



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

March 31, 2021

From Pastor Tom

“Spy” Wednesday

I learned something new today. The Wednesday of Holy Week, known as (get ready for it!) Holy Wednesday, or Good Wednesday, or Great and Holy Wednesday (by our Orthodox brothers and sisters), is also known as “Spy Wednesday.” Who knew? (It is even included in my *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, but I had never noticed.)

In the Gospel of John we are told that Jesus, “six days before the Passover” (and possibly the day before the Last Supper, thus our Wednesday), Jesus came to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in the village of Bethany, where “they gave a dinner for him.” And while they were eating, Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with “a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard” that filled the house with its fragrance. However, Judas Iscariot objected, saying “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” And John, in parentheses as it were, reminds us that Judas is “the one who was about to betray” Jesus (John 12:1-8). In other words, a spy was in their midst. Not exactly “holy” stuff!

Is there a spy in our midst? Is suspicion and paranoia meant to be the ethos of this day? And who might this despicable person be?

I propose we simply suspect—and inspect—ourselves! In what ways are we duplicitous about our commitment to Christ? When do we profess out of one side of our mouth our eager participation in the fellowship and mission of the church, and out of the other side, criticize and judge it? Is it possible we are more concerned with what we can get out of it than what we can give to it, more enamored with serving ourselves than with serving others? Ouch!

There are some who feel Judas gets a bad rap in the gospels, that he was merely playing the part ordained for him by God (Matthew even reports that Judas repented, tried to return the blood money he was paid, and ended up hanging himself; see Matthew 27:3-10.) But what about us? Do we or will we get a bad rap? Or will we be justifiably remembered as having betrayed Jesus?

Maybe—hopefully—the jury is still out, and Spy Wednesday is a good time for us to be honest about our duplicity with regards to the Gospel. There is still the confusion of Thursday to come. And the darkness of Friday. And the deep grief of Saturday. And, by the glorious grace of God, the celebration of Sunday!

Upcoming Events

Holy Week Events

April 1 – 4

Maundy Thursday 7 p.m. In-person and Virtual Service
April 1

Easter Sunday 6:45 a.m. Sunrise Service at Mark and Sandy Hiebert's farm
April 4
Bring your own lawn chairs and/or blankets!
Directions (931 140th): From Indigo, go west on 140th about 0.7 mile. There is the first farm on the left. Look for the solar panels north of the house (and their name on the mailbox)!

10 a.m. *Taste and See!* (Fellowship Hall)
Brunch in a Box and Easter Egg Hunt

10:30 a.m. *"Christ is Risen!"* (Sanctuary)

**Easter Brunch Boxes – all are invited to feast in the fellowship hall, courtyard, or even – this one Sunday – in the sanctuary!

***Please be seated and ready to celebrate together in the sanctuary by 10:30 a.m. each Sunday.

- ☞ **The Maundy Thursday service** will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 1 (tomorrow!) both in person and virtually. Communion will be part of the service. If you plan to attend virtually, communion elements will be available in the foyer through Thursday for you to pick up. You may use your own crackers and juice if desired, but these elements are available to you. Please take as many as needed for your family. Contact Aleen Ratzlaff at 620-947-2099 by Thursday at noon if you would like them delivered.
- ☞ **Explore FMC!** On the Sunday after Easter (that is, April 11), Pastor Tom will lead an "Explore FMC" class for those who might have interest in becoming an official member of our church, or are simply interested in learning more about our church and faith tradition. It will begin with lunch and last until approximately 3 p.m. If you are interested in joining the group, let Pastor Tom know by Monday morning April 5.
- ☞ **Tabor College** is excited to bring **The Triumphant Quartet** to campus Sunday, April 25 at 7 p.m. in the Shari Flaming Center for the Arts. This quartet has been singing quality gospel music since 2003, quickly gaining national attention and several #1 songs. The group received a Dove award in 2019 for their album YES, voted southern gospel album of the year. Please join them April 25 for a wonderful evening of beautiful music. Tickets may be purchased at www.tabor.edu/tickets or by phone at 620-947-3121 ext. 1401.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Eager to Celebrate the Season? Get your Covid Vaccination** and Step out in Confidence! It's as easy as 1-2-3....
 1. Log onto the Marion County website: www.Marioncoks.net. Scroll down until you see the Covid emblem, with links underneath it.
 2. Click on a "Vaccine Appointment Calendar" for the type of vaccine you wish, and you can set your own appointment for the vaccine.
 3. Show up at your appointment with your consent form (you can get that from the same website).
- ☞ Camp Mennoscah is seeking a full-time **Director of Development, Marketing & Communications** to lead our ongoing operational and advancement needs. This position reports directly to the Board of Directors while taking directive from the Executive Director when related to operational considerations. As a member of a small, very hands-on staff, the role is expected to be highly collaborative. This professional must embrace the mission of Camp Mennoscah, have an established background in coordinating nonprofit donation strategies, possess strong written, interpersonal, leadership and relationship building skills, and work as an independent contributor with good organization and follow-through. Most of the work will commence off campus, however some in-person time at camp is required.
- ☞ **The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA** voted during its Jan. 22-23, 2021 meeting to hold its biennial Delegate Assembly online due to uncertainty around COVID-19 gathering restrictions. Originally scheduled to meet in person on July 6-10, 2021, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Delegate Assembly will meet virtually on Saturday, July 10 from 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m. ET. For more information, visit <https://convention.mennoniteusa.org/> and click the Delegates tab.
- ☞ **Men and Boys Retreat, April 16-18, at Camp Mennoscah!** Come to Camp Mennoscah for this long-standing, guys-only retreat! Spend time fishing, canoeing, worshiping, sitting by the fire, or visiting with friends in fellowship. The official beginning to the weekend is Saturday morning, but many arrive on Friday. Meals can be purchased for Saturday night, Sunday morning and lunch. People are welcome Friday, but no meals or entertainment will be provided. Meals available for an additional cost. No pre-registration. Registration and payment will take place upon arrival. For more information, contact Kevin Neufeld at 316-322-5515.

Verse of the Week

"He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted." Isaiah 52:3-4 (NRSV)