



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

March 1, 2023

From Pastor Tom

The Jesus Revolution

This past Monday evening Jan Amstutz, Sue Buchholz, Josh Diener and I went to see the movie “The Jesus Revolution.” It depicts events in the late 60s and early 70s during which faith in Jesus Christ spread, particularly alongside the so-called “hippy” era. Not that they were the same thing. While the hippy era was characterized in part by its political activism, experimentation with psychedelic drugs, and “counter” culture, the Jesus revolution was focused principally on two things: faith in Jesus, and participation in church.

Still, to the extent the Church is itself called to be counter-cultural, there was some significant overlap between these two movements. Early on, the movie focused on the church as ideally being a place where all are welcome, including those with faith questions and doubts, and those with drug addictions. One of the things I most appreciated about the movie was its characterization of the movement’s leaders as being first and foremost relational, as reaching out to the world around them, as making themselves available, and as listening as much as talking. I also appreciated that it kept its theology simple but solid, that faith in Jesus offers forgiveness of sins, which requires repentance. And, I appreciated the movie’s focus on baptism by water being in many ways the first step in joining this “revolution.”

I further appreciated the implicit and explicit critique of the traditional church as being at times hypocritical (reference was made to the Pharisees of Jesus’ time), judgmental, and exclusive. And I appreciated the movie’s honesty about some of the risks inherent in that revolution, that its leaders sometimes became arrogant, self-focused, and harmfully ambitious, even to the point that it and they lapsed into cultism (which those of us who were alive in that time period will remember).

The movie raises a lot of important and helpful questions and challenges for the modern-day church, especially ones like ours who are struggling to remain viable. Questions like: who is Jesus? (!) Are we in the church remaining faithful to the Jesus we meet in the Gospels, rather than focusing only on the Jesus with whom we are most comfortable? In what ways do we need a “revolution,” an honest critique of the status quo, not just in how we live our lives but in our practice of Christianity, a practice that in many ways is called to be countercultural?

One concern or critique I do have about the movie is the extent to which it emphasized numerical growth as a sign of faithfulness, and bringing people simply to faith in Christ, rather

than to lives of Christian faithfulness and discipleship. No connection was made, for example, between Christian faith and advocating for peace. The prophetic words of Martin Luther King and his “revolution” did not make an appearance. Nor was the peace movement ever presented as anything other than simply anti-establishmentarian protest (rather than a central part of Jesus’ gospel message)

That said, I would (and will) see it again, and would encourage all of you to see it as well. I truly believe it could lead to lots of helpful (and hopeful) conversation!

Tom

Verses of the Week: Matthew 5:3-12

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely^(b) on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

☞ Pray for **Pastor Tom** as he seeks God’s guidance for his future.

☞ Pray for clarity about whether to pursue a part-time **interim pastor or a transitional pastor**. Please talk to members of the ministries council about what you are hearing from the Holy Spirit on our future.

- ☞ **WDC Request:** Pray for the retreat in San Antonio that the Church Planting Commission and conference minister Sandra Montes Martinez are planning. The event is called “Being the Church: Meeting our neighbors where they are,” and we pray that it bears fruit in encouraging emerging Anabaptist congregations in ministry that joins God in God’s work. – WDC Church Planting Commission
- ☞ **College Students:** Pray for those traveling (like the Goshen students we hosted) and all as they reach the midterm point in their semester. (remember students at Tabor, Bethel, Hesston, K-state, KU, and beyond!)

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Today: Worship Committee** meeting @ 3:30 pm.
Vision Council meeting @ 5:30 pm.
- ☞ **March 6, 7, and 8: TOGETHER WE CAN KNOT** - Come join the fun at 15th annual MCC **Comforter Blitz** on March 6, 7 and 8 on the Journey Yoder Campus, one mile north of Yoder, KS. Times are Monday and Tuesday 9-5 and Wednesday 9-4. No sewing skills are required, we will teach you. Lunch is available by donation each day, or you may bring your own sack lunch. Bring snacks to share during the workday. This event is hosted by Kansas Friends of MCC to make comforters for relief to be sent to refugees or places after natural disasters. Please contact the MCC Central States office with questions at #316-283-2720, or check the Comforter Blitz Facebook Page, “Kansas MCC Comforter Blitz”. Talk to Jan Amstutz if you would like to ride along with her!
- ☞ **Extra Special Event! Anabaptist 500 Class: March 8, 15, 22, and April 5th.** A small group is forming to study scripture and contribute bible study notes to the special edition of *the Anabaptist Community Bible*. Doug Miller will lead this group for this once-in-a-generation project. Mark you calendar today! Talk to Mark Hiebert for more information.
- ☞ **March 12:**
 - **Special offering** for Main Street Ministries, CORE, and Care Portal. Pray for these ministries as you consider you financial and physical support.
 - **Guest preacher: Nadine Friesen**
 - **A musician is needed** during worship if anyone is interested in helping out.
- ☞ **March 26: next “faspa” event.** Details coming soon. **Save the Date!**
- ☞ **April Events Coming:**
 - **2nd** - Palm Sunday
 - **6th** – Maundy Thursday service
 - **9th** – Easter Sunrise Service at Mark and Sandy Hiebert’s home followed by breakfast and worship.
 - **14th** – MCC Sale: Feeding the Multitude (4pm), General Auction (6pm)

- 15th – MCC Sale: breakfast (6:30 – 10am), sale begins (8am), Feeding the Multitude (10:30am) Event ends at 3:59pm.
- 16th – Pastor Farewell Celebration @ 5:30 pm with a “faspa” and sharing time in the Fellowship Hall. This will be Pastor Tom’s last Sunday here.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Guitar Music available!** A number of people have asked about the beautiful guitar music that was used in our worship last Sunday. That was from Pastor Tom’s CD called *Hymnal Masterworks*, classical guitar arrangements of hymns from our past blue hymnal, *Hymnal, A Worship Book*. He also has a second CD titled, *Abide with Me, More Hymns for Classical Guitar*. (I discovered that he still has extras available if you are interested. They are \$10 for a CD and \$5 for a cassette tape.)
- ☞ **March 22 to 24 Melva Kauffman Lecture Series**
Hesston College will explore what restorative justice looks like and how it can be integrated into the world around us during the Melva Kauffman Lecture Series. Jonathan Swartz, director for Student Accountability & Restorative Justice at Eastern Mennonite University, will present. What does restorative justice truly mean? How can one apply it in their life? You can attend a part of the Melva Kauffman Lecture Series at Hesston Mennonite Church on March 24 at 11 am. The session is also available by live stream at hesston.edu/formation.
- ☞ **April 2 - Sunflower Performing Arts**
Join the Sunflower Performing Arts on Sunday, April 2 at 3 p.m. to hear pax duo. Exceptional percussionists Micah Detwiler (who is Pastor Tom’s son-in-law, married to their oldest daughter, Hillary) and Tristan Swihart will bring a multi-media percussion concert integrating acoustic percussion and lighting design. The concert will be held at Hesston Mennonite Church. Find more information and purchase tickets at hesston.edu/sunflower-performing-arts.
- ☞ Consider participating in an online seminar entitled “**How to Pray (and Fast) for Awakening**” for three Monday evenings, March 6, 13, and 20, from 6:00 - 7:30 pm. For information, go to seedbed.com and look under the tab “Growth”. Contact Sue Buchholz if you have questions.
- ☞ **Kansas MDS Celebration Event**, Sunday, March 19 @ 7pm at First Mennonite Church in Newton, KS highlighting the work and ministry of the Kansas MDS Unit. The event at First Mennonite Newton will feature Kilometer 81, a family musical group. There will also be sharing from persons who assisted in various disaster responses during 2022. Hear short reports from the Cottonwood Complex fire, Andover tornado, The Cabinet Shop, and a Learning and Service trip to Louisiana.

- ☞ **Holy Land Trip:** Tabor and Bethel Colleges are again sponsoring a trip to the Holy Land December 26, 2023, to January 15, 2024. The trip will be led by Bible professors Douglas Miller and Peter Goerzen and will include two dozen biblical sites, such as Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, the Jordan River (baptismal site), Sea of Galilee (boat ride), Jericho, ancient ruins, Dead Sea and Dead Sea Scrolls, Masada, Mt. Nebo, Petra, museums, and much more. Goals of the trip also include learning about the three major religions of the area, understanding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and taking time for reflection, worship, and prayer together. There is currently room for additional persons to participate. If interested, contact Doug Miller at 620 947-2439 or DougM@tabor.edu.

- ☞ The WDC Church Planting Commission will be holding a Church Planting Summit with the theme **Being the church... Meeting our neighbors where they are** on March 24-25 in San Antonio, Texas. More information that will be sent out soon!

- ☞ The **Goessel**, KS WDC Churches, Tabor & Alexanderwohl, encourage you to attend the Mennonite Heritage & Agricultural Museum's **Heritage Dinner Fundraiser** on Friday, March 31 at 6:30pm at Tabor Mennonite Church. A roast beef catered meal will be provided by the Goessel Grocery & Deli. Special presenter, Brityne Rucker, KWCH 12 morning anchor, will present on "Communicating Agriculture in a Modern World."