

Menno-Life



First Mennonite Church • Bluffton, Ohio • Vol. 68, No. 5 • September 2021

Transitions

Synonyms for “transitions” include changes, evolutions, conversions, shifts, alterations, and modifications. These words describe First Mennonite Church at this point in our history, perhaps more so than any other time. Sometimes we describe this time as “liminal,” a Latin word meaning “threshold” – a space between what was and what comes next. This is often a time of waiting and not knowing, but it can also be a transformational time. Some of us love this time in our lives and thrive on it. Some of us dread this time and either want what was or at the very least something solid to hold on to. Wherever you fall on this spectrum, we, as a church community, are in transition whether we like it or not. Thus, we pray for guidance, calmness, trust, and hope in the days, weeks, and months to come.

It seems important to name some of these numerous transitions that have occurred over the past couple of years. COVID-19 came into existence, changed the way we do worship and church, and continues to modify our spiritual lives, both individually and as a faith community. Theda Good resigned and Jeff Boehr was hired. The church transitioned to a new governance structure in January from Commissions to Circles. Wanda Stopher retired, and we are preparing to find a new pastor. Mary Pannabecker Steiner retired, and we hired Trusty Schumacher. After over a year without more than a very temporary, very part-time custodian (Carter Dyar), we hired Don Burris. We are grateful for all these people who led our church in so many important ways in the past. And, we are so grateful for all the new staff at our church. I know that you will greatly enjoy getting to know Don and Trusty, as I have.

And let’s not forget all the volunteers who make our church function – both in “normal” time and through these transitions. We have people who serve on various discerning groups, who offer their gifts during worship, who help care for the needy in our community, who pray daily for our church and its members, who do many small tasks behind the scenes that no one notices, and much more. I have become even more grateful to these volunteers as I try to navigate my way through my new temporary position as church administrator. Plus, I am thankful for all the people who have affirmed me during this time. Your continued help and prayers will be greatly appreciated.

We, as your church staff, are working hard to make sure we communicate openly and in a timely fashion with the congregation. The Circle Leaders are committed to doing the same. Please help with this communication by letting us know what you are doing within the church.

Contact the church office when you have meetings, events, etc., so that we can put them on the master calendar. That way we can help prepare the space for you and avoid any conflicts. As good stewards, we want to take care of our building, keep it clean and maintained, thus creating a space that not only functions well for us, but also welcomes the community. Communicate with us about new visitors to our space, and make those people feel welcome as you connect with them. Let us truly function as a *Priesthood of All Believers*, as a family of loving faith and action in this turbulent, but beautiful world.

~ Mark Suderman

Meet the new staff

Trustworthy Schumacher

It has been wonderful being back in Bluffton, re-exploring our favorite spots and visiting old friends. I have loved working at the office and getting to meet new and old faces and it feels like home. Thank you all for the warm welcome. I was born here in Ashland Ohio. My dad was attending Seminary school at Ashland Theologicalwhile my mom was taking a few college courses. I am the second of three children, Thinkgrace (Zakama), my older sister and Devotion my brother. They both live in Winnipeg.

We moved back to Zimbabwe when I was 2 years old. I grew up in Mtshabezi, one of the Brethren In Christ Church mission stations, where my dad was a Professor at the Bible School. My dad was later elected Bishop and we moved to Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe. I lived there until I came to Bluffton University.

I met my husband, Isaac at the University and we got married in 2016. We have a son, Keagan Awande who is a joy and is keeping us busy. We enjoy watching movies, hanging out with friends (pre-covid) and cook outs. We hope to get to know all of you!





Children and Youth Ministry

During an outdoor Sunday School in September, 5th grader Bodey Benroth squatted down to check out a patch of loose, dead grass and suddenly held up a baby bunny in his hand! Kids rushed over to see the treasure Bodey uncovered, and the teacher took a detour in the Bible story covering creation, a serendipitous moment when she realized what they had - a real life example of the story of creation directly in front of them! A folding chair was placed over the nest to protect

the baby bunnies with a handmade sign warning people not to move the chair – baby bunnies! For the next week, Bodey stopped by each morning on his way to school to check on the critters, and by the following Sunday when the kids took a moment out of Sunday School to check, the bunnies had already vacated their nest. God teaches in unexpected ways!



Joint SHY & JHY Swim & Zipline Gathering at Bruce Steingass & Amy Freeman's Pond

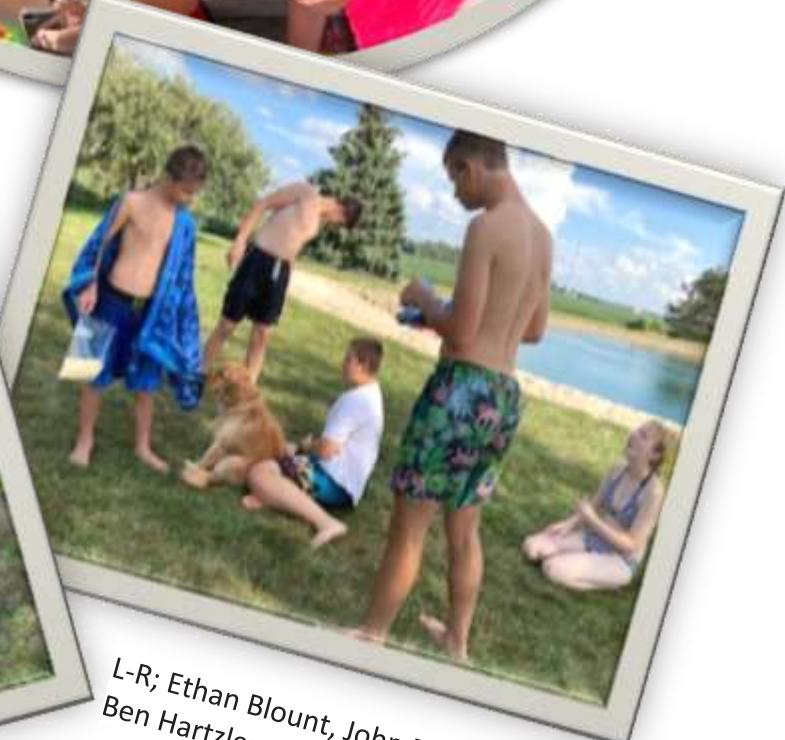
August 29, 2021

Top L-R; Clair
Phillips, Ellie
Hartzler

Bottom L-R
Rebecca Estell,
Kaleigh Coffman



Ben Hartzler, Ethan Nickel, James Gott, &
Oliver the dog



L-R; Ethan Blount, John Paul-Yoder, Ethan Nickel,
Ben Hartzler, James Gott & Oliver the dog

Ministry Opportunities

- **Nursery Volunteers:** Interested in showing hospitality to families? Sign up to be a volunteer in the nursery [here!](#) Not a fan of Google sign-up sheets? Call the church office to sign up!
- **Library Circulation Volunteer:** Checks in returned books, re-shelves books, files cards in catalog, assists in processing donated and new books, maintains library space, and works with the Library Committee.
- **Sunday School Sub:** Interested in supporting Christian Formation for our children and youth but can't make a long-term commitment to teaching? Consider adding your name to the sub list!
- **Greeters & Hosts Coordinator:** position schedules greeters and hosts each Sunday. If interested, contact the church office.
- **Weekday Christian Education (WCE) Coordinator:** This position serves as contact for the community WCE program that brings K-6 th grade children to our building for class once a week to study the Bible. The coordinator schedules volunteer walkers from FMC to walk children back and forth from their classrooms to the church.

Music Ensemble Rehearsals 2021

Music Ensemble Rehearsals to begin: note the dates, times, locations, and ages for the church's music ensembles. Please consider offering your musical gifts to this important part of worship for our congregation and encourage others to join. We would gladly welcome new additions to the ensembles and will greatly enjoy the return of former members.

- Chancel Choir (**adults of all ages**)
Wednesdays 7:00 p.m. (Mark Suderman, director) – Sanctuary. *All vaccinated singers are welcome to participate.*
- Adult (**adults of all ages**) and Youth (**Grades 7-12**) Bells - Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively (Ray Raeburn, director) – assembly room.
- Cherub Choir (**4yr. olds-2nd graders**)
Wednesdays 6:00pm (Laura Hartzler, director) – children's choir room. *Those without vaccinations will need to wear masks.*
- Jubilate (**3rd-6th graders**) begins on Wednesdays 6:30pm - (Laura Hartzler, director) – children's choir room. *Those without vaccinations will need to wear masks.*
- Youth Choir (**7th grade and up**) will meet on Sundays at 8:30a.m. (Laura Hartzler, director) – Children's choir room. *Those without vaccinations will need to wear masks.*
- *Parents with new choir members are welcome to stay as needed.*
- *Protocols for all ensembles are subject to change due to changes in COVID-19 spread*