

**Come! Live in the light of God's heart:
God's Healing is at hand
Third Sunday of Advent
December 11, 2016 10:30 a.m.**

— GATHERING —

Processional

Opening Words

Lavon Welty, Worship Leader

***Call to Worship**

L: We gather today in the midst of a world filled with many hurting and pain-filled people. We find it hard to live as a hopeful people

C: We too often live as if in a fog. We often feel overwhelmed with hopelessness, doubt and despair.

L: Advent reminds us that healing is at the center of God's heart

C: We gather today longing for healing.

L: As the dawn breaks into the darkness at morn, may we today see glimmers of light that point to God's healing.

All: As we worship today may we be renewed in our commitment to live in the light of God's heart.

— PRAISING —

***Opening Hymn**

"No wind at the window"

STS 11

Candle Lighting

Psalm Reading

One in a Number Women

Special Music

"Emmanuel Will Come"
Jubilate Choir

Becki Slagle Mayo

— PROCLAIMING —

Conversation with Children

Hymn

"He came down" - healing

Back of hymnal

Conversation

Laurel Neufeld Weaver

Hymn

"He came down" - healing

Back of hymnal

Confession

L: We long to live as a hopeful people.

C: God of healing, we confess our fatigue when considering all the pain and suffering of our world; we do not know how to respond to those isolated and alone in their suffering and pain. We confess that it is easier to turn a blind eye toward the suffering and pain we know exists, perhaps even among our neighbors.

L: We know your heart, our loving God. We know that you desire all to find healing.

C: Save us, Lord, from the blindness that fails to see all who need healing as sisters and brothers whether near or far.

L: We confess that too often we flounder failing to live in the light of God's heart.

Hymn

"Beauty for brokenness" (*verses 1 & 4, then refrain*) STS 115

Scripture Reading

Matthew 11:2-11

Special Music

"As the Dark Awaits the Dawn" Christopher Aspaas
Chancel Choir

Sermon

"Christmas Scandal" Wanda Stopher

— RESPONDING —

***Hymn of Response**

"My soul cries out!" STS 124

Words of Assurance

L: Throughout the tumult of life, God holds you close in love. Rejoice, because God's heart is our heart -- God's healing is our strength, God's compassion is our example, God's heart is our hope.

All: We choose to live in the light of God's healing. We choose to live in the light of God's heart. Grant us the courage to do it.

Pastoral Prayer

George O'Reilly

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" arr. Valerie Roth Roubos

— SENDING —

***Hymn**

"Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming" HWB 211

***Benediction**

***Postlude**

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

HWB – Hymnal: A Worship Book STS – Sing the Story

Large-print hymnals and bulletins are available on the cabinet next to the parlor.

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.-3 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

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

GREETERS: Willis and Betty Sommer

HOST: Mary Amstutz

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS – Melissa Friesen, Mitch Kingsley, Judy Diller

Worship – Kevin and Alison King, Mary Ina Hooley

NURSERY WORKERS NEXT WEEK: SS – No SS coverage

Worship – John and Julie Mackey, Kevin Cluts

SOUND SYSTEM: Kevin Cluts

CHANCEL: Anita Lehman

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	233
Worship attendance at Maple Crest last Sunday	7
Sunday school attendance last Sunday	72
Spending plan giving Dec. 4, 2016	\$18,145
2016 Proposed spending plan	\$418,276.00
The offering Dec. 4 totaled \$19,758. Money was received for these special funds: Grades K-5 - \$3, Grades 9-12 - \$5, Sojourners - \$190, Freudige - 150, Connections - \$29, Community - \$21, Kitchen services - \$9.50, Doris Hamman memorial - \$50, Deacons Benevolent - \$140, MDS - \$100, college scholarships - \$135, Syrian student - \$150, Ron Friesen - \$550, Mary Ann Kooker memorial - \$90, Treva Suter memorial - \$25, SHYF - \$75.	

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 Organist Coordinator – Lucia Unrau
Custodian – Mick Hardy
Administrative Assistant – Mary Pannabecker - fmc@bluffton.edu

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.



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bluffton University's Camerata Singers and University Chorale will hold "A Festival of Lessons and Carols," the university's Christmas choral concert, at 2:30 p.m. today in Yoder Recital Hall. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens.

The Bluffton Community Assistance Corporation is in need of additional sponsors for their adopt-a-family program this Christmas. As of December 7, BCAC director Jami Crawfis indicated that 17 individuals and four families have yet to be adopted. Sponsors are asked to provide groceries or a gift card for groceries for a Christmas dinner, as well as items to help the family or individual through the end of the month. Any items other than food are voluntary. Items must be delivered to the food pantry at St. John's UCC on Saturday, Dec. 17, from 8-10 a.m. Those interested in adopting should contact Crawfis at 419-236-2944 or crawfis@hotmail.com.

Update on Mennonite Disaster Service in Detroit: John Rich and four Grace Mennonite members served in Detroit November 14-18. A report of their week is posted in the fellowship hall. Pat and Dennis Sheidler volunteered in Detroit Nov. 28-Dec. 3; Mitch Kingsley and Ron Headings, Dec. 5-10. Lynn Miller is serving as project director Nov. 26-Dec. 17. This project has been ongoing since October 2014, following the August 11, 2014 flood. The current project will officially close on December 17. However, MDS and other Anabaptist agencies plan to maintain a presence in Detroit in 2017 as a result of relationships that have developed there over the past two years. Thanks be to God! -- *Lawrence Matthews, MDS project coordinator for Detroit*

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

Please remember Phyllis Friesen and her children, Janine Paul, Jon Friesen and Julie Friesen in your thoughts and prayers. Phyllis' husband, Ron, died December 3 at home. A private graveside service will be held at a later date.

Adan Ortiz continues to face health issues and is sometimes in need of transportation to appointments. If you are available as a driver, please call Adan at 419.358-0955.

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 11, 2016

8:30 a.m.	Youth Choir
9:15 a.m.	Christian education; coffee hour, FH
10:30 a.m.	Worship Service, Wanda Stopher preaching
Noon	Sojourners/Freudige potlucks
6 p.m.	Youth caroling, meet at MMH

THIS WEEK

Monday (12-12)	Riley Creek Association, AR, 7 p.m.
Tuesday (12-13)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m., sanctuary Staff meeting, 9 a.m., parlor Education, 6:30 p.m., parlor Trustees, 7 p.m., AR
Wednesday (12-14)	Cherub Choir, Adult Bells, 6 p.m. Jubilate, 6:45 p.m. Youth Bells, Chancel Choir, 7 p.m. Stewardship, 7 p.m., parlor
Thursday (12-15)	Blood Drive, noon-6 p.m., FH Congregational Discernment Team, 5-6:30 p.m., parlor Community meal, 6 p.m., Senior Center Council, 7:30 p.m., AR

NEXT WEEK

8:30 a.m.	Youth Choir
9:15 a.m.	Christian education; coffee hour, FH
10:30 a.m.	Worship Service, George O'Reilly preaching

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

Pastor Wanda will be out of the office next week, December 12-16. Please keep Bret and Wanda's youngest daughter, Kirsten, in your prayers as she will have surgery to donate a kidney on Tuesday. It is hoped that she will be released to recover at home on Wednesday. Please contact Pastor George with pastoral concerns.

Spending Plan Update: Our giving in November was less than in previous years, so it was good to see an excellent offering the first Sunday in December. Allowing for a release of reserves [\$18,386] that was included in the 2016 Spending Plan, we need an average of \$6,750 offering the next three Sundays to cover expenses of the 2016 Spending Plan. Hopefully offerings will be more so we do not need to use the full amount of reserves.

-- Thank you, Stewardship Commission

Intent Card Alert! Please help our treasurer draft the best possible final budget by turning in your Intent Cards as soon as possible, with a target of Sunday, Dec. 18.

Thanks to all!

-- Stewardship Commission

Thank you to everyone who came out to support the SHYF last Sunday with the pancake breakfast, whether you helped out in the kitchen, donated or enjoyed our pancakes and live music! With your help, we raised a profit of \$655 to put towards the Orlando youth convention.

Caroling tonight: The SHYF and JHYF are meeting at Mennonite Memorial Home today at 6 p.m. sing Christmas carols to our friends and neighbors. All are welcome to join us! We will return to church for some treats, hot chocolate, and fellowship.

The Christian Education Commission invites you to attend a time of Christmas carol singing Sunday, Dec. 18 at 6:30 p.m. Children and youth of the church will be involved in selecting and leading this time of Christmas celebration. Please bring a plate of snacks or cookies to share during intergenerational fellowship immediately following the music.

Come! Celebrate the light of God's heart shining in the story and songs of Christmas. We will gather as a congregation to welcome the Christ child on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. Bring your family and friends.

BLOOD DRIVE: First Mennonite will hold a Red Cross blood drive Thursday, Dec. 15 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 "fmennobl." (Note that our next blood drive will be held Thursday, Feb. 9.)

String players of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in a string ensemble to play during the Christmas Eve Service. We will have 1-2 brief rehearsals, with times to be confirmed. If you and/or your children would like to join us, please contact Rhonda Winstead (rhondaandwalt@yahoo.com or 419-890-7012) or Laura Hartzler so that we may share music and rehearsal information.

Revised Common Lectionary Readings for 2017 – We will follow Year A of the Revised Common Lectionary in 2017. The Revised Common Lectionary is a lectionary of readings from the Bible for use in Christian worship, making provision for the liturgical year with its pattern of observances of festivals and seasons. You may access it via the internet at <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/index.php#>. *The church office will provide print copies upon request.*

Gerald and Carrie Mast's recently-published "Human Sexuality in Biblical Perspective" is now available through Amazon or Cascadia Publishing. If you are looking for biblical footing amidst changing understandings of sexuality and intimacy, this book is a resource for conversation and discernment. The book sells for \$12.95. The CDC office will make copies available at regional gatherings and the annual meeting.

College students: Apply now for an educational scholarship. Everence wants to help people nurture their talents. If you or your parents are Everence members and you will attend an accredited undergraduate or trade program for the 2017-2018 academic year, apply for an Everence College Scholarship. Deadline is Feb. 28. Learn more at everence.com/college-scholarships.

The deadline for submitting Gifts Discernment surveys is today. Please place completed forms in the box on the table by the office.

Three regional gatherings for CDC members are set for early 2017: February 25 at Southside Fellowship (Lambright Center, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN); March 4, First Mennonite Church, Urbana, IL; and March 11, First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth. Regional gatherings allow us to hear developments and work in progress and to meet others in the conference. They are intended for all in the conference -- not only leaders in congregations or the conference.