

**Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20, 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: Our souls magnify you, our God. Our spirits rejoice in you, our Savior.

C: You have looked with favor on your lowly servants; Because of you we are called “blessed.”

L: You have scattered the proud and brought down the mighty.

C: You have raised up the lowly and filled the hungry.

L: You have remembered your mercy, helping those in need and their descendants forever.

All: Praise. Praise God’s Holy Name.

Invocation

— PRAISING —

***Opening Hymn** “My soul proclaims with wonder” HWB 181

Prophetic Scripture Reading Luke 1:47-55

Special Music “Pastoral Christmas” arr. Douglas Wagner
Youth Bells, directed by Ray Raeburn

Time with Children

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

Conversation Hymn Chris Gott
“Holy Child within the manger” STS 28
(Sing v. 2)

Lighting of Advent Candle Annaliese Nisly and Jacob Suter

Prayer of confession – Assurance of pardon

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

All: Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, prepare us, we pray, for the hours when we shall again celebrate the birth of Your Son. So often the world is so much with us, its allurements so tempting before us. So often we have allowed ourselves to be chained to that which makes us less than we should be. We are silent when we should speak. We are useless when we could be useful. We are lazy, and timid, and without mercy for other of Your children.

Loosen us, we pray, from the chains of our long-established habits, and in this time of Advent fix our minds on Him whose coming we proclaim.

L: As the chains with which we are bound are broken, let us silently confess our sin.

(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 “How Far Is It To Bethlehem?” arr. Alice Parker, Robert Shaw
Chancel Choir

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory “The First Nowell” arr. John Carter
Lucia Unrau, organist

— PROCLAIMING —

Gospel Reading Micah 5:2-5a

Sermon “They Shall Live Secure” Steven Yoder

***Hymn of Response** “O little town of Bethlehem” HWB 191

Pastoral Prayer Wanda Stopher

— SENDING —

***Hymn** “Love came down at Christmas” HWB 208

***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: Jon Diller, Julie and John Mackey, Mary and Fred Steiner,

HOST: Wendy Chappell-Dick

NURSERY WORKERS TODAY: SS – Pat Sheidler

Worship – Bruce Steingass, Amy Freeman, Annette Heslep, Amelia Heslep

NURSERY WORKERS NEXT WEEK: No SS – *Christmas brunch*

Worship – Ryan and Kristen Niekamp, Megan Coffman

SOUND SYSTEM: Chris Moser

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	270
Worship attendance at Maple Crest last Sunday (FMC DVD)	7
Sunday school attendance last Sunday	97
Spending plan giving Dec. 13, 2015	\$19,031.62
2015 Proposed spending plan	\$419,469.00
The offering Dec. 13 totaled \$19,031.62. Money was received for these special funds: SS - \$839, Capital Campaign - \$395, Habitat – 20, SHYF and JHYF winter retreats - \$660, Rejoice subscriptions - \$83.40, MDS – 200, College scholarships - \$50, Deacons' Benevolent - \$100, Chris Purves memorial - \$30, Mary Lou Vercler casket and dinner - \$610, Trustees - \$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



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 is now in its 12th year. An agenda to be embraced by our supporting congregations is to nurture and encourage a vision for active involvement in Brazo en Brazo ministries. *(The following is an excerpt from the annual report. You'll find the full report on the Mission, Peace and Service pillar in the fellowship hall.)*

"Immigration is a reality for Lima, Allen and surrounding counties as in many areas of Ohio and the USA. Laborers and professionals are coming from Spanish-speaking countries. For these adults, Spanish is the "soul" language. The children will rapidly learn English. This means there is a need for Christian services in Spanish and needs for tutoring school-age children and English classes for adults... congregations can prepare their people to receive and welcome these immigrants by encouraging study of the Spanish language. They can create a welcoming environment by occasionally singing a Spanish song with a familiar tune. Creatively reaching out to families and individuals will develop relationships that lead to trust..." -- 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/>.

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

Happy birthday to Mary Blosser, 85, Dec. 22; Keith Brauen, 87, Dec. 24; Marilyn Kern, 82, Dec. 27; Ann Shumaker, 83, Dec. 29.

Happy anniversary to Marty and Lowell Hostetler, 52, Dec. 21; Geneva and Luther Shetler, 75, Dec. 22.

Congratulations to Dwight and Trella Kauffman, whose granddaughter, Elsie Jan Glanzer, was born to Monte and Luella Glanzer December 14 in Charlottesville, VA, weighing 8 lb., 1 oz. Two-year-old Lola is her big sister.

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. 20, 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, Steven Yoder preaching
Noon	Community class potluck

THIS WEEK

Monday (12/21)	Deadline for Menno-Life submissions
Tuesday (12/22)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m., sanctuary Staff meeting, 9 a.m., parlor
Wednesday (12/23)	Bulletin submissions due by noon
Thursday (12/24)	Christmas Eve service, 6:30 p.m.
Friday (12/25)	Christmas 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, Wanda Stopher preaching
	Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

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
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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

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.

Christmas Eve: Please celebrate with us the coming of Christ on Christmas Eve at 6:30 p.m. With candles and song and scripture we will remember that the light shines in the darkness. An offering will be taken for the Deacons' Benevolent fund.

Spending Plan update: Last Sunday's spending plan offering was \$19,031.62. This greatly helps us reach our goals. Our spending plan offerings will need to average approximately \$7,520 for the remaining two Sundays of 2015 to cover our anticipated Spending Plan expenses. Thank you!! -- *Stewardship Commission*

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.

Holiday deadlines: Items for the January Menno-Life must be submitted by 4 p.m. Monday, Dec. 21. Items for the December 27 bulletin must be submitted by noon Wednesday, Dec. 23. Items for the January 3 bulletin must be submitted by noon Wednesday, Dec. 30.

Christmas Sunday Brunch: Our annual Christmas brunch will take place Sunday, December 27, at 9:15 a.m. in the fellowship hall. Please bring food to share: egg casseroles, fruit, muffins, pastries. Coffee and juice will be provided. To save on use of

paper products, all are asked to bring their own table service. There will be no Sunday school that morning.

-- *Nurture Commission*

The Education Commission would like to thank all those who shared their time and talents for the Christmas program last Sunday. Your efforts were wonderful gifts that helped the congregation remember the true spirit of the season.

Good news! 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.

"Swords to Plowshares," written by Lisa Weaver, illustrated by Amanda Huston, designed by Alison King and published by The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center would make a great gift with Bluffton connections. It tells the story of John P. Klassen creating a medallion from bullets to give to Mennonite Central Committee workers as a thank you for providing food and relief supplies to their Russian village in the 1920s. Proceeds from book sales help support peace education at The Lion and Lamb. Copies of the book and purchase information are available on the small display table in the fellowship hall.

DVDs of the Swiss Mennonite 175 event and copies of Perry Bush's new book "Peace, Progress and the Professor," a biography of C. Henry Smith will be available for sale after church today.

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*

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 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*