



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

January 12, 2022

From Pastor Tom

Paul and the Church in Corinth

I've long wanted to do a sermon series on First Corinthians. For starters, in my years of ministry I've never done one and it is time to check that off my list of goals! ☺ But another reason is that First Corinthians is simply about the Church—its challenges, joys, struggles, and above all, its reason for being.

Being and doing “church” with others isn't always easy. In fact, it is hard work. Behind the weekly worship services and Sunday School conversations and the occasional, jovial Potluck fellowship meals there are, well, people. People with different personalities. Each having their own life stories and circumstances, their own opinions and preferences. And with any church, whether big or small, in a large city or a small town, there's no guarantee that they will always get along.

Furthermore, church, as they say, is a volunteer organization. Which of course means that people can come when they feel like it and not come when they don't. For any church to be viable there needs to be a shared sense of purpose and mission—one that feels more important and needed and vital than simply staying at home on Sunday mornings, or going for a relaxing drive. And of course—or did I already mention it?—the church is comprised of, well, people. And what meets one person's needs may or may not meet another's.

The church in Corinth (or rather, the churches, plural; apparently there were several smaller groups of believers who met in each other's homes and only occasionally all together) was struggling in a variety of ways. And because Paul had been integral to them meeting together in the first place—and for some of them at least, becoming Christian in the first place—his heart went out to them. He had what we might call “a pastoral heart” for them; he cared about their well-being; cared about their doubts, questions, and confusions; cared about their interpersonal conflicts; cared about their overall viability; and above all, cared about the holy task to which he (and God through him) had called them. And so he wrote them a letter—a very personal, honest, direct letter—a letter which can be considered a primer on what it means to be Church, and how to do it.

Here at FMC we are in the midst of a lot of transition, including some significant turnover in our leadership, as well as in our membership, as some have moved away, others have sought church elsewhere, and others have simply lost the habit. And amidst all that, we are still facing Covid 19, a continually evolving pandemic that has seriously hindered (indeed, handicapped) our ability to be and do church. I hope and believe that taking a fresh look at Paul's first letter to the Corinthians can give us helpful insight into why we exist. I don't know yet how long the series will last, but given the length and richness of the letter, it will most likely unfold in several phases, perhaps six to eight weeks at a time, breaking in between for a couple of weeks to focus on different texts and foci. The title of the series will be “The Church of God, the Church of Christ.” I look forward to taking this “journey” with you!

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- ☞ Pray for the leaders of our country, and of all the nations of the world, that God may grant them the wisdom they need for their jobs.
- ☞ Pray for the Church around the world, that God's Holy Spirit will guide, direct, and prompt us (even though it may make us uncomfortable at times).
- ☞ Pray for First Mennonite Church of Hillsboro, that we will accept anew Jesus' invitation to pick up our cross and follow him.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **The church office will be closed Monday, January 17 in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.**
- ☞ **FMC Annual Meeting:** Our Annual Meeting will be held **Sunday, January 23**, following a carry-in meal. There are several purposes of the annual meeting. First, to briefly reflect on the year past with gratitude for God's goodness to us and to those among us who have served; second, to vote to affirm leaders who have been identified to head up ministries of the congregation for the next year; third, to vote to affirm the proposed budget, and finally, to have a discussion of possible important issues. Please make this event a priority as an important time in our church life together.
Doug Miller, moderator
- ☞ **Bethel College hosts two activities for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday that are free and open to the public, both in Memorial Hall: Jan. 17, 7 p.m.**, program with Jasmyn Elise Story as the featured speaker; **Jan. 18, 2 p.m.**, screening of the Kellogg Foundation's 2022 National Day of Racial Healing event. Sponsors are Bethel College Student Life, the Bethel College Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Center and the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR). *Current Bethel COVID protocols require masking indoors regardless of vaccination status.*
- ☞ **Everence will hold an informative Medicare webinar on Tuesday, Jan. 18, starting at 6:30 p.m.** Topics will include: when and where to sign up for Medicare, what Medicare does (and doesn't) cover, Medicare Parts A, B, C and D in clear, understandable language plus budgeting for health care costs in retirement. There will also be time for your questions. Information will be presented by staff from the Everence offices in Central Kansas. To register contact Everence at 316-283-3800, 877-467-7294 or central.kansas@everence.com. Attendance recommended for those approaching retirement or those ready to sign up for Medicare.
- ☞ **Hesston College invites you to enjoy a production of *Freedom Riders*** by the Mad River Theater Works Friday, Jan. 28 at 7:30 p.m. at Hesston Mennonite Church. The performance is offered as part of the 2021-2022 Sunflower Performing Arts season.
"This original play with live music looks at the work of the Freedom Riders – people, both black and white, who rode together on buses that crossed state lines in order to protest the illegal segregation practices still in use in the early 1960s. The play emphasizes the importance of working together and the value of non-violent protest. At this time when our nation, our world, is engulfed in divisiveness and distrust, we need to examine these important ideas – collaboration, peace and trusting others – and this play will help us do so."

Other Announcements

☞ To the congregants of First Mennonite Church,

We have greatly appreciated and enjoyed our time serving this church through our positions as custodian and secretary. Due to increasing responsibilities and forward movements in our other places of work, we feel that it is necessary for us to step away from our duties at FMC. This church has been so welcoming and generous as we've been blessed to serve you. We wish to relay only the sincerest appreciation for the opportunity to walk alongside you and the sadness that we feel toward leaving. Our final day of employment will be February 28.

First Mennonite Church is undergoing transitions in many areas of ministry, and our intention is not to add to the difficulty, but rather allow other gifted persons to step into God-ordained roles here.

Thank you for your kindness and understanding. Our prayer is that this body of believers would move ahead, eyes fixed on Jesus, in wisdom and peace into a beautiful new chapter.

Blessings,

Avery and Kara Unruh

☞ Our heartfelt thanks go out to Avery and Kara for doing such a good job with these much-needed services here at FMC. We have already begun the process of finding replacements for these two positions. We are open to any suggestions that you think would be a good fit for us.
Marlin Bartel, Stewardship MTL

☞ **Last chance for the annual church directory update!** If your information has changed this year, please contact Kara in the church office (620.947.5662 or secretary@fmchillsboro.com) by January 15.

Verse of the Week

“Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?”—Psalm 118:5-6 (NRSV)