

Menno-Life



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Freedom Bound

Those two words form the overall theme of our worship series during the six Sundays of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. The four Sundays of *Advent* are a time of anticipating the coming of God in flesh, the incarnate Christ to live and dwell among us. *Christmas* Sunday is a time to celebrate the birth of the child who will grow up to show us a better way and to live and die by the values of God's kingdom. Finally at *Epiphany* we will celebrate the light of the world, as witnessed by the magi coming from the East.

During our sojourn on earth we live in this tension of being bound yet living in freedom. We are on a march to freedom but encumbered by the sin and burdens we carry. We are encumbered with the scars of struggle but living with a new hope. During these six weeks we will explore how God's freedom takes us down pathways of justice, mercy, trust, love, service and inclusion. The reality is that many people in our world struggle to see these six areas of living fulfilled in their context. It is essential that we work together to

help others to be free in these areas. Through visual displays, scripture, sermon and song we will explore these six themes in the next six weeks.

Advent is a time to practice spiritual disciplines. Through daily scripture readings and prayer we can enter into the season of waiting in anticipation of the coming one even though we sit in darkness and struggle to live in hope. It is a great opportunity for families to have a devotional time together to light candles on an Advent wreath or to determine to do something during Advent that will help someone in need. Doing these things helps us to be freed up from the chains that bind us with all the flurry of activities before Christmas. Taking time daily to practice spiritual disciplines may be a good way to develop a practice that may last longer into the coming year. May the month of December be a time of watching and waiting for the signs of Christ among us even as we celebrate his birth.

-- Steven Yoder

Among our neighbors and friends

Happy birthday to:

Shirley Kirk, 88, Dec. 1

Celia Blough, 93, Dec. 18

Margrita Klassen, 86, Dec. 16

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

Our sympathy

We offer prayers of comfort and support to Ruth Naylor and Kim McCullough and the extended family. Ruth's husband and Kim's father, Stan Naylor, died November 8 at Mennonite Memorial Home. A memorial service was held Nov. 14 at FMC.

Please keep the family of Christine Purves in your thoughts and prayers. Christine died Nov. 25 at Willow Ridge. A memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Monday, Dec. 28 at FMC.

We extend our sympathy and support to Sally Roth and Carrie Mast and their families. Sally's father and Carrie's grandfather, Walter Short, died November 20 at Fairlawn Haven in Archbold. A memorial service was held November 24 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Our congratulations

Congratulations to Natalie and Ken Shenk, whose granddaughter, Emma Rose, was born November 7 at Bluffton Hospital. Emma's parents are Allen and Anita Shenk of Findlay.

Louise Matthews: Connecting with others through music

When did you discover a love for music?

At a very early age, I started playing "music" on our old upright piano, what others might call "noise." I soon discovered that I could sound out familiar songs, adding extra notes and left hand combinations to make my fingers "fly" over the keys like Aunt Linda's. Inspired by Uncle Ray and Aunt Teresa, I bought my first guitar when I was twelve and taught myself to play. I figured out how to play along with songs on the radio. Playing piano and guitar became something my fingers did naturally with no music theory to understand what I was doing musically.

What role did music play in your family of origin?

My dad was the chorister at Yorks Corners Mennonite Church and led singing during Sunday school, worship services and vacation Bible school. Our church hosted monthly hymn sings and I learned four-part-harmony, not by reading music but by singing notes that sounded good together. Our family sang when we worked in the garden, when we traveled, at the table during meals, anytime, all the time. For the record, our family with eleven children won first prize singing *Poor Folks* in a talent show, me accompanying on the guitar. Some of us still enjoy singing with instruments when we get together.

How did you include music while raising your family?

Lawrence and I enjoyed singing with our five children -- sometimes just for fun, often for various programs and special occasions, sometimes accompanied by piano or guitar, often a capella. Music was a significant part of our home school experience, singing and practicing piano each day. I still enjoy playing piano and singing with our grandchildren as they sing along with musical instruments. "To show a child what delighted you, to find the child's delight added to your own, this is happiness."

-- J.P. Priestly

Tell about your current music ministry:

Because I play music "by ear," there is no perfection in my music and I have been hesitant to play in public beyond playing guitar and singing as part of my programs at The Lion and Lamb Peace Art Center. I have recently gained confidence, and perhaps lost my inhibitions, as I play piano and sing with my dad and friends at the Mennonite Memorial Home. Music touches a place in my heart where words will never reach and provides a "good dose of medicine for whatever ails me." I have discovered this to be true for many others and am drawn to MMH, not just to visit my dad but to share a mutual dose of music. Music provides a channel for me to connect with people whether they sing along, smile along or simply enjoy the presence of music. The Lord has used our singing in specific situations to "brighten the corner where [we] are," encourage in the midst of life challenges, to offer comfort in suffering, and hope in the final hours of life. Music is simply what I have to offer.

My favorite music: I like to play piano or banjo along with CDs of bluegrass-style hymns and country gospel songs, which seem to be the "heart" music of many elders. My dad and I also compiled a list of more than 100 sing-a-long songs from his repertoire which he uses to refresh his memory when we sing together at MMH.

What instruments do you play?

Accordion, guitar, banjo, organ, autoharp, harmonicas, I have a mandolin that's begging to be learned; I enjoy rhythm on a Djembe drum and recently learned recorder and harp.

Descriptive quote from The Book Thief by Marcus Zusac: "It was a style not of perfection but warmth; even mistakes had a good feeling about them."

Welcome to our new members...

We welcomed three new members to FMC on November 15. They include Peter DeMeo, Sally Roth and Shannon Thiebeau.

Peter DeMeo



After working for 24 years, I retired and moved to Willow Ridge in June. I was born in San Francisco and raised in Palo Alto, CA. I graduated from De Anza Junior College and attended a year at UC Berkeley. After volunteering part time for 20 years at Stanford Convalescent Children's Hospital, I took a full-time position as a technician in small item transport at the Packard Children's Hospital Stanford.

My K-12 education was at Palo Alto Unified School District, where my father taught special education, elementary level, of the emotionally disturbed, culturally deprived and educationally handicapped. My mother, an Ohio State University nursing school graduate, worked 50 years as an RN. I have two sisters, one who head of the plant nursery with the San Francisco Park Department, and another who is Chief of Staff to the

Commissioner-General of UNWRA, the UN agency for refugees.

My home church is First Congregational Church Palo Alto, an open and affirming church, where I have been a member since childhood. I look forward to having a new church family, one that also accepts me as I am. Retirement, the move from the Pacific Coast to the Midwest, and all new people is all quite a shock, but also a welcome challenge. I look forward to feeling at home here.

Sally Roth



Until now, I lived my life in the Archbold, OH area, with the exception of two years in Denver, CO, where my husband did his 1-W service. I grew up in Central Mennonite Church and as an adult, transferred to Lockport Mennonite Church, where my husband was a lifetime member.

I have two sons: Corey and Christian. Corey is married to Rachel Aeschliman, and they now live in my former home near Archbold. Christian resides in Columbus, OH. My daughter is Carrie Mast. I am here in Bluffton because she and Gerald encouraged this move. (So far, I don't think they have regretted it.)

I was widowed 10 years ago and retired a few years ago. I am excited to be starting this new phase of life. Thank you for the warm welcome to Bluffton and First Mennonite Church.

Shannon Thiebeau

I am from St. Marys, Ohio and grew up alternating between a Missionary Baptist church and an ELCA Lutheran church until I was in high school, when I exclusively attended the Lutheran church. After high school I attended Bluffton University (class of 2015) as a religion major, where I came to embrace the Mennonite faith.

For most of my four years at college, I attended chapel and Sunday Night Worship on campus and called Bluffton my "church." Throughout those years I occasionally visited First Mennonite with friends on Sunday mornings. I always appreciated seeing familiar faces from the university and experiencing a similar style of worship as my home church.

When my endeavors from university allowed me to make connections within the Mennonite church, I realized two things: 1. I always felt at home with the Mennonites. 2. Maybe I am not a very good Lutheran. My experience at Bluffton University greatly impacted my faith formation and I came to understand that I had a calling to go into ministry with the Mennonite Church. Now that I am serving as the youth director here at FMC, I could not be more thankful that God has led me to such a warm and supportive community of believers!



Joanne Niswander publishes "Reflections from Maple Crest Pond"

A year ago last April, Joanne Niswander began the discipline of writing a short essay each day, reflecting on the myriad "little" things that make daily life worth living. She has now compiled those 365 short reflections into a book titled "Reflections from Maple Crest Pond." To purchase a book, contact Joanne. The price is \$14.95.

Mennonite Women

Thank you to everyone who enjoyed fellowship and helped knot comforters Monday night and Tuesday morning, November 9 and 10. Anyone willing to hem these comforters will find them on an eye-level shelf in the Quilt Room. (Ten comforters were tied.) Kits for sewing additional comforter tops are available on the table near by. Thank you in advance for your work on these tasks!

-- Sarah Basinger

SHYF in December

SHYF meets on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month from 7-8 p.m. in the youth room except where noted otherwise below.

- Sunday December 6: Caroling, 6:30-? p.m. We will sing Christmas songs through the Mennonite nursing homes and return to the fellowship hall for some refreshments. This is a JHYF and SHYF combined event...friends and family are welcome!
- Sunday, December 13: Christmas Program, 6:30 p.m.
- Sunday, December 20: Sanctuary decorating, after church. An SHYF tradition. This year, the JHYF is also invited to help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. There will be PIZZA!

JHYF in December

JHYF will meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month from 2:30-3:30 p.m. in the Junior High youth room. Listed below are additional events and activities.

- Sunday December 6: Caroling, 6:30-? p.m. We will sing Christmas songs through the Mennonite nursing homes and return to the fellowship hall for some refreshments. This is JHYF and SHYF combined event...friends and family are welcome!
- Sunday, December 13: Christmas Program, 6:30 p.m.
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From other organizations



First Mennonite's sister church in Honduras recently celebrated its 35th anniversary. Earlier they requested funds to help them paint their church. To see more pictures, look up the church's Facebook page listed under IGLESIA EVANGELICA MENONITA FUENTE DE AGUA VIVA.

Ten Thousand Villages, Bluffton seeks store manager

The Etcetera Board, Inc. is seeking qualified applicants for the vacancy of store manager of the Ten Thousand Villages Store in Bluffton. This person will oversee daily operation of the store, including supervising the volunteers, handling ordering of products and overall finances. Candidates must understand and embrace the mission of Ten Thousand Villages to support artisans in developing countries. Business and retail background is a plus. The job is about 30 hours per week. Interested applicants should send cover letter and resume to Linda Suter at suterlr@bluffton.edu or 122 Grove

St., Bluffton. Applications will be received until January 1, after which interviewing will begin immediately and a recommendation will be made to the board and the filled position announced.

Bluffton University Christmas events

Bluffton University will present its 120th performance of Handel's "Messiah" at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6, in Founders Hall. The event is free and open to the public.

"A Festival of Lessons and Carols," Bluffton University's Christmas choral concert, is set for 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, in Yoder Recital Hall. Tickets, \$8 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens, are available online at <http://tickets.bluffton.edu> or at the Marbeck Center information desk.

Everence college scholarship available to Everence members

If your family uses Everence faith-based services, you are eligible to apply for Everence college scholarships for the 2016-2017 school year. Submit your application by Feb. 29, 2016. Learn more at everence.com/scholarships or see Willis Sommer, Everence advocate, for a copy of the application.

Sunshine Communities shares holiday wish list

Sunshine Communities, Maumee, is a non-profit that serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in northwest Ohio. Please consider a donation of money or purchasing an item on their Holiday Wish List. *Note: Please note that Sunshine cannot accept used items due to health risks. All donated items must be brand new with tags, original packaging, etc.*

Their wish list includes clothing, household items, toys, CDs/DVDs, toiletries, art/craft supplies, electronics, books, miscellaneous gift cards/tickets. Please see their letter of explanation and a detailed list that is posted under "Miscellaneous" on the pillar nearest the office in the fellowship hall. Items should be delivered to Sunshine by December 10. Checks and gift cards may be mailed to Sunshine Communities-Holiday Gift Fund, 7223 Maumee Western Road, Maumee, OH 43537.

AMBS offers Explore for 11th and 12th graders during summer 2016

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries Explore, a theological program for high school youth gives young people in the 11th and 12th grades the chance to develop leadership gifts. Explore will be offered in summer 2016, thanks to a generous donor. Through the congregational experience and group experience, participants engage the world of theological ideas and foster a call to vocation in the church. The deadline for the next Explore program is February 1, 2016.

- **Group Experience:** During the 16-day group experience (July 5-20, 2016), youth worship, serve and study. Participants become church with and for each other while exploring their own places in their congregations and in the church they imagine for the future.
- **Congregational Experience:** The congregational experience comes before, after, or on both sides of the group experience. Participants serve in their congregation for 100 hours over a period of five or more weeks, working with their pastor in a mentoring relationship.

To learn more about Explore and to obtain the application form, go to:

<https://www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/Explore.cfm>.

MCHO offers monthly support group for caregivers

Do you know someone living with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia or wish you had caring support or more information about the disease? Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio provides a monthly support group for caregivers. The group meets on the third Monday of each month, except December, from 3:30-4:30 p.m. in the library at Mennonite Memorial Home, 410 W. Elm St., Bluffton. Co-led by Tricia Herrmann, RN, and Emily Koogler, LSW, the focus is on mutual support, education and community resourcing. Call 419-358-1015 for more information and questions.