

**Advent 1: Let It Be  
December 3, 2017**

*Focus statement: We awaken to God's purpose, which begins in darkness -- whether seed in the ground, child in the womb, or new self in the soul. We are shaking, fearful, and resistant, yet we call upon God to tear open the heavens and be present with us in our uncertainty.*

**Church bells call us to worship** Bret Stopher

**Call to Worship** Darryl Nester  
Leader: Awake! The invitation to carry light comes from the God of trembling mountains and shaking foundations.

*All: O God, your expectations terrify us. How can our small selves hold your blazing presence? (pause for silence)*

Leader: Quiet our questioning souls.

*All: Lead us beyond our resistance. Let it be.*

**Lighting of Advent candle** Xavier Diller

**Prelude** Jackie Wyse-Rhodes

**Welcome**

**\*Opening Hymn** "Praise the one who breaks the darkness" STS 1

**Scripture** Isaiah 64:1-9 LOGOS

**Special Music** "View the Present through the Promise" Roy Hopp  
*Chancel Choir*

**Conversation with Friends**

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

**Conversation** Rhonda Winstead

Wisdom and Wonder – Paul and Ana Neufeld Weaver

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

**Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings**

**Offertory**

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

**Scripture** Mark 13:24-37 Melissa Friesen

**Sermon** "God in our darkness" Theda Good

**\*Hymn** "O Savior, rend the heavens" HWB 197

**Confession**

*O God of power and might, we want you to tear open the heavens and come down, yet we tremble and quake at the thought. We confess that even though we know your light, we do not like the dark, empty void where your Spirit hovers over the waters. We shake like leaves in the wind, fearful of what you might ask, afraid to trust you completely. Caught up in the swirling of our world we struggle to "let it be." Forgive us, O God. (pause for silence)*

**Words of assurance**

*O God, Emmanuel, in Jesus, the Christ, you have come among us. You have given us life, and we are restored.*

**Pastoral Prayer** Wanda Stopher

**\*Hymn** "O come, O come, Immanuel" (*vv. 1, 2, 3, 6*) HWB 172

**Benediction**

**Postlude**

*\*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](http://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:** Marilyn Bishop

**HOST:** Mary Amstutz

**NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS** – Melissa Friesen, Tig Intagliata, Alice Ruth Ramseyer

**Worship** – Sue and Tom Schaaf, Anna Neufeld Weaver

**NURSERY NEXT WEEK: SS** – Melinda, Patrick, and Rebecca Estell, Victoria Woods-Yee

**Worship** – Annette Heslep Rachel Diller Grace Paquin

**SOUND SYSTEM:** Art Shelly

**CHANCEL:** Carolyn Rich

*The video of the most recent worship service may be viewed on the church's homepage, [www.fmcbluffton.org](http://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](http://tinyurl.com/fmc-videos)*

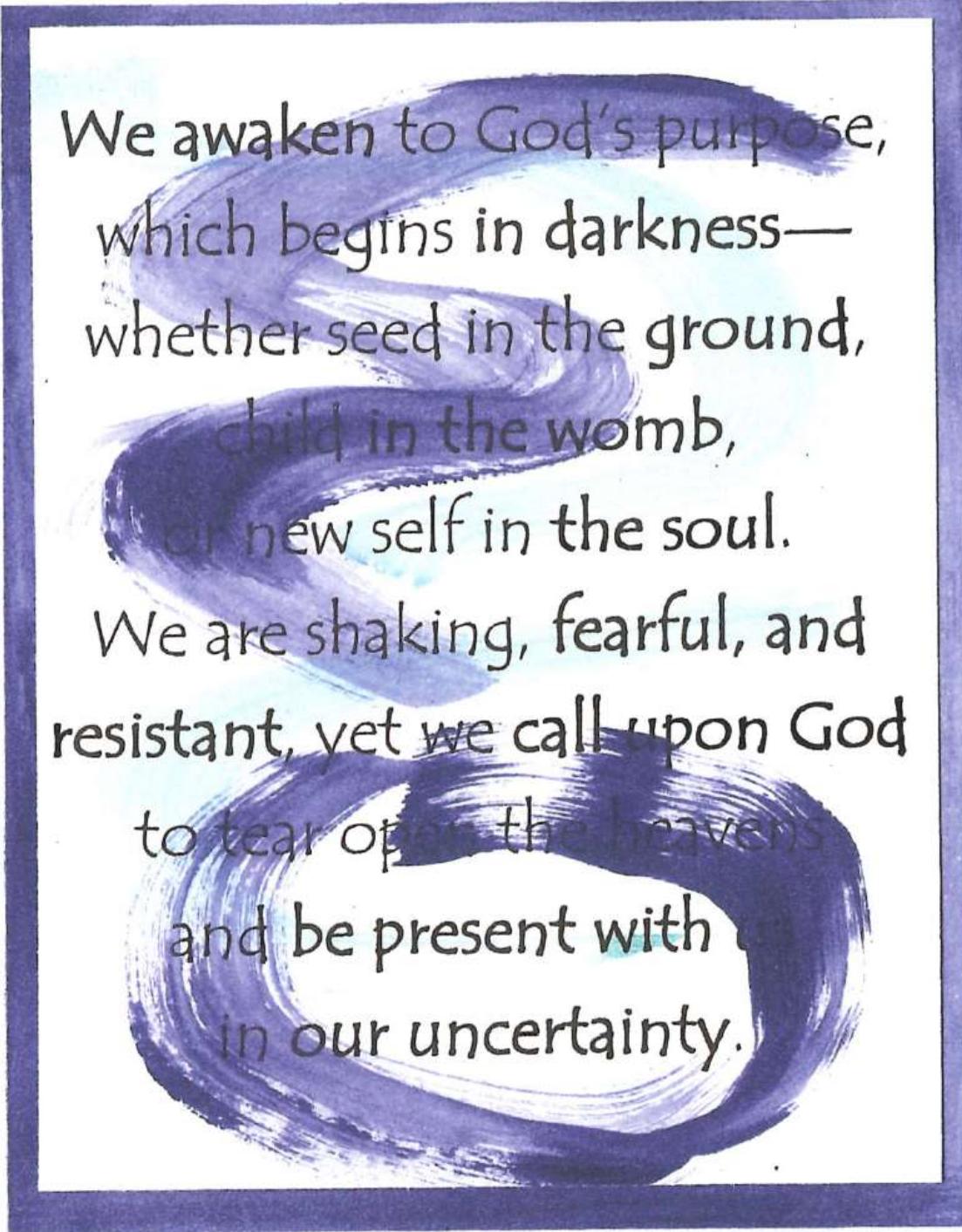
**OUR STEWARDSHIP**

Worship attendance last Sunday	FMC-231, MC-8
Spending plan giving Nov. 26, 2017 (includes e-giving)	\$4,813.30
Special fund giving Nov. 26, 2017 (includes e-giving): <i>Grades K-5-\$8.85, Grades 6-8-\$1;</i>	<u>\$4,739.72</u>
<i>Faith and Life-\$16; Sojourners-\$8; Young Adults-\$2; SHYF-\$1,166; Deacons-\$274;</i>	
<i>Cap Camp Flooring-\$2,960, Kitchen-\$8.87; Betty Sommer memorial-\$275; Syrian student-\$20</i>	
Total giving Nov. 26, 2017 (includes e-giving)	<u>\$9,553.02</u>
Total spending plan receipts as of October 31, 2017	\$312,066.11
Spending plan expenses as of October 31, 2017	\$335,390.00
2017 spending plan	\$421,146.00

**CHURCH STAFF**

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



**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>. *The church office will provide print copies upon request.*

**Still interested in working for Habitat for Humanity**, but need a ride? Contact Lynn or Linda Miller and they will take you along on Tuesday and/or Thursday mornings. They leave Bluffton at 8:30 a.m. and return at 1:30 p.m. You may volunteer any Tuesday through Saturday at the ReStore for a 2- or 4-hour shift or all day. Contact Mark Suderman with any questions or to volunteer: [mark@habitatlima.org](mailto:mark@habitatlima.org).

**Consider Christmas gifting** in a way that will benefit someone in need. You'll find a variety of options through organizations such as Heifer International, MCC, WorldHelp, Mennonite Economic Development Associates, and World Ark. We have catalogs from each of these in the office so stop by if you'd like to view them or check their websites.

**Bluffton University** will hold a Holiday Collage Concert featuring Bluffton's music ensembles at 2:30 p.m. today in Yoder Recital Hall. A free-will offering for scholarships will be collected. Additionally, the ensembles will perform during the annual Christmas Festival Forum at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 5, in Yoder Recital Hall.

**Bluffton University will present the 122nd performance** of Handel's "Messiah" at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 10 at Yoder Recital Hall. Tickets (at no cost) are required and must be reserved at <http://tickets.bluffton.edu> or at Marbeck Center. A free-will offering will be taken for music scholarships. Natalie Mallis, director of choral activities, is the conductor. The event will also be livestreamed at <https://livestream.com/bluffton>.

### GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

**Steve Harnish's mother**, Ruth F. Harnish, 90, of Eureka, IL, died November 23. Please pray for Steve, Monica, Lucas, Julian, Christopher and their family. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 16, at Roanoke Mennonite Church, Eureka, with visitation one hour prior to services. Additional visitation will be from 4-6 p.m., Friday Dec. 15. Memorial contributions may be made to Roanoke Mennonite or MCC.

**Margaret Weaver's family** shares that during the past week, Margaret began hospice care. She continues to reside at Mennonite Memorial Home.

### 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 3, 2017

9:15 a.m.	Sunday school, coffee hour
9:30 a.m.	Theda Good meets with staff/staff relations, parlor
10:30 a.m.	Worship, Theda Good preaching
Noon	Connections potluck, FH
2:30 p.m.	Holiday Collage Concert
4 p.m.	Meet and Greet at Mennonite Memorial Home
5 p.m.	Meet and Greet at Maple Crest
6 p.m.	Christmas caroling at MMH (refreshments afterward at FMC)

### THIS WEEK

Tuesday (12-5)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m. Staff meeting, 9 a.m.
Wednesday (12-6)	Adult bells, Cherubs, 6 p.m. Jubilate, 6:30 p.m. Chancel choir, youth bells, 7 p.m.
Thursday (12-7)	Worship, 7 p.m., parlor

### NEXT SUNDAY

8:15 a.m.	Youth choir
9:15 a.m.	Sunday school, coffee hour
10:30 a.m.	Worship, Wanda Stopher preaching Congregational meeting to vote on candidate (following worship)

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

**Today we welcome Theda Good**, candidate for Pastor of Connections here at FMC. Theda served most recently for five years as Pastor of Nurture and Fellowship at First Mennonite Church of Denver. Theda lives in Denver with her spouse, Dawn Kreider.

**Thank you to Carolyn Rich** for designing the bulletin covers to be used during Advent. Carolyn offered these words to accompany the designs: “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 December 10 worship service**, a congregational meeting will be held for voting upon the candidate. Votes will be counted immediately following the meeting. Results will be shared with the congregation after they are reviewed by Church Council and shared with the candidate. Absentee voting will be available for those unable to be present for the congregational vote on December 10. Absentee voting opens on Monday, Dec. 4, in the church office. You will be asked to put your completed ballot in a sealed box and a record will be kept in the office of who submitted their vote in advance.

**All youth, families, and friends** are invited to sing Christmas carols at Mennonite Memorial Home today at 6 p.m., with snacks in the fellowship hall afterwards. We would like to extend a special invitation to mentors for this joint youth group-mentoring activity. Help us spread Christmas cheer! -- Lisa and Amber Shelly, Shannon Thiebeau

**The next First Mennonite blood drive** will be held Thursday, Dec. 14 from 1-6 p.m. Volunteers are needed for this event: If you can provide cookies, help with registration, make sandwiches, help serve food, or unload and load the truck with their equipment, add your name to the sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall. **To schedule your blood donation appointment**, call 1-800-RED-CROSS or go to redcrossblood.org, sponsor code “fmenncbl.”

**Sunday, Dec. 10 - Potluck and time of thanks for Pastor George O’Reilly:** Pastor George is nearing the end of his term with us as pastoral associate. He arrived in June of 2016 and concludes December 31, 2017. Let’s celebrate his FMC pastoral work with a potluck and time of sharing. Please bring a food item and dinnerware. There will be an open mic time after the potluck. Feel free to do a skit, poem or reflection as a group or individual. Please inform Chris Moser of your plans for the event at moserbus@gmail.com. -- Nurture Commission

**Following the Christmas program** on Sunday, Dec. 17, there will be fellowship with refreshments. Please bring your favorite snack (cookies, crackers, fruit, etc.) to share. Hope to see you there.

**The Stewardship Commission** recently kicked off Flooring to Flourishing, a yearlong capital campaign that will fund a plan for updating and improving our sanctuary space. The project features new flooring, redesigned steps at the front of the church, new hymnal racks to hold all of our singing resources, and patching and paint throughout our worship space. Our goals are twofold: to raise \$56,000 and to achieve 100 percent participation. With your help, at just \$1 a day for the next 365 days, we can reach our goal. As you contemplate your financial contributions to FMC for the remainder of 2017 and for the upcoming 2018 year, consider giving to both the capital campaign and the spending plan. Intent cards for consideration of your giving to the 2018 Spending Plan are in mailboxes. *There is also now a fund specification of Capital Campaign on our Vanco online giving site, listed in the “Miscellaneous” section.*

**Julian Harnish, an FMC member and junior at Goshen College**, wrote GC’s Advent devotions for November 28. With his permission, we have posted his devotions on the “Here and Now” pillar in the fellowship hall.

### **Needed: A person to serve as Everence Stewardship Advocate**

**Role Overview:** Stewardship Advocates strengthen the stewardship ministry of the church by helping to integrate faith and stewardship principles with the needs of your congregation

**Time Commitment:** Volunteer one or two hours per month

**Term:** Be willing to serve two or three years

**Gifts:** Organization, passion for helping people meet stewardship needs, desire to learn and share about Everence resources

*More information is available on a full ministry role description in the literature rack in the fellowship hall. See Art Shelly to express your interest.*