



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

November 24, 2021

From Pastor Tom

The First Day of the Christmas Holiday?

In many ways, Thanksgiving Day is the first day of the Christmas holiday. Families will gather, including some college students whose fall semester is essentially over and Christmas break has begun. Homes are decorated and cheery. Some may even have their Christmas trees up already, or at the very least, outdoor lights to welcome their loved ones home. The first of many sumptuous feasts will be served and devoured around dinner tables. Christmas music is certain to appear on some Spotify playlists. Some families will even have their “Christmas” (in the sense of exchanging gifts) on Thanksgiving, for lack of a better time to get together. And of course, the holiday shopping season kicks off in its fullest swing virtually as soon as Thanksgiving Day is over. Everybody, let’s sing together (along with Bing Crosby): “It’s, be, -ginning to look a lot like Christmas!”

In other ways, however, Thanksgiving is like the last day of the entire Christian year. Technically, “Reign of Christ Sunday” is, with the following Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, kicking off the Christmas holiday (or at least the new Christian year). With Thanksgiving sandwiched in between, perhaps it makes as much sense to spend it looking back as looking forward.

The first and preeminent question we should discuss around our dinner tables is “For what are we thankful?” And certainly, for most of us, our lists will be long. Yes, in some ways it’s been another difficult year, particularly due to Covid. But perhaps Thanksgiving Day is not the time to talk about that. Instead, how about this: how has God blessed us in the last twelve months? How has God provided for us? How has God’s steadfast love been made manifest in our lives?

There is another set of questions that fit the day particularly well: How has God been at work in the world? What divine trajectories or plans can we see? What does the Reign of Christ look like at this moment in time? Thanksgiving Day, in other words, is a great time to look back and look around.

And then, this coming Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, we can begin look forward once again, to the ever-needed birth or birthing of Christ in our world. Our Creator God, among all other things, is Lord of time, Lord of the seasons. And this week we will celebrate not one but two.

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- ☞ **Let us pray for all those who will be traveling this busy holiday weekend.**
- ☞ **Let us pray for those who will spend Thanksgiving Day alone**—that they will be granted the powerful sense that they are not alone.

- ☞ **Let us pray for those broken or wounded relationships in our lives** that need healing, including those in our own families.
- ☞ **And let us pray for First Mennonite Church**, that God will lead us into a new year of renewal and rebirth!

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Reminder: No Wednesday night activities tonight, and the church office will be closed Thursday and Friday to celebrate Thanksgiving.**
- ☞ **The McPherson Community Brass Choir under the direction of Jerry Toews will give their Christmas Brass Concert Sunday, Dec. 12 at 7:30 p.m. in the Goessel HS gym.** This event is sponsored by the Goessel Ministerial Alliance. Note the location change accommodating for social distancing. Come and enjoy a festive brass Christmas concert!
- ☞ **Have yourself a honkin' good holiday, December 17 from 4-6 p.m.!** MCC is thrilled to host this drive-thru event again this year. Order your charcuterie box(es) today to enjoy in the comfort of your home, spread Christmas joy and order extra to give as gifts! Suggested donation per box is \$25. We're also collecting items for [MCC hygiene kits](#) at this event. **Place your order by 5 p.m. on December 9. [Details and order form are on mcc.org.](#)** Questions? Please call 316.283.2720.
- ☞ **Camp Mennoscah Christmas Gathering** is Dec. 18 at 2:30 p.m.! Join us in the Dining Hall at Camp Mennoscah for afternoon fun—bring games to play indoors or out. Camp will provide popcorn and generic pop. (Masks recommended and encouraged for inside activities.)

Other Announcements

- ☞ **This coming Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent!** Be sure to look around the foyer and sanctuary for simple expressions of beauty and Christmas cheer. In addition to celebrating the beginning of Advent, we will also share the ritual of Communion together. And, yes, we'll have a Christmas Eve Service at 6 p.m.!
- ☞ **Poinsettias:** You are invited to share poinsettias for Advent! Please place plants in the Fellowship Hall south window area. Plants can be taken home after the December 24 Christmas Eve Service. Thank you!
- ☞ **Christmas Boxes for Our College Students!** Time for our annual box of goodies for our college students! Boxes will be available in the fellowship hall through Sunday, November 28. For seven boxes, bring something fun to eat and/or practical items, such as, sticky notes, mechanical pencils, pens, reusable or disposable face masks, hand sanitizer, hot chocolate packets, microwave popcorn, spiced cider packets, fruit snacks and notes of encouragement. This is especially helpful to them at the end of the fall semester! Our students are Sarah Diener, Caleb Diener, Stephanie Hiebert, Joe Knoll, Carson Linnens, Brodie Rathbone and Landon Roberts.
- ☞ **Last Chance for Peppernuts!** A few ½ lb. bags of peppernuts remain from our sale at the Arts & Crafts Fair. They will be sold soon at another outlet. The price is \$6 per bag and two for \$11.

- ☞ **FMC Advent Ensemble will sing during the Dec. 19 worship service. We will rehearse Dec. 5 and 19 from 9:00-9:30 and will prepare one or two songs.** We will rehearse with masks and will hear from the FMC Covid Task Force about singing without masks during the service. Paper/ disposable masks are, in Holly's opinion, easier for singing. Please join us as we make a joyful noise!
- ☞ **'TIS THE SEASON FOR ANNUAL REPORTS!** The deadline is **December 15** this year for your annual reports to be submitted to the church office. Thank you for your hard work throughout the year, committee and council members!
- ☞ **Thanksgiving WDC Office Closing-** The WDC office and library will be closed on Thursday, Nov 25 and Friday, Nov 26 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. Have a great Thanksgiving!
- ☞ **Giving Tuesday is November 30.** There aren't any gimmicks this year to encourage you to give, just stories. Remember the camper who stayed after campfire to talk to counselors about faith and life struggles. Think of the awe-filling trips in inner tubes down the river at night and the campfires with the starry heavens above. Spend a moment with your own memories of Camp Mennoscah. Encourage everyone to follow Jesus Christ by supporting the faith formation ministry of Camp Mennoscah here. Checks can be sent to Camp Mennoscah, PO Box 65, Murdock, KS 67111.

Verse of the Week

"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 (NRSV)