

**Advent 4: Yes! Let it be now
December 24, 2017**

Focus statement: Infused with God's vision, we proclaim with confidence, "Let it be with us according to your word!"

Church bells call us to worship

Call to Worship Darryl Nester
Leader: Yes! The invitation to carry Light comes to each of us, no matter who we are.

All: O God, you choose to dwell within us. You promise to move about with us until we find our rest in you.

Leader: Your call seems risky; saying yes takes away our breath.

All: Yet we know your faithfulness and steadfast love endure forever.

Leader: You are our strength.

All: Yes! Let it be now.

Lighting of Advent candle Closson/Phillips family

Prelude "The Wexford Carol" arr. Mark Hayes
Deb Niswander

Welcome

***Opening Hymn** "The angel Gabriel" HWB 180

Scripture Isaiah 9:2-7 LOGOS

Special Music "All Bells in Paradise" John Rutter
Chancel Choir

Conversation with Friends

Hymn "Maranatha, come" (*refrain, vs. 1, refrain*) STS 2

Conversation Rhonda Winstead

Hymn "Maranatha, come" (*refrain, vs. 5, refrain*) STS 2

Wisdom and Wonder Paul and Ana Neufeld Weaver

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory "In Dulci Jubilo" arr. Anna Laura Page
Adult Bells

***Hymn of Dedication** "Angels we have heard on high" (*refrain only*) HWB 197

Scripture Luke 1:26-38, 46b-55 LOGOS

Sermon "Infinite Weight and Lightness" Wanda Stopher

***Hymn** "My soul cries out" STS 124

Confession

O God of blessing and joy, your favor rests upon us, and our souls magnify you. We sing of your steadfast love and proclaim your faithfulness. We confess we often lack complete trust, walking in our own strength, building our own houses instead of joining you in turning ruins into abundance. We are terrified and overcome by fear, wondering, "How will we know?" and pondering, "How can this be?" We are afraid to claim and proclaim that nothing is impossible when your power overshadows us, when your Spirit comes upon us. We find it hard to let go and say, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Forgive us.

(pause for silence)

Words of assurance

Pastoral Prayer George O'Reilly

***Hymn** "To us a Child of hope is born" HWB 189

Benediction

Postlude "Regent Square" arr. Anna Laura Page

**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: Vickie Laird

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS – Pat Sheidler, Kathy Traucht

Worship – Alison and Kevin King, Anneliese Nisly

NURSERY NEXT WEEK: SS – NO Sunday school

Worship – Tara and Kyle Miller, Christopher Harnish

SOUND SYSTEM: Chris Gott

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

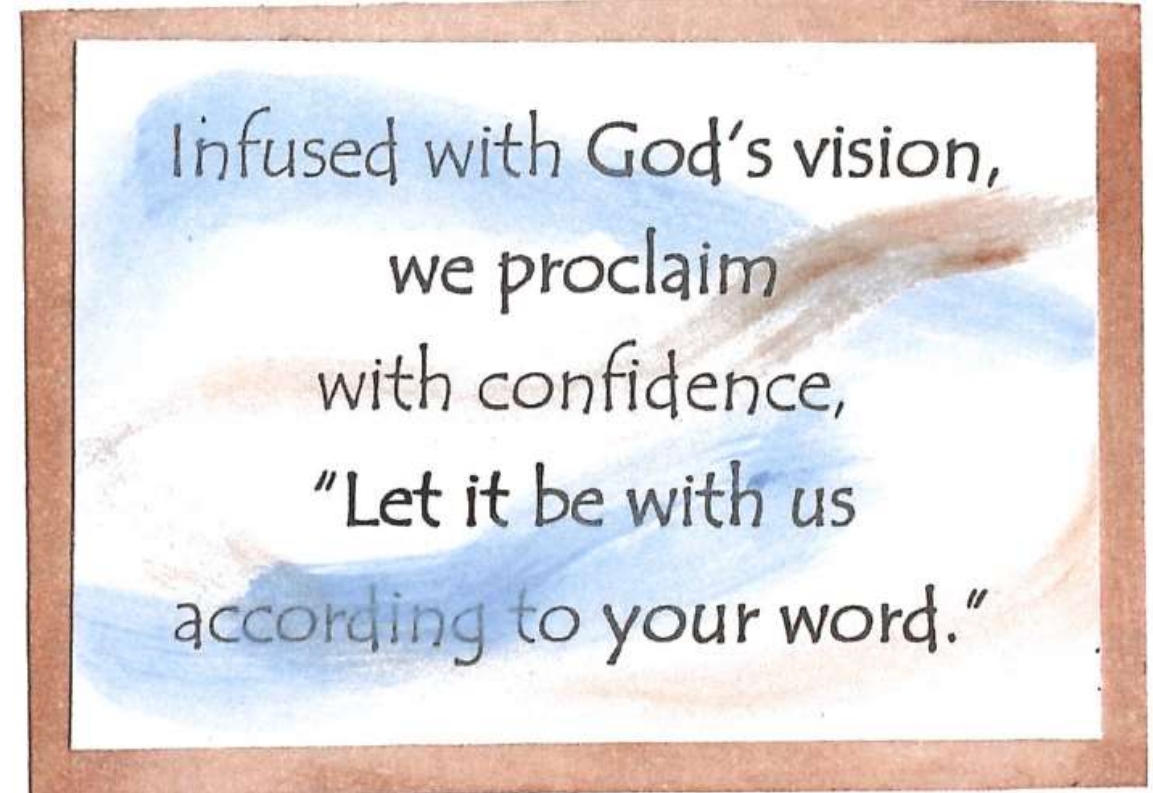
OUR STEWARDSHIP

Worship attendance last Sunday	FMC-217, MC-7
Spending plan giving Dec.17, 2017 (includes e-giving)	\$5,844.00
Special fund giving Dec. 17, 2017 (includes e-giving): <i>Grades K-5-\$4.25, Freudige-\$150</i>	<u>\$2,778.85</u>
<i>Faith and Life-\$64; Sojourners-\$17; Cap Camp Flooring-\$1,125; Casket fund-\$59.85; Deacons-\$100; Kitchen service-\$13.75; facility use-\$145; SHYF-\$50; JHYF-\$50; Misc-\$1,000</i>	
Total giving Dec. 17, 2017 (includes e-giving)	\$8,622.85
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.



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

Mary Amstutz had a stroke on December 18 and is currently at St. Rita's Medical Center, where she will soon begin rehabilitation. Short visits are welcome. Mary and her family appreciates your prayers.

Bob Flick had a heart attack on December 21 and as of Friday morning was at Bluffton Hospital. The family appreciates your prayers.

Please pray for 60 families evicted from their land last week in Colombia. CPT reports that "on Wednesday, 13 December 2017, municipal authorities in Puerto Wilches evicted the farming families from the land they farm to ensure the food security of their families and the inhabitants of the township of El Guayabo. Police violently displaced the community from 11 farms that they have been harvesting for 30 years, causing a humanitarian crisis." CPT has accompanied this community for several years.

-- *Mission, Peace and Service*

MC USA invites your prayers for peace to come to the earth: for creative peacemaking that can disrupt cycles of violence and oppression; for communities to find ways to support and love one another; for past wounds to begin healing; for the people of the church to continue seeking the peace of Christ.

Please pray for our operations team as they continue planning for new projects in Florida and Texas and their continued evaluation of Puerto Rico. Continue to remember those impacted by Hurricane Harvey and the MDS volunteer teams responding in the area of Victoria County, Baytown and the Coastal Bend area of Texas. Also keep in prayer the volunteers in as they transition to long-term response after Hurricane Irma. Remember in prayer those who have been affected by disasters as they enter the Christmas season.

-- *Mennonite Disaster Service*

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 24, 2017

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

THIS WEEK

Monday (12-25)	Christmas Day, OFFICE CLOSED
Tuesday (12-26)	No Morning Prayers Staff meeting, parlor
Thursday (12-28)	Caroling, Sunshine Homes, Maumee, leave FMC at 11 a.m.

NEXT SUNDAY

9:15 a.m.	No Sunday school
10:30 a.m.	Holiday brunch, FH Worship, George O'Reilly preaching

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

The deadline to submit items for the December 31 bulletin is 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 27.

We invite you to attend our Christmas Eve candlelight service at 6:30 p.m. tonight. The service will include the Christmas story read by Jean Miller, a tableau directed by Gary Wetherill, singing of carols and music provided by the Neufeld-Weaver family and a trio of Ellie Hartzler, Kaleigh Coffman, and Benjamin Hartzler. Deb Niswander will be our organist.

Thank you to Carolyn Rich for designing the bulletin covers used during Advent. “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.” (Words from Carolyn.)

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

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.***

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 two 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

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.

Beginning in January, the Freudige class will be studying “Trouble I’ve Seen” by Drew Hart. We know others in our congregation have studied this book and are hoping you may be willing to share your books. If so, please put your name in the book and place it in the MCC kit bag cart by the library. Thanks so much!

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>.

Electronic Giving is an option for giving in support of First Mennonite Church. There is a link, “ONLINE GIVING,” at the far right of the red navigation bar on the FMC website. To register, you will need your bank routing and checking account numbers. You’ll choose a starting date, as well as frequency. You may also make one-time contributions via this site and there is a fund listed for the capital campaign, “Flooring to Flourishing.” **All forms of donations are still appreciated, whether by cash, check or e-giving.**

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, 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/>.