

**Come! Live in the light of God's heart:
God's Justice is at hand
Second Sunday of Advent
December 4, 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 injustices and inhumane treatment of one against another. 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 justice is at the center of God's heart.

C: We gather today longing for justice.

L: As a light breaks through the darkness in Bethlehem, may we today see light breaking through that points to God's justice.

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

— PRAISING —

***Opening Hymn**

"Come, thou long-expected Jesus"

HWB 178

Candle Lighting

LuAnn Stuckey

Psalms Reading

Special Music

"Christmas Lullaby"
Chancel Choir

John Rutter

— PROCLAIMING —

Conversation with Children

Hymn

"He came down" - justice

Back of hymnal

Conversation

Laurel Neufeld Weaver

Hymn

"He came down" - justice

Back of hymnal

Confession

L: We long to live as a hopeful people.

C: God of justice, we confess that too often we get caught up in taking sides when the justice of one or another seems violated, even when the circumstances seem so clear from our perspective. The battle for our allegiances and commitments rages.

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.

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

Hymn

"Beauty for brokenness" (*verses 1 & 2, then refrain*) STS 115

Scripture Reading

Matthew 3:1-12

Shannon Thiebeau

Sermon

"Pursuing the Preposterous Promise"

George O'Reilly

— RESPONDING —

***Hymn of Response**

"Hark! The glad sound!"

HWB 184

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 justice. 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

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

arr. Lloyd Larson

— SENDING —

***Hymn**

"Helpless and hungry"

STS 26

***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 – Wendy Chappell-Dick, Bobbie Chappell, Mary Pannabecker Steiner

Worship – Carrie Mast, Jacob Biesecker-Mast, Rachel Diller

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

Worship – Kevin and Alison King, Mary Ina Hooley

SOUND SYSTEM: Chris Moser

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	225
Worship attendance at Maple Crest last Sunday	6
Sunday school attendance last Sunday	89
Spending plan giving Nov. 27, 2016	\$5,194.54
2016 Proposed spending plan	\$418,276.00
The offering Nov. 27 totaled \$9,500.81 Money was received for these special funds: Grades K-5 - \$13.33, Sojourners - \$2, Faith and Life - \$10, Kitchen services - \$9.50, MDS - \$20, Doris Hamman memorial - \$100, Deacons Benevolent - \$310, MDS - \$100, Habitat - \$50, Connection class - \$80, college scholarships - \$150, Syrian student - \$2,500, Community class - \$3, Treva Suter memorial - \$50.	

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.



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*

Bluffton University will present Handel's "Messiah" today at 4 p.m. in Founders Hall. Jonathan Wey will conduct; soloists include Leah Crane, soprano; Mitzi Westra, mezzo-soprano; Joseph Purifoy, tenor; and Mark Gilgallon, baritone.

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. Sunday, Dec. 11, in Yoder Recital Hall. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens. They are available at <http://tickets.bluffton.edu>, or at the Marbeck Center information desk.

The Bluffton University music department will present "Christmas Festival" in Forum at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6, in Yoder Recital Hall. The forum will feature University Chorale, Camerata Singers, Saxophone Ensemble, Low Brass Ensemble and a vocal solo.

Join the #MennoLove fun! Participate in the "Love is a Verb" storytelling project by submitting a Love Your Selfie! Send a photo of yourself practicing self-care and a brief explanation to the Mennonite Church USA and they will share it across the church online. Send emails to alysabs@mennoniteusa.org.

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS

Please offer prayers for the family of Mary Ann Kooker, who died November 27 at Mennonite Memorial Home. A service was held at First Mennonite on November 29.

The Treva Dillman Suter family would like to thank you for all the cards, visits and prayers during Mom's passing. Thank you also to those who helped with the funeral, especially Pastor Wanda, Pastor George, Lori Nester and those assisting with the dinner and the trio of Doug Luginbill, Darryl Nester and Ray Raeburn, which was wonderful.

-- *Thank you so much, Jim Dillman, Marilyn Basinger and Diane Elshire*

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 4, 2016

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

THIS WEEK

Tuesday (12-6)	Morning prayers, 7 a.m., sanctuary Staff Christmas breakfast, 8:45 a.m., Lulu's MPS, 7 p.m., parlor
Wednesday (12-7)	Cherub Choir, Adult Bells, 6 p.m. Jubilate, 6:45 p.m. Youth Bells, Chancel Choir, 7 p.m.
Thursday (12-8)	Community meal, Senior Center, 6 p.m. Congregational Discernment Team, 5-6:30 p.m. Nurture, 7 p.m., parlor

NEXT WEEK

8:30 a.m.	Youth Choir
9:15 a.m.	Christian education; coffee hour, FH
10:30 a.m.	Worship Service, Wanda Stopher 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

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

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.

DISC – Discernment, Insight, Support, Caring: Have you ever faced a life-changing decision and felt overwhelmed with the options in front of you? Have you ever been in conflict with family members or friends and felt the only choices you had were hopeless? Have you faced a serious illness and didn't know how to cope with all the medical decisions or financial responsibilities that you had to handle? There is no reason to face issues such as these alone. Confidential DISCOVERY teams can be formed to walk with anyone at FMC who needs help making a decision or coming to a workable response to a personal crisis issue. See a pastor or a deacon if you would be interested in forming a DISCOVERY team.

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.*

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.

Due to a scheduling error at the Fort Wayne office of the Red Cross, the First Mennonite December blood drive has been rescheduled for 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 this scheduling change results in a change to our next blood drive, which has been rescheduled for Thursday, Feb. 9.)

The deadline for submitting Gifts Discernment surveys is Sunday, Dec. 11. 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.

The Congregational Discernment Team asks for your help in ongoing efforts to identify the pastoral leadership needs of our congregation. To understand the identity of First Mennonite Church and to know our shared story, we must share our stories with each other. As part of developing an understanding of our collective past experience, the CDT asks that you each respond to the two questions they posed in the November 13 bulletin. Extra copies of the insert are available on the table in front of the Blessings Board in the fellowship hall. Please respond to the questions and pin your response paper to the Blessings Board.

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 in Detroit Nov. 26-Dec. 17. The Detroit project has been ongoing since October 2014,