



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

July 7, 2021

From Pastor Tom

A Desert Place

This week I've done some advance reading for the July 18 worship service and sermon (I'll be in Michigan this Sunday—keep reading!) The lection from Mark (6:30-34, 53-56) is a frantic, almost humorous window onto life on the job for Jesus and his disciples. The disciples had just been sent out, two by two, to try their hand at being “Jesus” for a while, teaching and healing as they walk along the various roadways of Galilee. They're back. They're excited. And, they're exhausted. Even as they begin to talk over each other, telling Jesus about their adventures, he can tell they need a break. “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while,” he says to them.

Yep. Sometimes you just have to take a break. Get away. Hit the road. I always enjoy my mini-getaways to Marion Reservoir on my motorcycle. But I'm ready for something a bit longer. This Thursday Lois and I, along with Miriam and Jim, Madeline and Rosie, hit the road for northern Michigan to celebrate Miriam's 80th birthday (actually 81, but then Covid happened and we couldn't make the trip) in the place of her birth, earliest memories, and profound family rootedness. The nearest town is Comins (it's not even on our road atlas!), but we won't be staying in town. Rather, we'll be staying in a Michigan forest. On a Michigan, spring-fed lake. With water so cold you have to screw up your courage before jumping in. And the haunting call of loons penetrating your dreams.

Clearly it's not a desert. Far from it! But it is deserted. Loons are pretty much the only thing you hear at night. The half-dozen or so “hunter's cabins” have no running water. So occasionally one might also hear the sound of someone tripping on the way to the outhouse at night. Fortunately (although I confess I'll miss that) this time we're staying at “Frank and June's house,” a ranch-style home along the winding gravel road between Highway 62 and Rhoads Lake. From minimum amenities to fully furnished, in just a couple hundred yards or so. Frank and June are no longer with us, but that doesn't keep their “cousins” (broadly defined) from enjoying the place. It will be a reunion of sorts—so no silent retreat for Lois and me—it will be a party! And, it will definitely be a getaway.

Summer is a great time for getaways, what with school out and s-l-i-g-h-t-l-y relaxed schedules (I stretched that word about as far as it will go without snapping! ☺). It always takes a lot of work to get ready for a road trip; sometimes you can't help but wonder if it will be worth it. But once you hit the road you can literally feel your pulse slowing and your shoulder muscles unwinding. Ahhh!

I hope you all get the getaways to the “desert places” you need, at least sometime this summer. Jesus knows when you're tired, too! When he says “Come away to a desert place,” you almost get the sense that he will somehow be there with you! And I won't mind that one bit. He's always good company!

I will miss you all while I'm gone (but not horribly much ☺). And I will be glad to see you when I return (that part is always true! ☺). See you (and hear you) in a week!

Upcoming Events

- ✚ **Worship this week:** Marcia Brubaker, organist; Doug Bartel, worship leader; Erin Unruh, Children's Time; Jeff Wintermote, Sharing & Prayer leader; Doug Miller, preacher, "Who Shall Stand?" based on Ephesians 1:3-14 NRSV.
- ✚ **Everence will host its popular workshop, *Make Medicare an easy step*, as a webinar on Tuesday, July 13 at 6:30 p.m.** Attendees will learn about the various Medicare plans and what they cover; plans that supplement Medicare; and enrollment details and deadlines. This webinar is free. Please register by contacting our office at 877-467-7294, 316-283-3800 or central.kansas@everence.com. **Attendance is recommended for those approaching retirement or those ready to sign up for Medicare.*
- ✚ **Family Weekend at Camp Mennoscah July 17-18!** If you're looking for a weekend to escape, this retreat offers a smorgasbord of camp activities for you to choose from and plenty of time to be with your family and friends. Register at campmennoscah.org and contact 620-297-3290 with questions!
- ✚ **Join in this special Annual Assembly storytelling opportunity!** WDC's Assembly theme July 30-August 1 is "Woven into God's Story." StoryCorps has invited WDC to partner with their storytelling project, *One Small Step*, to share and record our own stories within WDC. *One Small Step* is an initiative to facilitate conversations across differences. (Facilitators are bilingual in Spanish and English.) It's a chance to spend time virtually with someone different than you and discover the stories behind each other's beliefs. To join another WDC member for an online conversation, sign up at <https://onesmallstep.storycorps.org/wdc/>.

Other Announcements

- ✚ **Extra help needed for summer youth camps!** Camp Mennoscah has paid and volunteer positions for grounds, maintenance and custodial positions. Volunteer kitchen staff is needed for July 18-24; willing hands and the ability to follow directions is all that is needed. Contact Camp Mennoscah at 620-297-3290 or olivia.bartel@campmennoscah.org for details. You will make camp an amazing experience for everyone!
- ✚ **The MCC Central States office in North Newton, KS is now open to the public.** Regular office hours are Monday-Friday, 8am-12pm and 1pm-5pm. Masks are respected but not required for fully vaccinated adults. We look forward to welcoming you back at MCC! Contact us at 316-283-2720 or centralstates@mcc.org.
- ✚ **Have you noticed WDC's website has a new look?** Check it out at <https://mennowdc.org>. While it is still a work in progress, the refreshed website is now THE place to go for all things WDC! Beginning in July, the *WDC Sprouts* weekly newsletter email will be discontinued. WDC articles, announcements, and other information will be posted exclusively on the website. Email alerts will be sent to let you know when new content has been posted.
- ✚ **Join us in saying thanks to WDC Administrative Assistant Nancy Funk!** If you would like to share an expression of appreciation for Nancy in anticipation of her retirement at the end of August, you are invited to stop by to visit with Nancy at the WDC office (2517 North Main Street, N. Newton, KS) over the next several weeks, or to send a note to her at WDC, PO Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117, or wdc@mennowdc.org.
- ✚ **Current openings at MCC** can be found at mcc.org. Current open positions include Canning & Trucking Manager, Multimedia Producer, Meat Canner and many international service opportunities.
- ✚ **The sewing group is making Dignity kits for MCC.** We are sewing the basic kits but need help collecting the other items to fill them. We will need ladies' cotton briefs (sm, med, lg), hand towels, washcloths, bars of bath soap, bars of laundry soap, wide tooth combs, nail clippers,

wooden or plastic clothespins. Please put any of the above donations in the storage cart in the narthex. Thank you for your help!

☞ **Join Jerusalem Seminar this winter!** Bethel College and Tabor College are again sponsoring a trip to Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, from December 26, 2021, to January 15, 2022. The four emphases of the trip are to (1) understand the Bible in its context, (2) learn about the three major religions of the area (Judaism, Islam, Eastern Christianity), (3) understand the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and (4) take time for reflection, worship, and prayer together. There is currently room for additional persons to participate. If interested, contact Peter Goerzen (pgoerzen@bethelks.edu) immediately. Cost is estimated at \$4700-\$4900 per person.

Verse of the Week

“This God—his way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.” –Psalm 18:30 (NRSV)