



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

November 25, 2020

From Pastor Tom

A Word on Palestine

The history of Palestine is complicated. As a purely geographical designation, Palestine is a region in Western Asia that includes modern day Israel, and the so-called occupied territories known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sometimes referred to as the "Holy Land," Palestine is considered the homeland of Jesus, and the locus of both the Old and New Testaments. It has always been a crossroads between multiple civilizations and cultures, and its history is intertwined with that of three modern day world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

As a political designation, much of this region has been supplanted by and is now under either the sovereignty or the military occupation of the state of Israel, which was declared in 1948. While the exact borders of Israel continue to be disputed, the United Nations and 138 nations worldwide recognize the occupied territories as an independent, sovereign, Palestinian state. Meanwhile, the state of Israel continues to slowly expand its borders through annexation and settlement. In other words, as a nation, Palestine is shrinking.

The Palestinian people are those, primarily of Arab ethnicity, who consider Palestine their homeland and who trace their ancestry there, including Christians, Jews, and Muslims. There are approximately 12 million Palestinians worldwide, only half of whom still live in that geographical territory. Of those 6 million, 1.9 million live in Israel proper, while the remaining 4.1 million live in the occupied territories, either in tiny Gaza or the West Bank. About half of these are registered as refugees, meaning they lost their homes and were internally displaced.

Palestine, in other words, is a land that has long been torn by conflict, and its people beset by all manner of injustices. Why should we care? Because Palestine was the home not just of the birth of Christ, but the birth of Christianity. Because Christ, and the Bible as a whole, pays special attention to those who are victims of injustice. Because the situation in Israel-Palestine is in many ways a microcosm of the beauty and brokenness in the world as a whole. And because our congregation has been invited to be one of 100 congregations in the United States, of many different denominations, to take part in an initiative called "Keep Awake: a Call to Preach Palestine."

So this coming Sunday, November 29, even as we begin celebrating the Season of Advent and follow our denominational worship curriculum and its theme "On the Road..." I'm going to preach in part about Palestine. I will draw from two of our First Sunday in Advent lections: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, and Isaiah 64:1-9. Please pray for me as I prepare. Pray for Palestine. Pray for our congregation, that we may continue to carry out our mission. And pray that God will once again "tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at Your presence" (Isaiah 64:1).

Ways to Help

- ☞ **Change the world with one dollar a day challenge.** Marion County Core Community is looking for 140 brave and generous people who will pledge \$1 a day or \$30 a month for one year. \$1 a day can solve poverty by inviting families experiencing poverty to a safe place where their voices are heard, they are treated with honor and dignity as they unpack their lives, gain new relationships and build resources. Text or call Mark Rogers @ 620-877-0899. All gifts are tax deductible.
- ☞ **Cookies in a Box!** Camp Mennoscah is expanding on the theme of a Camp in a Box for Giving Tuesday with Cookies in a Box for anyone who gives \$25 more than their total giving in 2019 on Tuesday, December 1. We'll carefully pack up the dry ingredients for approximately 20 cookies from camp cook Leslie Schrag's famous Chocolate Crinkle cookies. Add a few ingredients that don't pack well and bake them at home! Send a check to Camp Mennoscah with "Giving Tuesday" in a note, or give online at campmennoscah.org Food allergies? Let us

know. Limited to donations given or postmarked on December 1. **Camp Mennoscah** is a wonderful place for family gatherings of whatever size! A variety of facilities fit any number of family groupings. Or maybe you only need a space during the day for walking the trails or playing disc golf. There is plenty of outdoor space! Contact Camp Mennoscah at 620-297-3290 or office@campmennoscah.org to reserve! You are welcome here!

- ☞ **MCC asks for support for Central American hurricane recovery.** Not one, but two hurricanes within two weeks have caused extensive flooding in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Hurricanes Eta and Iota have destroyed crops and forced people from their homes. MCC is working with churches and community organization to provide emergency food, hygiene supplies and cleanup support. Join us as we help these communities recover. You can donate online mcc.org/eta-iota-relief, by phone (888) 563-4676 or by mail at MCC, 21 S. 12th St., PO Box 500, Akron PA 17501.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **This Sunday, Nov. 29,** we will begin celebrating the season of Advent, that season of waiting for Christ to come into the world, and into our hearts, as he once came as a baby. It is also our tradition to share the Lord's Supper with one another on the First Sunday of Advent. Since the theme of our denominational Advent worship curriculum is "On the Road...", we will celebrate communion by coming to the front, pew by pew and safely distanced, where we will each receive a small bag with "food for the Road," which we will eat together after returning to our seats.
- ☞ **Global Orphan Fundraiser** is sponsoring the Ball Brothers at Memorial Hall on Tuesday, December 1. They are a gospel singing group that speaks to all ages. You can check out their hit song, "It's all about the Cross," on YouTube. Check out the poster in the hallway for more information. Tickets are \$20, with group rates available.
- ☞ **Have yourself a honkin' good holiday at MCC in North Newton!** This drive-thru event on Dec. 11 from 4-6 p.m. is a unique way to safely enjoy some delicious Christmas cheer while supporting the worldwide work of Mennonite Central Committee. Each charcuterie box is composed of seasonal artisan meats and cheeses, olives, fruit, mixed nuts and seasonal treats with crackers served on the side. A box serves two generous appetizer portions. RSVP by 5 p.m. on December 4 to reserve yours! Share your Christmas joy by ordering extra boxes to deliver to family and friends. Take a moment and treat yourself this holiday season! Suggested donation per box is \$25. Email centralstates@mcc.org to reserve your charcuterie box today! Find more information and photos at mcc.org/honkin-holiday.
- ☞ **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.
 - December 9 at 7 p.m. EST: Serving and Learning Together (SALT)
 - 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 CannerFor more information and to register: mcc.org/mcc-me-webinar-series-service-opportunities
- ☞ **Bethel College Women's Association (BCWA)** is looking for Newton-area bakers to help support the college by supplying baked goods for this year's "5 Places of Christmas" on Dec. 5. Follow this link for sign-up options: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4BABA2EA4FDCF8-baked>.
- ☞ **Looking for your next opportunity to come to Camp Mennoscah?** The Christmas Gathering is tentatively being planned as an outdoor event on Saturday, December 12 at 2:30pm. Details forthcoming.
- ☞ **Now on display in the Regier Art Gallery, Luyken Fine Arts Center, at Bethel College: "Noir + More,"** recent work by Denise Brueggeman. Gallery hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Mon.-Fri. Please note that face coverings must be worn and physical distancing observed on the Bethel campus.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **SOOP (Service Opportunities with our Partners)** is accepting applications! Use your gifts and skills to work alongside others in a network of ministries across the church. Flexibly designed for retirees, families, and adults over 25. Visit MennoniteMission.net/SOOP to learn more!

☞ **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!

☞ **We have 2021 Calendars** in the church office if you would like to pick up one during office hours or email Maura and she can put one in your mailbox here at church. One is from MCC and the other is from Yazel-Megli Funeral Home. Both have beautiful scenic pictures and verses for each month.

Weekly Inspirational/Encouraging Bible Verse(s)

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:4-5