



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

January 20, 2021

From Pastor Tom

Fifty (Thousand!) Shades of Grace

So two weeks ago I asked you all (via this newsletter): “What to preach?” I asked for your suggestions. One of you emailed me: “How about a sermon series on grace?” Perfect!! Grace is one of the most important words in the New Testament. It is one of the most important words in the Christian faith. And it just happens to be one of the most important words in my life!

It hasn't always been. For starters, I didn't grow up with it. Grace was one of those “Paul words” that didn't seem to connect with the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith in which I was raised. After all, when Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, “For by grace you have been saved through faith , , , not the result of works” (Ephesians 2:8-9), does that not seem to fly in the face of Anabaptist emphasis on discipleship, on how we live? Thanks to some awesome seminary professors, I now have a much fuller and more nuanced understanding of the word grace, not to mention of Anabaptist faith. And far more importantly, thanks to an awesome God, I now have experienced grace personally. Over and over and over.

The title of the sermon series will be “Fifty (Thousand!) Shades of Grace.” Admittedly, it's a play on words of the movie titled “Fifty Shades of Grey” (a movie I have never seen, although from what I hear, many have considered it pretty raunchy). There are indeed different “shades” or manifestations of grace, and just as many different ways to talk about it. Throughout the series (which for now will last for at least the four weeks leading up to Lent, and which I may pick up again sometime after Easter) I look forward to talking about some of these different shades and manifestations. I will do so by selecting a variety of biblical texts, each of which will help to illustrate one or more of these shades. We will also sing together (or rather, will hear sung, at least until we have all received the full COVID-19 vaccine) some of the many hymns and songs from the new hymnal *Voices Together* that talk about grace. Hope you'll join us—in person, on Zoom, or live-streamed on Facebook!

Ways to Help

- ☞ **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

- ☞ **The FMC Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 24**, immediately following the worship service. Our plan intends to include as many people as possible who wish to participate, but if you cannot participate for whatever reason, you may still cast an absentee vote for (a) the slate of MTLs (to be sent with the newsletter this week), and (b) the proposed budget (previously distributed to the congregation). The meeting will be held in the sanctuary, asking people to remain seated as they were during the worship service. We will make the meeting available via Zoom as well (link to be sent). Those participating via Zoom will be able to speak as well as listen. The annual reports are now available in church mailboxes. Please read these prior to the Annual Meeting. The first part of the meeting will be a streamlined acknowledgment of committee work among us. If you have any questions or comments about the work of any committee, you are invited to send those to Maura at the church office ahead of time so that they may more easily be addressed in the meeting. During the meeting, we will also invite a conversation that includes reflections on how we have functioned as a church community during these past 9 months, and suggestions on ways to improve during the months ahead. Your prayers for this event are appreciated. Doug Miller, moderator

2021 Ministry Team Leaders for Congregational Affirmation First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro

Vision Council: Nadine Friesen

Discernment Council: (Coordinating Cabinet)*

Care Committee: Susan Schultz

Hospitality Committee: Erin Unruh

Mission Committee: Glenn Wiebe

Nurture Committee: Doug Miller

Stewardship Committee: Marlin Bartel

Worship Committee: Aleen Ratzlaff

Treasurer: Glen Diener

Church Secretary: Deanne Duerksen

Moderator: Doug Miller

*Coordinating Cabinet is the Pastor, Vision MTL, Discernment MTL, and the Moderator

- ☞ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kauffman Museum at Bethel College is offering **Kansas Day in a Box** to give families the option of celebrating the day in the safety and comfort of their own home. The box will include games, crafts, recipes, foods, maps, activities and some surprise items to help you enjoy Kansas history and culture. The order **deadline is Weds., Jan. 20**; to order, go to <https://kauffmanmuseum.org/product/kansas-day-craft-kit/> Kansas Day in a Box can be picked up at the museum between Jan. 26-30, or mailed for an additional fee. On Sat., Jan. 30, Ms. Kristin (Kristin Neufeld Epp) from New Creation Preschool in Newton will open Kansas Day in a Box live on Zoom. Details on how to participate will be sent to all who purchase boxes.
- ☞ **Sat., Jan. 30 – Kauffman Museum annual Kansas Day** event, “Our Stories, Our Foods.” **Starting at 11 a.m.** – food trucks, local producer booths and take-it-home crafts, *museum parking lot and grounds*; **11 a.m. via Zoom: Glen Ediger**, North Newton: stories about Mennonite ethnic foods; **2 p.m. via Zoom: Jenny Masias**, Newton: “The Immigrants Who Built Newton: One Spike at a Time”; **walking tour** to the eight “Stories Along the Trail” sites in North Newton. *Please note that face coverings must be worn and distancing guidelines followed on Kauffman Museum and all Bethel College property.* **To get Zoom links**, go to the Kauffman Museum Facebook page or [kauffmanmuseum.org](https://www.kauffmanmuseum.org)
- ☞ **The KIPCOR Film Series at Bethel College is serving up a second helping of *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code***, which focuses on the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave to illustrate how Black, Indigenous and People of Color and low-income citizens suffer the most negative impact

from natural disasters. The film is an indictment of U.S. disaster preparedness, and connects extreme weather, extreme disparity (income and other) and extreme racism. Go to kipcor.org, "Film Series," for a link to watch *Cooked* for free and a link to register for the **Feb. 7 virtual discussion**; **advance registration is required to participate in the discussion**, which will be held in break-out rooms, with leaders who include Chicagoans who experienced the 1995 heat disaster.

- ☞ **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.

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

- ☞ **Join MCC for a free webinar: The Spiritual Cost of Doctrine of Discovery.** Mark Charles, a Navajo activist, speaker, and author will be presenting on The Spiritual Cost of Doctrine of Discovery. Along with Soong-Chan Rah, Mark is the author of *Unsettling Truths: The ongoing, dehumanizing legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, Intervarsity Press (2019). The free webinar will take place on **Thursday, January 21, from 10-11:30 CST**. Please register by January 20 at mcc.org/webinar-registration-dod to receive the webinar link.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **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

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

--Matthew 7: 12