ **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 Encouraging Bible Verse

“I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” – Colossians 2:2-3 (NRSV)