

**Second Sunday of Advent
December 6, 2015
10:30 a.m.**

— GATHERING —

Call to Worship “Pilgrim” Lawton/Silva
(See insert – sing as directed)

Welcome Carrie Mast, Worship Leader

Responsive Reading

L: We wait for God’s light to burst into our dark world. Open your eyes. Unstop your ears.

C: As we prepare for your coming, we recognize that we are in need of change.

L: Like the valleys and hills, the crooked paths and rough places, we need your mercy to transform us.

C: We confess that we still live in the shadows of apathy, greed, and prejudice. Burn away in your refining fire all that keeps us from you.

All: Kindle in us your merciful love, so that we may be freed to serve and worship you in spirit and in truth.

Invocation

— PRAISING —

***Opening Hymn** “Oh, how shall I receive thee” HWB 182

Prophetic Scripture Reading Malachi 3:1-4

Special Music “Away in a Manger” Traditional
Cherub Choir

Time with Children

Hymn “Holy Child within the manger” STS 28
(Sing v. 1)

Conversation Hymn “Holy Child within the manger” Chris Gott
STS 28
(Sing v. 3)

Lighting of Advent Candle Karen McCullough and Kristen Niekamp

Prayer of confession – Assurance of pardon

L: In the presence of God and each other, let us confess our sin.

All: Eternal God, the birth of whose Son we prepare to proclaim, we long to save Advent and Christmas for Your purposes, but so often our good intentions are lost in all the planning and preparing, the dinners and parties, the buying and wrapping. We lose ourselves in the bondage of long-established habits and lock You out of our lives. Free us, O God, from all that makes us less than what You want for us. Free us from ourselves, to become servants of You.

L: As the locks which we have closed to keep others out are opened, let us silently confess our sin and seek God’s mercy.

(Silent confession)

L: Together, let us accept God’s forgiveness.

All: This is the confidence we have in God: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Special Music “In The Bleak Midwinter” Harold Darke
Chancel Choir

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory “Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus” arr. Peter Terry
Lucia Unrau, piano

— PROCLAIMING —

Gospel Reading Luke 1:68-79
Luke 3:1-6

Sermon “A Forgiveness Story” Wanda Stopher

***Hymn of Response** “Comfort, comfort, O my people!” HWB 176

Pastoral Prayer Steven Yoder

— SENDING —

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

***Benediction**

***Postlude**

**Please stand, or remain seated if that is more comfortable for you.
HWB – Hymnal: A Worship Book STS – Sing the Story*

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: Ken Shenk, Gayle Trollinger, Heidrun Awad

HOST: Wendy Chappell-Dick

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS – Kevin and Alison King

Worship – Kevin and Alison King, Ellie Nickel

NURSERY WORKERS NEXT WEEK: SS – Greg and Laura Hartzler

Worship – John and Julie Mackey, Sunita Hooley

SOUND SYSTEM: Don Pannabecker

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

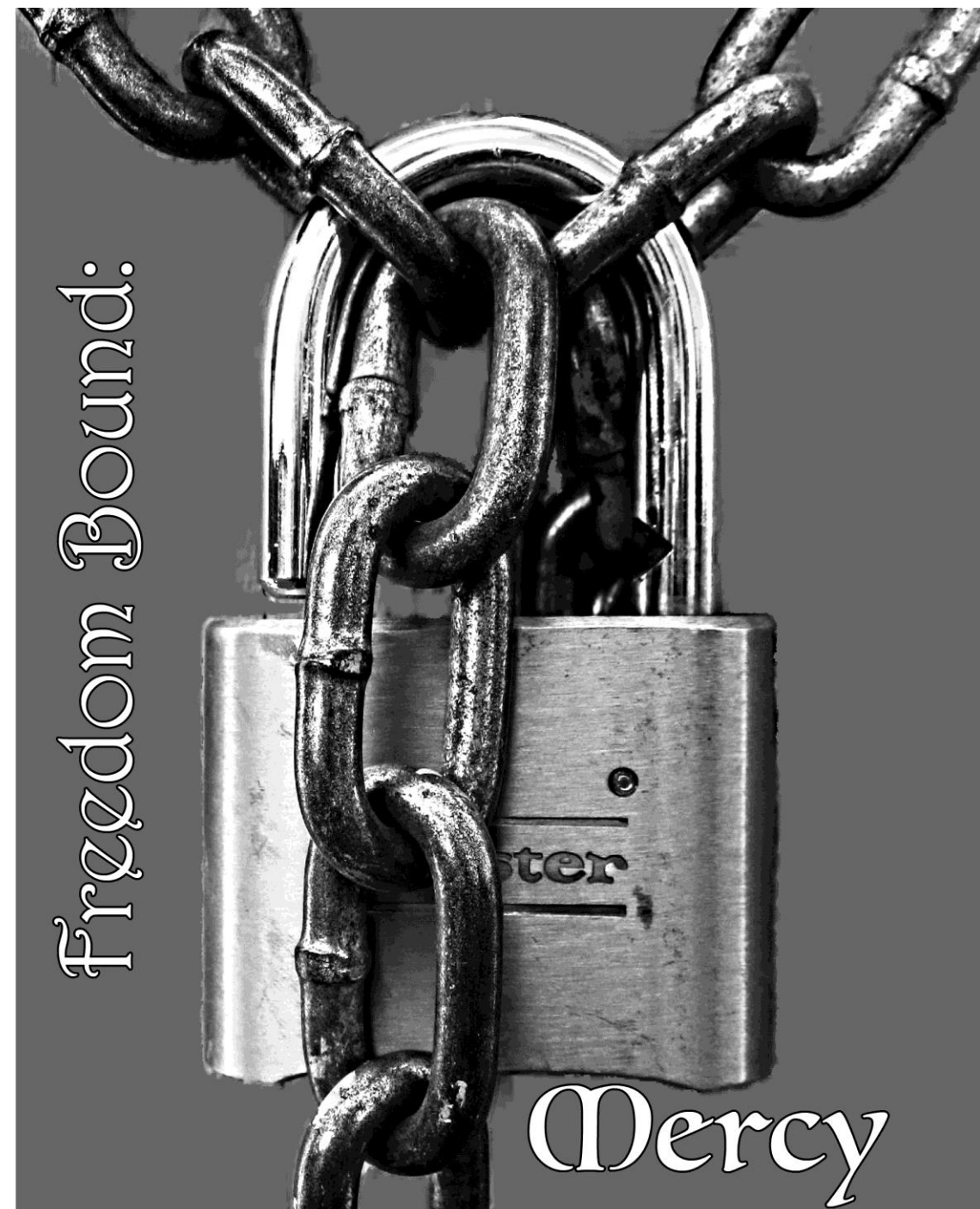
OUR STEWARDSHIP

Worship attendance last Sunday	248
Worship attendance at Maple Crest last Sunday (FMC DVD)	6
Sunday school attendance last Sunday	74
Spending plan giving November 29, 2015	\$5,877.50
2015 Proposed spending plan	\$419,469.00
Spending plan receipts as of November 30, 2015	\$339,444.00
Spending plan expenses as of November 30, 2015	\$351,364.00

The offering Nov. 29 totaled \$7,393.19. Money was received for these special funds: SS - \$77.55, Capital Campaign - \$120, Rejoice subscriptions - \$54.80, Kitchen service – 13.75, Deacons' Benevolent - \$189, Chris Purves memorial - \$50, Worship commission - \$20.

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:

Mercy

adults and \$6 for senior citizens, are available online at <http://tickets.bluffton.edu> or at the Marbeck Center information desk.

The Bluffton/Pandora Swiss Community Historical Society Christmas Open House, “Christmas at the Homestead” will be held from 1-6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 at the Schumacher Homestead, 8350 Bixel Road, Bluffton. The public may tour the decorated 1843 house, enjoy refreshments, and hear songs of the season, as well as watch food being prepared in the fireplace, hand dip a candle, play a game of checkers, shop in the gift shop and chat with staff about the history of the house and typical life in the 1840’s. Those arriving at dusk will see the house lit by candles much as it would have been in 1843. At 3 p.m., Gerald Mast will tell the story of David Rothen, a German schoolteacher who arrived in the Bluffton/ Pandora area in 1838 with his wife Barbara. Rothen was a well-known composer. At 4 p.m., Perry Bush will do a reading and sign copies of his book, “Peace, Progress, and the Professor: The Mennonite History of C. Henry Smith.” The event is free, but donations are much appreciated.

Manager for Ten Thousand Villages: The Etcetera Board, Inc. is seeking qualified applicants for the vacancy of store manager of the Ten Thousand Villages Store in Bluffton. This person will oversee daily operation of the store, including supervising the volunteers, handling ordering of products and overall finances. Candidates must understand and embrace the mission of Ten Thousand Villages to support artisans in developing countries. Business and retail background is a plus. The job is about 30 hours per week. Interested applicants should send cover letter and resume to Linda Suter at suterlr@bluffton.edu or 122 Grove St., Bluffton. Applications will be received until January 1, after which interviewing will begin.

Explore the mysteries of Christmas through song, both ancient and modern. Wendy Chappell-Dick, cello and dulcimer; Teri Sato, bowed psaltery; Steve Harnish, recorder; and Jan Wiebe, flute and vocal harmony, will perform “Songs of Forests and Thorns” Monday, Dec. 7 at 6:30 p.m. at Bluffton Public Library and Saturday, Dec. 19, from 9-11 p.m. at the Mustard Seed Café .

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

Thank you to all who have sent cards, visited, and offered prayers for Wanda Pannabecker, as she recovered from pneumonia. She has returned to Room 11 in Dogwood Hall at Mennonite Memorial Home. She does enjoy visitors.

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. 6, 2015

8:30 a.m.	Youth choir
9:00 a.m.	Coffee time, FH
9:15 a.m.	Christian Education; Adult fellowship, FH
10:30 a.m.	Worship Service, Wanda Stopher preaching
Noon	Connections class potluck
4 p.m.	Messiah, Bluffton University
6:30 p.m.	JHYF/SHYF Christmas caroling

THIS WEEK

Monday (12/7)	Farmers Market annual dinner, 5 p.m., FH
Tuesday (12/8)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m., sanctuary Staff meeting, 9 a.m., parlor Deacons, 7:30 p.m., parlor (Note change in time)
Wednesday (12/9)	Cherub choir and Adult bells, 6 p.m.; Jubilate, 6:45 p.m.; Chancel choir and Youth bells, 7 p.m. Stewardship, 7 p.m., 301
Thursday (12/10)	MPS, 6:30 p.m. Nurture, 7 p.m.

NEXT WEEK

8:30 a.m.	Youth choir
9:00 a.m.	Coffee time, FH
9:15 a.m.	Christian Education; Adult Fellowship, FH
10:30 a.m.	Worship Service, Wanda Stopher preaching Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18.

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 available 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 mercy washes over us, unlocking the darkness within and without. We wait for Christ's light to free us to have the strength to make needed changes. *(Please note: The gold slips in the pews will be used during the service today.)*

Spending Plan update: Our spending plan offerings will need to average \$11,786 for the remaining four Sundays of 2015 to cover our anticipated Spending Plan expenses.
-- *Stewardship Commission*

Youth Caroling! Tonight at 6:30 p.m., the JHYF and SHYF are going to Maple Crest and Mennonite Memorial Home to sing Christmas carols to the residents. We will meet in the fellowship hall and return there for some hot chocolate and cookies. All are welcome to sing and bring a dessert to share.

SHYF and JHYF winter retreats: Please turn in your Camp Friedenswald winter retreat forms and money by **Sunday, Dec. 13.**

SWAP – This summer the SHYF are traveling to Harlan, KY from June 27-July 2. We need a few adults who are willing to come along to volunteer with us. If interested, please contact Shannon Thiebeau.

To those who recently ordered fruit from SHYF: We are disappointed to announce that we did not sell enough fruit to meet the minimum required to order from the fruit company. If you paid in advance, the youth who sold to you will be returning your money.
-- *Shannon Thiebeau*

Due to conflicting schedules, the Deacons have changed their meeting time to **7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8**, rather than the previously scheduled 7 p.m. The 7:30 p.m. start time will be for all forthcoming Deacons' meetings unless otherwise noted.

It's not too late to share your talents! This year's Christmas program will be held Sunday, Dec. 13 at 6:30 p.m. Those wishing to provide music, poetry or drama notify Mary Ina Hooley. If you don't want to perform, you can still be involved by providing cookies or other snacks to share afterwards.
– *Christian Education*

If you have quarterlies and Rejoice! devotionals that have expired we encourage you to recycle them on your own. We no longer have a place that takes them to use again in other settings. Thank you for your cooperation.

-- *Steven Yoder, Director of Christian Education and Spiritual Formation*

Red dot mystery: You may notice a red dot on your mailbox or other mailboxes. The red dots indicate that those persons have elected to receive their Menno-Life and monthly calendar as electronic documents or that they receive them by mail or hand delivery. This causes less confusion when we are distributing items to mailboxes. If you would like to receive the Menno-Life, calendar, and other items (such as Focus or the Central District Reporter) electronically, please notify the church office.

We have prayer cards showing the Mennonite Voluntary Service unit in Seattle. This is where Jennifer Steinmetz is serving this year. The prayer cards will be on the cabinet by the sanctuary entrance in the fellowship hall. Also take time to check out the service volunteers from our congregation – posted on the bulletin board near the library.

Miriam Rumsey was a member here for the several years. In March she moved to Tennessee to be closer to her son. On Monday, December 21, Miriam will turn 90 years of age. To help celebrate this occasion her daughter, Leslie, has requested to have a card shower from those who knew her. Miriam's address is:

*Miriam Rumsey
c/o Morning Pointe of Brentwood
1522 Wilson Pike
Brentwood, TN 37027*

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bluffton University will present its 120th performance of Handel's "Messiah" at 4 p.m. today in Founders Hall. The event is free and open to the public.

A Festival of Lessons and Carols, Bluffton University's Christmas choral concert, is set for 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, in Yoder Recital Hall. Tickets, \$8 for