



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

October 27, 2021

From Pastor Tom

The Power of Story

Everybody loves a good story. It captures our attention, draws us in. It entertains us, and sometimes even delights us. It connects our lives with the lives and experiences of others, whether fictional or non-fictional. And perhaps most importantly, a story has the power to convey truth and meaning.

The Bible is full of stories! Virtually every book of the Bible has one or more stories to tell (even when they may be more implicit than explicit). Paul's letters tell stories. The Psalms imply stories. And then of course one could say that the Bible itself tells one long story!

We sometimes become overly preoccupied with whether or not a story is "true." What do we mean when we say that? That it actually happened? That every detail was recorded and documented, as is? In what sense is history "true?" Granted, I am not a historian (although my stepfather Jim Juhnke is!), but it seems to me that even the passing on of history involves some interpretation on the part of the historian, and it is precisely this interpretation that defines its "truth."

I learned in seminary that the New Testament gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are each stories about the life of Jesus. Each one has its differences and uniquenesses. Each one has different "truths" about Jesus it is wanting to highlight and interpret. Their truth becomes evident whenever we relate these stories to our own, when we find ourselves as characters in them, along with their other significant characters (which of course include not just Jesus but God, and often the Holy Spirit), whenever we listen for the voice of God in their telling.

Or take the stories in the Old Testament (for example, the story of David and Goliath). Whether or not they actually happened exactly as described (as if recorded and documented in history) is not the point of these stories. Rather, the point is finding ourselves as characters in them, alongside the presence and leading of God—a God whom the story helps us better to know.

This Sunday I will be preaching on Ruth 1:1-18. It happens to be a text I have never preached on. It is the first chapter of a longer story that was told and retold and passed down through the generations and was eventually determined to be important enough—true enough—to be included as part of the "Canon" we call the Bible. In what ways is this story true? (Or maybe a better question is, what is it that makes this story true?) Who are the characters? Where does God fit in? And above all, where do we find ourselves? How might God be speaking to us? These are some of the questions I will be asking as I decide how to "preach" this story—how to pass on this story—to all of you. But you can rest assured: it is a good one!

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **FMC Wednesday Night TONIGHT!** Come at 6:15 p.m. to enjoy meatloaf, baked potatoes, peas, and fruit cups! Pastor Tom will be leading a study of Ruth 1:1-18 at 7 p.m. in the chapel, and youth will meet.
- ☞ **Hillsboro's annual Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat is TONIGHT, October 27 from 7-8 p.m.** You are invited to leave canned goods on your porch to donate to Main Street Ministries, which will be picked up by youth groups of Hillsboro. All First Mennonite youth are invited to participate!
- ☞ **Thurs., Oct. 28 – Bethel College Chamber Orchestra Halloween concert, 7:30 p.m.,** Krehbiel Auditorium in Luyken Fine Arts Center. Bethel's current COVID-19 protocols require physical distancing and mask-wearing indoors with groups of 10 or more.
- ☞ **Jordan Feliz "Next to Me" tour is coming to Tabor College THIS FRIDAY, October 29 at 7 p.m. in the Shari Flaming Center for the Arts!** [Tickets are on sale now:](#) VIP tickets \$45 (early entry and Q&A with Jordan), Main Floor \$20, Gallery \$15. Follow the link above or call the box office at 620-947-3121 ext.1402 to get tickets. For group purchases of 10 or more, use coupon code TaborArtsJF to receive a \$5 per ticket discount.
- ☞ **The Sunflower Performing Arts series will begin Oct. 31 at 3 p.m. with the first-ever Sunflower Soirée,** a free concert of local and regional artists that also promotes the season ahead and kicks off the organization's annual patron drive. This event will feature the following artists: pianist Karen Schlabaugh; The Sunflower Trio; flautists Kristin Shaffer and Kenna Graber; guitarists Howard Glanton and Excier Rodriguez; soprano Holly Swartzendruber and pianist Karen Unruh; and musicians Ken Rodgers and Russell Adrian. More information on each performance of the 2021-2022 season can be found at sunflowerarts.org. All concerts will take place at Hesston Mennonite Church. Audience members and staff are required to wear masks while inside the church.
- ☞ **Sun., Oct. 31 – Bethel College fall choral showcase, "Bethel Sings," featuring small and large groups, 4 p.m.** NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION to the Ad Building steps, or Memorial Hall in case of rain.
- ☞ **Fri., Nov. 5 – The Menno Simons Lecture Endowment, with support from the Reimer-Boese Worship and the Arts Endowment, brings Jan Kraybill** to the Bethel College campus for two lectures on the theme "This is Our Story, This is Our Song: The Power of Music in Community." "The Sound of Science" is at **11 a.m. in Memorial Hall** as part of Bethel's student convocation series. "Music and Memory, Meaning and Mission" is at **7 p.m. in Krehbiel Auditorium** in Luyken Fine Arts Center. *Bethel's current COVID-19 protocols require physical distancing and mask-wearing indoors with groups of 10 or more.*
Reception for Menno Simons lecturer Jan Kraybill and the "Voices Together" exhibit (in the Regier Art Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center at Bethel College), **following Kraybill's lecture that begins at 7 p.m.** in Krehbiel Auditorium, in the Fine Arts Center lobby.
- ☞ **MDS Region 3 Annual Meeting** is November 12-13, 2021 at Hesston Mennonite Church in Hesston, KS. Registration table opens at 4 p.m. on Friday, November 12. **RSVP** by completing the online registration form at <https://tinyurl.com/2xa9bys9> or by contacting Steve Hochstetler at (919) 825-0354 or shochstetler@mds.org.
Additional Details: On Friday come and enjoy the fellowship, the meal, special music and our keynote speaker Kevin King. On Saturday we will hear more about what is happening in Region 3 and to have a chance to dive in a bit deeper with some table activities. This will be followed by lunch and then a Region 3 business meeting. Throughout the weekend you will have opportunities to meet/greet some of the binational staff. We also plan to make this a hybrid meeting with the meeting connected to a Zoom meeting for those that could not travel to Hesston.

The Zoom meeting link is <https://tinyurl.com/2e4v6ups>. For more details about the meeting, visit <https://mds.mennonite.net/region-3-annual-meeting-2021/>.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Christmas is just around the corner, and Heartland Pregnancy Care's *The Gift of Christmas*** intends to put Christ's love into action for their clients' kiddos. For four weeks leading to Christmas, clients are given an opportunity to "Christmas shop" for their children ages 12 & under at their in-center store. Clients earn virtual dollars by attending classes, which they can redeem for one new toy per child each week. For some clients, these may be the only gifts they can provide for their children this Christmas.
Here's How to Help: Generous donors make this possible by providing NEW gifts (with a value of \$20-25) for kids newborn-12 years. Gift ideas include learning toys, building kits, crafts and games. Gifts can be purchased through [the Amazon gift registry](#) and sent directly to Heartland Pregnancy Care. If purchased elsewhere, please bring *unwrapped* gifts to Heartland by November 24. For further information, contact Vanessa at 620.200.8428 or vanessa@heartlandpcc.com.
- ☞ **Conference Minister Heidi Regier Kreider plans to be out of the office November 15 – December 31**, for a sabbatical leave approved by the WDC Executive Board. In Heidi's absence, ministry responsibilities will be covered by other WDC staff and board, commission or committee leaders. Further details will be communicated directly to pastors, congregations and leadership groups. For more information, contact WDC at wdc@mennowdc.org or 316-283-6300.
- ☞ There are **weekly volunteer opportunities to serve with MDS** in Jennings, LA; McAllen, TX; and Paradise, CA through the end of 2021. Contact Deanna Frey (dfrey@mds.org or 800-241-8111) with any questions or to schedule a week of service!
- ☞ **Mennonite Central Committee has a variety of positions open** for those called to be the hands and feet of God in a global context. We hope you will prayerfully consider the following service opportunities.

Seek Discipleship Program – Jordan, Palestine and Israel - Seek is a new six-month intentional discipleship program from MCC which encourages young adults (18-20 years of age) to deeply learn what it means to be an Anabaptist follower of Jesus. The program will include multiple discipleship and service opportunities with MCC partners. To learn more and apply for the Seek program, visit mcc.org/seek.

International Program Safety and Security HR Specialist - MCC seeks an International Program Safety and Security HR Specialist with experience in safety and security management, and at least 1 year experience in insecure environments. Should be committed to the Biblical call to be a peacemaker by seeking and promoting nonviolent solutions to conflict and oppression.

External Grants Coordinator – Lebanon, Syria & Iraq - MCC seeks an External Grants Coordinator who will provide support for humanitarian assistance and other externally funded projects in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq that MCC is undertaking as a result of the ongoing needs in the region.

Program Coordinator – Lebanon, Syria & Iraq - MCC seeks a Program Coordinator. This role, based in Beirut, is tasked with managing the program's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) for projects in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

For more information about our current openings, including those listed here, please visit mcc.org/serve.

Verse of the Week

“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NRSV)