

**Come! Live in the light of God's heart:
God's Restoration is at hand
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 18, 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 seemingly broken with so much hostile civil discourse and broken relationships. We struggle 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 restoration is at the center of God's heart.

C: We gather today longing for restoration.

L: As the sun breaks through the fog, may we today see glimmers of light that point to God's restoration.

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

— PRAISING —

***Opening Hymn**

"Comfort, comfort, O my people"

HWB 176

Candle Lighting

Psalm Reading

Kevin King, Darby Benroth, Jason Diller

Special Music

"There Was a Little Baby"

Traditional

Cherub Choir

— PROCLAIMING —

Conversation with Children

Hymn

"He came down" – hope

Back of hymnal

Conversation

Laurel Neufeld Weaver

Hymn

"He came down" – hope

Back of hymnal

Confession

L: We long to live as a hopeful people.

People: God of restoration, we confess that too often get caught up in the brokenness of our world, discouraged that things can ever be restored to a point when all can live side by side in harmony. We find ourselves wondering how things can be made whole.

L: We know your heart, our loving God, yet too often we live limited by shortsightedness and partial understandings.

C: Save us, Lord, from the pride and foolishness of narrowmindedness that prevents seeing others near and far as sisters and brothers.

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

Hymn

"Beauty for brokenness" (*verses 1 & 3, then refrain*)

STS 115

Scripture Reading

Matthew 1: 18-25

Special Music

"Thou Shalt Know Him"

Mark Sirett

Chancel Choir

Sermon

"Family Issues"

George O'Reilly

— RESPONDING —

***Hymn of Response**

"God is here among us"

HWB 16

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 justice 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 restoration. We choose to live in the light of God's heart. Grant us the courage to do it.

Pastoral Prayer

Wanda Stopher

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

"We Three Kings"

S.E. Fauble

Adult Bells

— SENDING —

***Hymn**

"To us a Child of hope is born"

HWB 189

***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: Susie Gratz, John Rich

HOST: Mary Amstutz

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS – No SS coverage

Worship – John and Julie Mackey, Kevin Cluts

NURSERY WORKERS NEXT WEEK: *No nursery coverage*

Worship – No nursery coverage

SOUND SYSTEM: Art Shelly

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 230

Worship attendance at Maple Crest last Sunday 13

Sunday school attendance last Sunday 84

Spending plan giving Dec. 11, 2016 \$8,713.00

2016 Proposed spending plan \$418,276.00

The offering Dec. 11 totaled \$19,870.80. 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

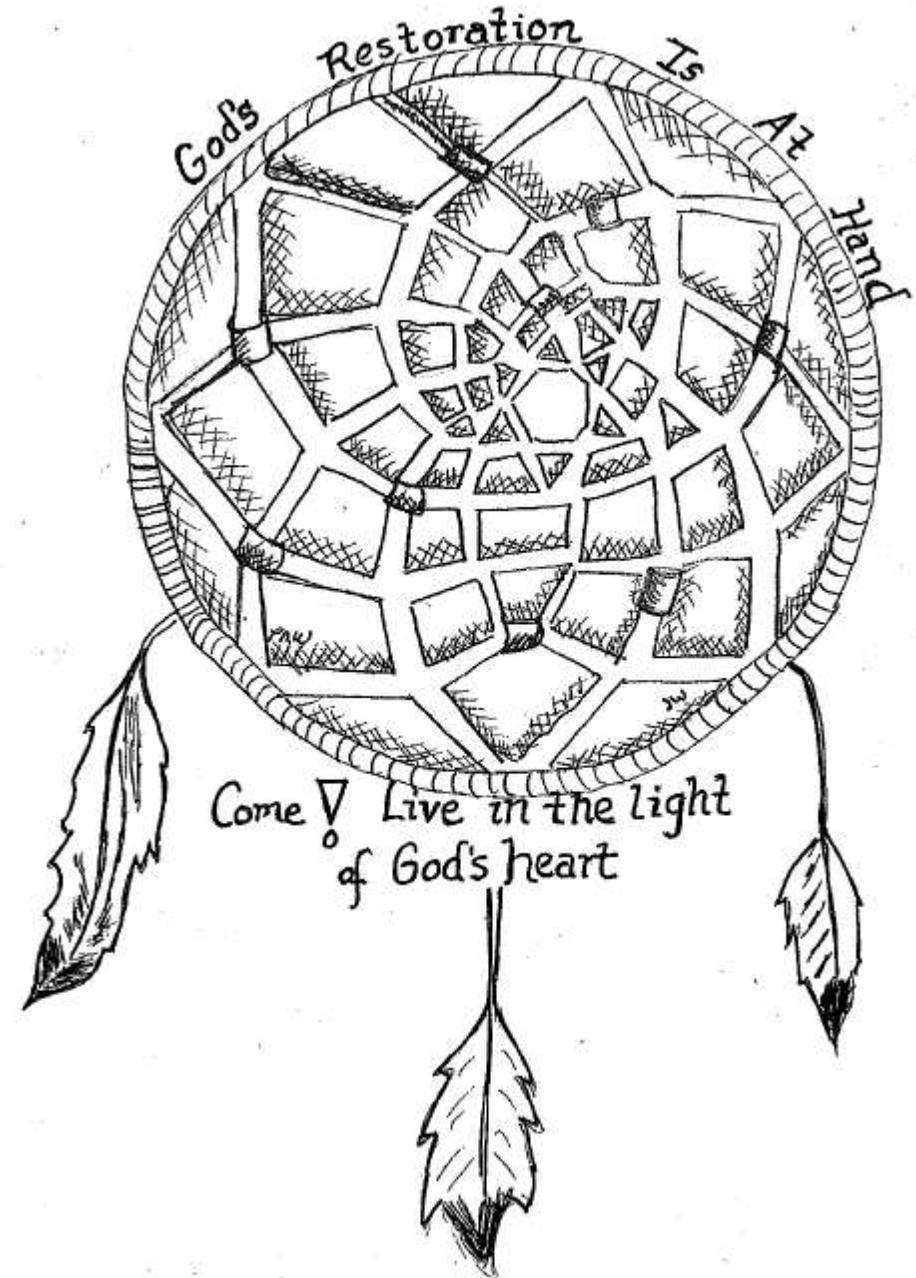
Youth Ministry Director – Shannon Thiebeau – fmc.shannon@bluffton.edu

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

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

To our church family, thank you for your thoughts and prayers, cards, food and visits during Ron's illness and death. I will be moving to Frieda House, Willow Ridge after Christmas.

-- Phyllis Friesen and family

Thank you to everyone who encouraged us and offered prayers for Kirsten, for her surgery and for the kidney recipient. Kirsten is continuing to recover well and we are deeply grateful.

-- Bret and Wanda Stopher

Dear First Mennonite Church: Thank you for letting us use your building as our venue for the Harvest Dinner. We had such a great turnout this year and raised \$1,000 more than we did last year. We could not have done this without your help.

-- Thanks again, Bluffton University Nutrition Association

Trella and Dwight Kauffman are thankful that they were not injured during a car accident that occurred while traveling to a Mennonite Disaster Service meeting. Although their car was totaled, the Kauffmans were not injured.

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 18, 2016

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
Noon	Community class potluck
	Youth Christmas decorating and potluck
6:30 p.m.	Christmas program, sanctuary; refreshments, FH

THIS WEEK

Tuesday (12-20)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m., sanctuary Staff meeting, 9 a.m., parlor Deacons, 7:30 p.m., parlor
Wednesday (12-21)	Cherub Choir, 6 p.m. Jubilate, 6:45 p.m. Chancel Choir, 7 p.m.
Thursday (12-22)	Adriel, parlor, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
Friday (12-23)	MENNO-LIFE DEADLINE

NEXT WEEK, CHRISTMAS DAY

	NO SUNDAY SCHOOL
10:30 a.m.	Worship Service, Wanda Stopher preaching

The Christian Education Commission invites you to attend a time of Christmas carol singing tonight 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.

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

Advent season brings the opportunity for scripture, spoken word, song and visuals to help us anticipate the birth of the Christ Child, the light in a dark world. Each Sunday in our call to worship we refer to light breaking into and through the darkness. The fabrics and candles at the front of the sanctuary are the visual interpretation of what we read, sing and say about our hope for the light to break through the darkness of our lives and our world. The dark fabric is pulled back and another candle is lit each week. This is done to represent our increasing assurance that the light of Christ's birth is coming.

-- Anita Lehman

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.

In your church mailbox today, you will find a report from the Congregational Discernment Team. It includes a process timeline for our work in January and February in preparation for a search team to begin their work. If you have questions, please see any of the CDT members (Chris Moser, Laura Hartzler, Rhonda Winstead, Rich Bucher, George O'Reilly, Wanda Stopher.)

String players of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in a string ensemble to play during the Christmas Eve Service. We will rehearse on Wednesday, December 21, at 6:00 pm. If you or your children would like to join in, please contact Rhonda Winstead (rhondaandwalt@yahoo.com or 419.890.7012) or Laura Hartzler.

FREE – A free tutorial is offered to someone willing to operate the video camera during Christmas morning worship. Please contact Bob Suter at 419.230.2744.

If you haven't yet submitted your intent card, please do so by Sunday, Dec. 25. This will help our treasurer draft the final budget for 2017.

New Year's Brunch: All are invited to attend our annual holiday brunch Sunday, January 1, at 9:15 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Please bring food to share: breakfast casseroles, fruit, muffins, or pastries. Coffee and juice will be provided. *Please bring your own table service.* There will be no Sunday school that morning.

-- Nurture Commission

Spending Plan Update: 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 two 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*

First Mennonite Church is joining other faith communities in Ohio to urge Governor Kasich to not allow the resumption of executions in Ohio. It has been nearly three years since the last execution, but the next one is currently scheduled for January 12, 2017. We know that Ohioans can be safe from dangerous criminals while holding them accountable, without taking their lives. Please call Governor Kasich at 614.466.3555 to leave a message with your name, residence and personal request that he not resume executions. Today in the fellowship hall, we have information and postcards to send to Governor Kasich. -- *Thank you, Mission, Peace, and Service*

The Freudige Class is collecting food/paper/cleaning/personal/etc. items for the Bluffton Food Pantry through the end of the year. Donations may be placed in the box outside of the church office and items will be delivered to the food pantry on a regular basis. We would love to have the whole church involved. Thank you for your generosity!

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.

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.