

Menno-Life



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Celebrating Advent in a spirit of grace Lighting a candle each day

Thanksgiving 2018 is past and Advent lies ahead. I've been thinking for at least a month now about how I will observe Advent this year. I want to celebrate in a way that is meaningful and life-giving. What I don't want is for it to make my life busier or heavier or more complicated! I'm open to a new practice of sorts, but I'm not at all interested in adding something just for the sake of doing something. And I'd like to celebrate in a spirit of grace rather than a spirit of rigor. Is that too much to ask or hope?

Just today, I've settled on my Advent practice for 2018. I will light a candle each day, and let it remind me of Jesus, the Light of the World. This is an addition to my life. I don't light a candle every day. It's simple, not at all complicated, and at the same time I think it might potentially be deeply meaningful. There is an element of mystery.

I don't know for certain what may come from this little practice. That said, I do anticipate that this physical act of creating space, of mindfulness or yieldedness, will provide an opportunity for the Spirit of Christ to illuminate something I hadn't seen before. I'm guessing that as I light the candle or as I see the smoke rise when it burns to its end that I may sometimes be called to prayer, or that some small thought will rise in the waft. Perhaps its stillness will call me to be quiet for moment, and to pause.

So it's decided. I will light a candle this Advent. I will light a candle in anticipation, in hope, and with the intent of yielding to the source of all light and life. I will light a candle to both remember and anticipate the Light of Christ.

~Pastor Wanda





Important dates to remember

December 2 – Holiday Collage Concert, Yoder Recital Hall, 2:30 p.m.

December 2 – Tree lighting ceremony, Houshower House, following the concert, approximately 4:30 p.m.

December 4 – Christmas Festival, Yoder Recital Hall, 11 a.m.

December 6 – Community Meal, **(FMC providing this meal)**
Bluffton Senior Center, 6 p.m.

December 9 – Messiah, Founder's Hall, 4 p.m.

December 13 – Red Cross Blood Drive, 1-6 p.m., FH

December 16 – Pancake breakfast fundraiser, 8:30-9:30 p.m.

December 16 – Children's Christmas program, sanctuary, 9:45 a.m.

December 16 – Caroling, MMH and MC, 6 p.m.

December 20 – Community Meal, Bluffton Senior Center, 6 p.m.

December 21 – Menno-Life deadline, noon

December 24 – Christmas Eve service, sanctuary, 6:30 p.m.

December 30 – Holiday brunch, FH, 9:15 a.m.

Holiday brunch Dec. 30

All are invited to attend the annual holiday brunch at 9:15 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 30, in the fellowship hall.

Please bring food to share: breakfast casseroles, fruit, breads, coffee cakes, muffins, cookies, etc. Coffee, tea, and juice will be provided. Please bring your own table service.

There will be no Sunday school that morning.

-- *Nurture Commission*



Advent events Dec. 16: Traditional and new

This Advent season we are crafting our schedule to create flexible space for families and friends to gather for some of the traditional activities.

December 16 will be a busy day at First Mennonite, so the SHYF will get you started with a pancake breakfast fundraiser. From 8:30-9:30, you can get your most important meal of the day with pancakes and some extras in the fellowship hall.

Following breakfast, at 9:45 a.m., the children in preschool through fifth grade will retell the nativity story in the First Mennonite sanctuary **(Please note that this event replaces the children's program previous held in afternoon or evening.)**

We'll wind up the day with an intergenerational Christmas caroling at Mennonite Memorial Home and Maple Crest, beginning at 6 p.m. We'll return to the church for snacks and hot beverages. All are encouraged to join in the caroling!



Noodle Night staples

Various pasta shapes, Parmesan, tomato sauce, and applesauce are always guaranteed at Noodle Night, a kid-friendly, intergenerational meal with lots of time for free play and chitchat.

Jaden Goings thought the green-iced chocolate mini cupcakes were pretty good! With him are his mom, Andrea, sister Ariana, and Ray Person.

Did someone mention Noodle Night?

Noodle Night? If you're thinking to yourself, "I don't know anything about it," open yourself to the possibilities that arise with the combination of a little pasta and a lot of kid energy.

Imagine the playdough and Lego creations of a three-year-old child helped by a seven-year-old and a tween. Imagine a new mentoring pair emerging over a few weeks with the help of a pictorial directory and a little encouragement.

Imagine a place where parents of young children are encouraged to relax long enough to eat and chat while another adult intervenes to chase their toddler or model peacemaking to their elementary-aged child. Imagine the bond developing between a 70-something mom and grandma and a 30-something mom whose paths never cross except around a table where ziti and tomato sauce are only the beginning. This is Noodle Night. And it is happening.

What was informally developed as a way to create welcoming space and a bridge in busy schedules for families with young, messy, picky eaters, has borne fruit as an unlikely place and space for church to happen. Every Wednesday evening during the school year, Noodle Night sees anywhere from 7-33 individuals of all ages gathering to eat pasta, sauce, Parmesan, and applesauce, along with surprise contributions of salad, fruit, veggies, and bread. A recent Wednesday feast included pizza, crescent rolls, kale and apple salad, mini-cupcakes, pigs-in-a-blanket, hummus and pita, cheese, salami and crackers. Also guaranteed are chaos, crumbs, and conversation!

You're all invited to enjoy food and conversation in the fellowship hall every Wednesday evening between 4:45 and 6 p.m. All are welcome to come and go as schedules allow. Come and see!

-- Carrie Mast



FMC pastors meet with MMH residents

On the second Wednesday of each month, the First Mennonite pastors meet with FMC members and friends living at the Mennonite Memorial Home. Clockwise from front left, Pastor Theda Good, Chuck Hilty, Pastor Wanda Stopher, Jim Lehman, Fran Henderson, Bob Flick, Glennys Henry, Luther Shetler, Geneva Shetler, Lois Jean Andreas, and Tony Frey.

(Photo by Louise Matthews)



**American
Red Cross**

Blood drive Dec. 13

A Red Cross blood drive will be held Thursday, Dec. 13 in the First Mennonite fellowship hall from 1-6 p.m.

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 register at <https://www.redcross.org/> and use sponsor code "fmenncbl."

Workshop at Maple Crest endorsed by Caring Connections Developed and led by Jeff Boehr

A three-session workshop titled "Meaningful Presence: Support for Late Life Reorientation" will be offered in January. The workshop was developed as part of Jeff Boehr's MA in Christian Formation program at AMBS.

The sessions are focused on noticing who one is and forming community in relationship with each other and with God. Participants will explore their path of formation and creative responses to what they notice. "We will also explore creative possibilities for ongoing formation and meaning making with each other and God, directed toward living the last years of life," says Boehr.

The three-session series is designed for those with some life experience and a desire to face the questions of late-life living in community. The series of sessions is limited to 12 persons. Another workshop will be scheduled as needed for those interested.

A sign-up sheet will be available when the specific dates of the workshop have been set. The location will be the Community Room at Maple Crest. The first and second sessions will be a few days apart. The third session will be one week after the second session. The cost is \$15 per person for the series of sessions.

Brochures will be available in the church office. For questions or more information contact Jeff Boehr at 419.358.9150.