



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

December 13, 2023

To All Brothers and Sisters In Christ:

Next Steps in our Journey - *Latest leadership plans and decisions*

Hi friends,

We're getting closer to Christmas and Blue Christmas. Now Blue Christmas is certainly about grieving the loss of significant people. Yet it's more. Let's make a metaphorical centerpiece of some other losses, too:

- Pandemic broke our normal way of doing church.
- A relationship is broken and we grieve the loss of its old status, or haven't found a healing path away from the hurt.
- As we mature, we all face giving up pieces of our identity to make other choices. To marry is to give up single life. To retire is to give up a named role, sometimes a professional identity. To enter a nursing home is to give up independence. Even positive changes are changes that include loss!
- We face choices that appear to be lose-lose rather than the win-win we had hoped for. We need help finding hope in such choices.
- The present hasn't built on the glory of the past in the same way we thought it would. It's different, perplexing, and is hard to get unstuck from.

So Blue Christmas makes space for all these losses. I have put this encouragement into the announcement: Please be prepared to arrive & seat yourself **in silence**, and later to leave **in silence**. This is not the time to inquire **why** someone has attended. Just let it be. We are all broken and in need of God's love and care in some way. In fact, everyone who doesn't attend is just as human as those who attend, so Schadenfreude (being secretly glad about someone's misfortune because you're not them) and its tool, Gossip, have no place here. Only love and grace.

Blessings. ~Pastor Kristine

- **Ministries Council:** Meeting tonight at 7 pm.

- **Worship/Nurture/Vision:**

- 3rd Sunday of Advent this coming Sunday. Keep lighting your candles, waiting, hoping and remembering Emmanuel – God with us! The “choir” will sing this Sunday.

- **Blue Christmas service** – Wed., Dec. 20 at 6:30 pm. Flyers explaining this service are in the foyer to share with your friends and neighbors.
- **Dec. 24 – Worship at 4 pm with “Faspa” to follow!** Come celebrate with us!
- **Dec. 31** –Since New Year’s Eve is on Sunday, expect to celebrate at our 10:30am worship with carol singing, dedication, and surrender to God for the New Year. (This can be much more helpful than a new year’s resolution that only lasts thru January!) Since we will include a time for favorite Christmas Carols – time will be given to submit your requests this coming Sunday.

Verse for Pondering: Matthew 4:16 (TLB)

“the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- Pray for one another through our directory!
- We have many birthdays to celebrate this month! Remember one another!
- Thanks to all who participated in the service and hospitality at our celebration service this week. Keep following your caring instincts to reach out to those who grieve and adjust to life without loved ones.
- Pray that God would help us be mindful of sharing God’s peace during this busy holiday season and keeping Christ central in our celebrations.
- Pray for all of **our mission efforts**, both local and far reaching as people are discerning where to give financial gifts as the year ends. Pray that God would give us generous hearts.

Upcoming Events

- **Tonight! 1. Choir** – 6:15 pm.
2. Ministries Council Meeting – 7:00 pm.

- **“Faspa” on Christmas Eve!!!** Come and make memories together as we worship and fellowship together at 4:00 pm on Dec. 24. We will be keeping it simple, but if you would like to bring food to share, please contact Sharon Diener.
- **Sunday** – Choir come at 9:00 am to warm up our song for worship.

Other Announcements

- **Invitation for new members:** We had the welcome of new members several months ago, but not everyone who wanted could participate. We’ll do it again soon! If you haven’t already spoken to administrator Sue or pastor Kristine, please do so by this Sunday December 10th. Our next welcome Sunday is tentatively scheduled for January 7th, 2024.
- **Need gift giving ideas?** Check out MCC’s “5 special Christmas gifts you can’t pull from a shelf” in their monthly newsletter [In Touch](#).
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#inbox/FMfcgzGwHxtktNXGDbWXnFSStBZTzHTDz>
- Interviews for the 2024 **Summer Staff at Camp Mennoscah** start over the Christmas/semester break. Want to be involved or know someone who might?