

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

Associate Pastor – Steve – Tuesday-Friday, 9-4, off Monday

Director of Youth Ministries – Shannon -- Tuesday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

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

GREETERS: Jon Diller, Ken Shenk, Mary and Fred Steiner,

HOST: Gloria Hernandez-Bucher

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: *No SS – Christmas brunch*

Worship – Ryan and Kristen Niekamp, Megan Coffman

NURSERY WORKERS NEXT WEEK: *SS* – Greg and Laura Hartzler

Worship – John and Julie Mackey, Elizabeth and Annalise Nisly

SOUND SYSTEM: Walt Paquin

CHANCEL: Lois Wetherill

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 246

Worship attendance at Maple Crest last Sunday (FMC DVD) NA

Sunday school attendance last Sunday 73

Spending plan giving Dec. 20, 2015 \$9,651.38

2015 Proposed spending plan \$419,469.00

The offering Dec. 20 totaled \$13,969.70. Money was received for these special funds: SS - \$366.65,

Capital Campaign - \$158, MCC – 1,000. SHYF and JHYF winter retreats - \$1,430, SHYF SWAP - \$25,

Rejoice subscriptions - \$27.80, MDS – \$1,000, College scholarships - \$20, Kitchen Service - \$40.87, Stan

Naylor Memorial - Deacons' Benevolent - \$250.

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor – Wanda Stopher – 419-551-1079 -- fmc.wanda@bluffton.edu

Associate Pastor – Steven Yoder – 419-369-4753 (h) - fmc.steve@bluffton.edu

Youth Ministry Director – Shannon Thiebeau – fmc.shannon@bluffton.edu

Director of Music – Mark Suderman

Organist Coordinator – Lucia Unrau

Custodian – Mick Hardy

Administrative Assistant – Mary Pannabecker Steiner - fmc@bluffton.edu

Freedom Bound: Service



are able to serve the week of February 1-5. Visit First Mennonite online for more information on the Detroit project: <http://fmcbluffton.org/service-to-others/>
-- Lawrence Matthews: 419-303-8056 detroit@mds.mennonite.net

You are invited to Grace Mennonite's comforter knotting day on Thursday, Jan. 7 at 9 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Hope to see you.
-- Carolyn McDaniel

Brazo en Brazo: Permanent residents are just that: permanent residents. Their green card, the plastic card the size of a driver's license that identifies them, may be lost or expire (in 10 years), but their legal status does not change. However, without a card that is in effect, they cannot travel out of the United States. A mother and her son are permanent residents. Their cards will expire soon. This woman's mother is ill in Mexico and they want to visit her. They each need to submit an eight-page renewal application with \$450 and receive new cards before they can travel. On Monday, Dec. 21, Paul and Genaro visited and provided two copies of the form for them. -- Paul and Ann Conrad

Mennonite Arts Weekend 2016 is scheduled for February 5-7 at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati. Organized and supported by members of [Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship](#), the event invites artists and art enthusiasts to join together for a weekend of presentations, workshops, performances and worship. Registration is now open – the deadline for early registration is January 15. More details are available at <http://www.mennoniteartsweekend.org/>.

Leave or stay? Many Syrian families face that question as international humanitarian assistance dwindles and the patchwork of resources they used to rely on wears thin. Your gift of money helps Mennonite Central Committee continue to provide food, water, rent assistance and winter supplies so families that decide to stay in the region can survive the cold weather ahead. Please give online at mcc.org/syria-iraq; by phone at 1-888-563-4676; or by check, sent to MCC U.S., P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501. -- MCC

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

Happy birthday to Ann Shumaker, 83, December 29.

Please remember Burton and Elnore Yost in your thoughts and prayers this week. Burton continues to recover from pneumonia at Bluffton Hospital.

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.

TODAY, Dec. 27, 2015

9:15 a.m. Christmas brunch, FH (NO Sunday school)
10:30 a.m. Worship Service, Wanda Stopher preaching

THIS WEEK

Monday (12/28) Volunteers leave for Our Daily Bread, 9:30 a.m.
Memorial service for Christine Purves, 2 p.m., sanctuary; light meal to follow, FH
Tuesday (12/29) Morning prayers, 7 a.m., sanctuary
Staff meeting, 9 a.m., parlor
Wednesday (12/30) Bulletin submissions due by noon
Friday (12/31) New Year's Day, church office closed

NEXT WEEK

9:00 a.m. Coffee time, FH
9:15 a.m. Christian Education; Adult Fellowship, FH
10:30 a.m. Worship Service, Steven Yoder preaching
Scripture: Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

Welcome Statement Process Date to Remember

Jan. 3, 2016 **Written responses due** -- must be placed either box – one located in the fellowship hall, one near Church Street entrance

Welcome to our worship service today. Please sign and pass the friendship pads in the pews. 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 and throughout history, people around the world struggle to live with different political, social, and personal situations. This Advent, we await the coming of Jesus to lead us to a new freedom and to be released from what holds us back -- from our best selves, and from more compassionate interactions with others. God's labor of love and the gift of Jesus to the world cut through the fears and worries that have become the chains that weigh us down. Jesus' coming is the gift that shapes the church's life. While we spend time with family and friends this season, let us be mindful of our church family and that freedom in Christ is evidenced by a spirit of cooperation through service one to another and bearing the load for others despite our conflicts or differences.

Please remember to prayerfully consider the materials and timeline for processing a congregational decision regarding a proposed Welcoming Statement and Policy Statement. Your signed, written responses are due January 3, 2016, and may be placed in the box located in the Fellowship Hall or at the back of the sanctuary at the Church Street entrance. These responses will be summarized (without names) for further discussion later in January. Please contact Darryl Nester with any questions.

Spending Plan update: Last Sunday's spending plan offering was \$9,651.38. This greatly helps us reach our goals. Today's spending plan offering will need to be approximately \$6,300 to cover our anticipated Spending Plan expenses. Thank you!!
-- *Stewardship Commission*

Holiday deadlines: Items for the January 3 bulletin must be submitted by noon Wednesday, Dec. 30.

Workers are needed on Monday, Dec. 28, to help serve at Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen in Lima. Volunteers will be leaving the church at 9:30 a.m. Please contact John Rich if you can help.

Bluffton Community Meal: First Mennonite is responsible for the community meal at the Bluffton Senior Center on January 7, 2016. Helpers are needed to serve and work during the meal beginning at 5:30 p.m. **Please contact John Rich if you can help.**

Good news! First Night returns in February\March. For five weeks beginning Wednesday, Feb. 17 through March 16, we will once again have a First Night meal and program to follow. There will be no 5:30 p.m. program, and the meal will begin at 6:15 p.m. After the meal we will have a 30-minute program from 6:40 until 7:10. If you are interested in presenting a 30-minute program please contact Pastors Wanda or Steve. More information will be coming soon.
-- *Nurture Commission*

We received word this week from the Central District Conference board that Lois Johns Kaufmann will retire from the position of conference minister in the summer of 2016. The board is in the process of selecting a search committee to call a new conference minister to CDC and will provide updates along the way. There will be an opportunity to celebrate with Lois at our CDC annual meetings in Columbus, June 23-25, 2016. The letter is posted in the fellowship hall for anyone wants to read the letter. Please include the board and Lois in your prayers throughout this time of transition.

We are forming two new adult Sunday school classes which will begin on January 24, 2016. A class of young parents will begin a seven week book study and discussion on "Seven Things Children Need" by John Drescher. The class coordinators are Alison King and Jenny Benroth. A second class designed more as intergenerational class but with an emphasis on young adult issues is being organized and led by Kaye Phillips. Please share your interest by talking with Alison, Jenny, Kaye or Steven Yoder.

Parables, an eight-student worship ensemble from Goshen College, will perform at FMC at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30. Lucas Harnish is a member of Parables, which combines music, original drama and personal stories to create an engaging worship experience designed to inspire, comfort and challenge. Watch for additional details to be announced in an upcoming bulletin.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers needed Feb. 1-5, 2016: Volunteers for cleanup and repair work are needed in Detroit. Meaningful work, comfortable overnight accommodations, and awesome meals are provided. Contact Lawrence Matthews if you