

Advent 3: Let it whole
December 17, 2017

Focus statement: Rejoicing in God's comfort, we catch God's vision of shalom. We choose to join the Spirit that is already at work restoring creation.

Church bells call us to worship

Call to Worship

Pat Sheidler

Leader: Awake! The invitation to carry light comes from the God of restoration.

All: O God, you amaze us with your promise to build up the ancient ruins. You say you will replace the ashes of the past with garlands of beauty. Your bold vision dazzles our doubting souls.

(pause for silence)

Leader: Quiet our questions.

All: Lead us beyond our fears, and guide us on the path to peace.

Leader: Let it be whole.

Lighting of Advent candle

Goings family

Prelude

“Savior of the Nations, Come”
LuAnn Stuckey

setting by A. N. Vetter
(based on HWB 173)

Welcome

***Opening Hymn**

“Come, thou long-expected Jesus”

HWB 178

Scripture

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

LOGOS

Special Music

“Still, Still, Still”
Cherub Choir

Austrian

Conversation with Friends

Hymn

“Maranatha, come” *(refrain, vs.1, refrain)*

STS 2

Conversation

Rhonda Winstead

Hymn

“Maranatha, come” *(refrain, vs. 4, refrain)*

STS 2

Wisdom and Wonder

Paul and Ana Neufeld Weaver

Special Music

“The Bells of Christmas”
Jubilate

Anonymous

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

“Holy Child within the Manger”

setting by S. Glick
(based on STS 28)

***Hymn of Dedication**

“Angels we have heard on high” *(refrain only)*

HWB 197

Special Music

“A Maiden Most Gentle”
Chancel Choir

arr. Andrew Carter

Scripture

John 1:6-8, 19-28

LOGOS

Sermon

“Called to testify”

George O'Reilly

***Hymn**

“View the present”

STS 108

Confession

O God of peace, your justice wells up like a spring, bringing dreams, laughter, and wholeness to the world. We confess we so often stifle your Spirit. We are afraid to claim that you anointed us to carry your upside-down vision into our broken world, where the lowly are trampled upon, the hungry go away empty, the rich increase in power and might. We confess we lack the courage to build up and repair what we have broken, imprisoned, and oppressed. Forgive us when we do not catch your vision. Lead us beyond our fears, and guide us on the path to peace.

(pause for silence)

Words of assurance

Pastoral Prayer

Wanda Stopher

***Hymn**

“Holy Child within the manger”

STS 28

Benediction

Postlude

“People, Look East”

setting by S. Glick

**Please stand (remain seated if that is more comfortable for you.)*

HWB – Hymnal: A Worship Book STJ – Sing the Journey

Large print hymnals are available. Please ask an usher for assistance in locating one.

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH

101 S. Jackson Street

Bluffton, Ohio 45817

Phone: 419-358-5766

Website: fmcbluffton.org

Office Hours: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Pastor – Wanda – Monday-Thursday, 9-4, off Friday

Pastoral Associate – George – Tuesday-Friday, 9-4, off Monday

Director of Youth Ministries – Shannon -- Tuesday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Thursday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Custodian's schedule: 7:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; weekends as needed

GREETER: Ken Shenk

HOST: Joyce Hostetler

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS – Mary Pannabecker Steiner, Mitch Kingsley

Worship – Kendra and Ellie Nickel, Kevin Cluts

NURSERY NEXT WEEK: SS – Pat Sheidler, Kathy Traucht

Worship – Alison and Kevin King, Anneliese Nisly

SOUND SYSTEM: Melissa Friesen

CHANCEL: Carolyn Rich

The video of the most recent worship service may be viewed on the church's homepage, www.fmcbluffton.org. Videos normally are posted on the Tuesday following the service. Previously recorded worship service videos may be found at tinyurl.com/fmc-videos

OUR STEWARDSHIP

Worship attendance last Sunday	FMC-251, MC-11
Spending plan giving Dec.10, 2017 (includes e-giving)	\$13,737.75
Special fund giving Dec. 10, 2017 (includes e-giving): <i>Grades K-5-\$3.65, Freudige-\$380</i>	<u>\$9,145.65</u>
<i>Faith and Life-\$17; Sojourners-\$200; Menno Women-\$10; Habitat-\$10; MDS-140; College scholar-\$640; Cap Camp Flooring-\$7,645; Betty Sommer memorial-\$100;</i>	
Total giving Dec. 10, 2017 (includes e-giving)	\$22,883.40
Total spending plan receipts as of November 30, 2017	\$343,260.57
Spending plan expenses as of November 30, 2017	\$368,683.61
2017 spending plan	\$421,146.00

CHURCH STAFF

- Pastor – Wanda Stopher – 419-551-1079 (cell) -- fmc.wanda@bluffton.edu
- Pastoral Associate – George O'Reilly – 402-619-7099 (cell) – fmc.george@bluffton.edu
- Youth Ministry Director – Shannon Thiebeau – fmc.shannon@bluffton.edu
- Director of Music – Mark Suderman – sudermanme@bluffton.edu
- Administrative Assistant – Mary Pannabecker Steiner - fmc@bluffton.edu
- Custodian – Mick Hardy

First Mennonite Church is affiliated with the Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. The Mennonites are named after Menno Simons, one of our early church leaders, and are rooted historically in the "Anabaptist" movement, which began in 1525, with origins in Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands now reaching around the world. Some primary Anabaptist convictions then and now are following Jesus Christ in service to others, rejection of violence and war, and joyful community life.



workshops, performances and worship. This year's featured artists include Theater of the Beat; Paul Buxman, painter; Brenton Good, painter/printmaker; Karen Newe, artist/designer/illustrator; Sadie Gustafson, Zook-singer/songwriter; James Heiks, conductor/song leader; Sarah Kathleen Johnson and Carl Bear, music, worship planners; Becca J.R. Lachman, poet; Sofia Samatar, writer; Eugene Friesen, cellist. The weekend culminates with a Sunday morning worship service with plenty of music, singing and artist participation. Register by January 15 for the early registration fee - adults, \$65 per person (\$75 after January 15); students, \$45 per person (\$55 after January 15.)

For more information, see <https://www.mennoniteartsweekend.org/>.

Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio seeks to fill a full-time Volunteer Coordinator position (32 hrs. a week.) This individual will coordinate, with activity directors, the volunteer program on all campuses including recruiting, orienting, managing and celebrating volunteers. The successful candidate will enjoy building relationships with volunteers, community organizations, staff and elders, possess excellent written and oral communication skills, have strong organizational skills, familiar with using database programs and have the ability to work independently to advance the program. Two years related experience, and/or an advanced degree or certification preferred. Submit a resume and application to 410 W. Elm St., Bluffton, Ohio 45817 or email to dlamb@mhcoliving.org.

The board of The Mennonite, Inc. is accepting applications for the position of Executive Director. The executive director serves as chief executive officer for The Mennonite, Inc. and is responsible for publishing and administration, management of staff, and maintaining denominational relationships. The Mennonite is a multimedia and print publication and organization connected to MC USA. To read the full description, visit: <https://themennonite.org/mennonite-inc-seeks-next-executive-director/>.

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

We thank you for the many expressions of love, support and care as we grieve the passing of our mother and grandmother, Ruth Harnish. Your cards, kind words and thoughts and prayers mean so much at this time. -- *Steve and Monica Harnish and family*

Thanks to all who helped with and/or donated blood at the Red Cross blood drive on December 14. Our next blood drive is Thursday, Feb. 8, 2018. -- *MPS*

Welcoming Statement

In response to God's unconditional love for all people, we joyfully and unconditionally welcome you to join us on our journey of faith in Jesus Christ. We are committed to breaking down dividing walls and building community where all are loved and accepted. We believe in active inclusion and invite each one to participate in the life and ministry of our congregation.

TODAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017

9:15 a.m.	Sunday school, coffee hour
10:30 a.m.	Worship, George O'Reilly preaching
Noon	Community class potluck
Noon	SHYF/JHYF, pizza and decorating
3 p.m.	Children's Christmas program, snacks afterward

THIS WEEK

Monday (12-18)	MPS, 7 p.m., parlor
Tuesday (12-19)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m. Staff Christmas breakfast, 8:30 a.m., office closed until 10 a.m.
Wednesday (12-20)	Adult bells, Cherubs, 6 p.m. Jubilate, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday (12-21)	Chancel choir, youth bells, 7 p.m. Council, 7 p.m., AR

NEXT SUNDAY

8:15 a.m.	Youth choir
9:15 a.m.	Sunday school, coffee hour
10:30 a.m.	Worship, Wanda Stopher preaching
6:30 p.m.	Christmas Eve Service

Welcome to our worship service today. If you are a visitor, please sign one of our guest books located at the entrances to the sanctuary. Wireless hearing aids are available. If you would like your children watched over while you worship, our staff will care for them in the nursery downstairs. Worship activity bags for children are available.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Outcome of the December 10 congregational vote: Thank you to everyone who voted in person or by absentee ballot. We had 224 total votes--77% voted yes, 20% voted no, and the remainder abstained. Church council met following the vote to discern whether or not to extend a call to Theda Good. After prayerfully considering how to understand the outcome of the vote we decided to move ahead with an invitation for Theda to be our Pastor of Connections. We are thankful for the strong affirmation in this vote for the direction of our church's discernment process. We respect the clear expression of dissent from that direction also present in the voting outcome. We desire for all of us to stay in fellowship with each other as we continue to give and receive counsel during this time of waiting and transition.

As Moderator, I called Theda Sunday afternoon and shared the outcome of the vote and Council's invitation to come to First Mennonite in Bluffton as the Pastor of Connections for a three year term. She is aware of the details of the vote, and she has accepted our call. She and Dawn anticipate moving to Bluffton the week of January 20 so that she might begin her ministry among us on February 1. Pray that God's Spirit will continue to move among us as we live into this next chapter. -- Kendra Nickel

DEADLINES: Due to the holiday schedule, deadlines have been altered for the next few weeks. The deadline for submitting items for the December 24 bulletin is 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 20. For December 31, the deadline is 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 27. The deadline for the January Menno-Life is 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21.

Thank you to Carolyn Rich for designing the bulletin covers to be used during Advent. Carolyn explains: "Past-Present-Future. Living in the present, we can only draw our hope for the future from looking at the repeated themes of the past...from chaos emerges tiny seeds of increasing power to grasp the earth with roots, to stretch toward the sun and sprout leaves, to blossom and give forth fruit. 'Let it be' as we participate in God's miracles of rebirth."

LOGOS members during Advent include Rich Bucher, Chris Gott, Carrie Mast, Elfrieda Ramseyer, Greg Ring, Cheri Slotter, Ashton Cluts, Melissa Friesen, and Gary Wetherill.

Following the children's Christmas program at 3 p.m. today, there will be fellowship with refreshments. Please bring your favorite snack (cookies, crackers, fruit, etc.) to share. Hope to see you there.

If you have not yet submitted your intent card for giving for 2018, please mail or drop them off to the church office by Sunday, Dec. 24. If you need a new intent card, they are available on the back of the pews, in the literature rack, or can be requested through the church office at fmc@bluffton.edu or 419.358.5766.

2017 Spending plan update: Due to generous November giving the projected end-of-year deficit to the spending plan has shrunk by \$3,500 down from \$15,500 to \$12,000! With three weeks to go the challenge is for us all to narrow this gap even further! Please consider how you are able to further contribute to meeting our spending plan goals. -- Stewardship Commission

All are invited to attend the annual holiday brunch at 9:15 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 31, in the fellowship hall. Please bring food to share: breakfast casseroles, fruit, breads, coffee cakes, muffins, cookies, etc. Coffee, tea, and juice will be provided. ***Please bring your own table service. There will be no Sunday school that morning.***

We have created some temporary mail slots for new attenders. These are located in the bottom row of the side holding the second half of the alphabetized names. At the beginning of January 2018, all labels will be updated alphabetically. Please empty your mailbox by 9 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 3 Any material left in boxes after that time will be recycled to accommodate changing boxes.

Singers of all levels and ages are invited to join a group going to Sunshine Homes in Maumee for caroling on Thursday, Dec. 28. We will meet at FMC at 11 a.m. and car pool. You should be back in Bluffton by 2:30 p.m. unless you want to join a group who will stay for lunch at Georgette's (a coffee and sandwich shop run by Sunshine Homes residents.) Sign up on the list in the fellowship hall. -- John Rich

Revised Common Lectionary Readings for 2017-18 – We will follow Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary in 2017-18. You will find it at <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/lections.php?year=B&season=Advent>.

Consider attending the 2018 Mennonite Arts Weekend Feb. 3-5 at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati. Organized and sponsored by members of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, the event invites artists and art enthusiasts to attend presentations,