

## Ponderings at the end of a day—or year!

Dutch Catholic priest and theologian Henri Nouwen found it useful to reflect on several questions at the end of the day: “Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone’s face? Did I say words of healing?” Pondering such questions may prove valuable at the end of a year as well: “How did I contribute to peace in the world this past year? Did I bring smiles to others’ faces? Did I offer words of healing?” Nouwen continued, and we can too: “Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love?”

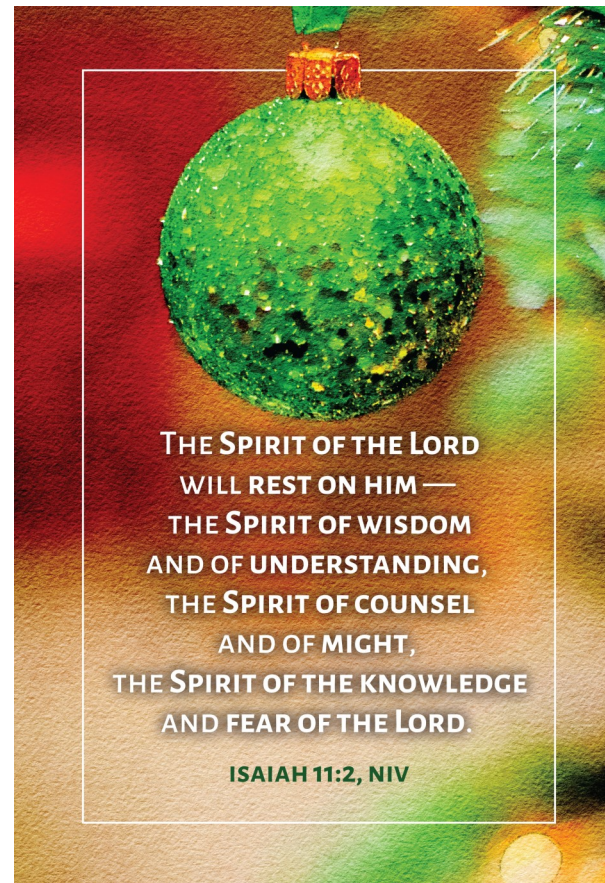
Many of us set New Year’s resolutions for self-improvement, asking, “What are my goals? How can I better myself, my weight, my work-life balance, my habits?” But Nouwen said of his self-inquiry: “These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and [in] the life to come.” His resolution was to share God’s love with others. With God’s help, it can be ours as well, for each new day and each new year.



# The Church Corner

December 2023

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### First Mennonite Church

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Halstead, KS 67056  
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Sunday School at 9:15 am  
Worship at 10:30 am and  
Live Streaming at 10:30 am on the  
church Facebook page

"We are a community of  
believers who follow Jesus  
Christ as we receive and  
share God's love."

**We, of First Mennonite Church,**  
Valuing the convictions of our faith,  
Endeavor to:  
Engage our members in ministry,  
Expand community outreach,  
Embrace new people,  
in the love of Christ.



## Remembering Snow

As some of you might imagine, the recent snow we received was a very exciting thing for me. Watching it softly descend, the flakes filling the skies and then resting on limbs and flat surfaces was beautiful! I enjoyed going out in it and feeling the flakes on my face and the look of it as it blanketed the town. It brought back so many memories of growing up in Pennsylvania where we had similar and even much larger snowstorms. It was fun to wander through those memories of snow, which at this point in my life is still something I enjoy. And I have a number of fond memories and lessons associated with snow and snow storms.

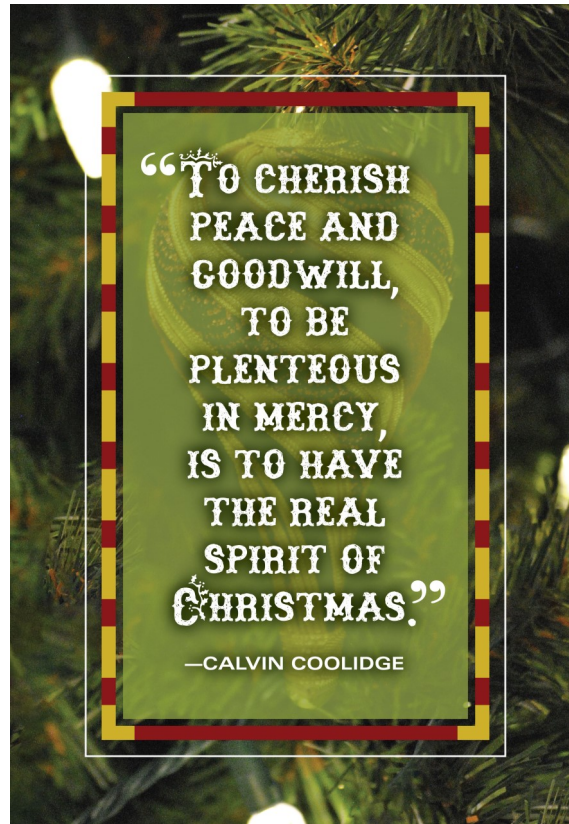
As I thought about that today, I was appreciating the capacity of memory that God has given us. It is a good thing that we can remember, that we can recall things in our life or that we have learned. And it's not something that we use only for our own fun as we gander back on fond memories. It's something God has given us to specifically remember things He has done as well. It was a command to the Israelites in Exodus 13:3: "Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, because the Lord brought you out from there by strength of hand; no leavened bread shall be eaten." It's important that we remember the things we have come through and God's hand as He has led us out of them.

We also remember what the coming of Christ meant for us as the Advent season begins and Christmas is on the horizon. Ephesians 2:12-13 says, "Remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Even if we perhaps can't remember what it was like to have no hope in God, we can definitely remember the meaning of the gift God sent us in the form of a baby!

As we move through Advent and into Christmas, join me in remembering. Remember past Christmas times spent with those you love, remember traditions and celebrations. Most of all remember what the season really celebrates and what God did in giving us His Son for our forgiveness and salvation.

Blessings - Pastor Steve



## Camp Mennoscah

⇒ **Camp is recruiting for Summer Staff!** Staff must be 18 years old or older and receive stipends for naturalist, crafts leader, lifeguard, grounds/maintenance, music leader and office/media. Applications accepted until all positions are filled.

⇒ **Please consider giving to Camp Mennoscah** as part of your end-of-the-year giving. It's not that we aren't thankful for all you've done - but there is a lot to be done at Camp, and we already know that God has touched your hearts and called many to be part of Camp's mission. Let's not just finish the M&M Project strong - let's finish the year strong!

⇒ **Volunteers are needed immediately (M-F)** to work alongside the facilities director on general maintenance tasks. Please let us know if you can come for a few hours and bring a water bottle and your own lunch.

⇒ **A wish list** for camp needs and volunteer opportunities are listed on the website.

Contact camp:  
(620) 297-3290

[www.campmennoscah.org](http://www.campmennoscah.org)  
[office@campmennoscah.org](mailto:office@campmennoscah.org)

## Your Light Has Come



In the introduction to his book *For All God's Worth*, theologian N.T. Wright says, "Christmas is God lighting a candle, and you don't light a candle in a room that's already full of sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are. The light shines in the darkness, says St. John, and the darkness has not overcome it."

For that reason, Wright explains, Christmas isn't a dream or a momentary escape but reality. And the same is true for Christianity. "Either Jesus is the Lord of the world and all reality makes sense in his life, or he is dangerously irrelevant to the problems and possibilities of today's world," he adds. "There is no middle ground. Either Jesus was, and is, the Word of God, or he, and the stories Christians tell about him, are lies."

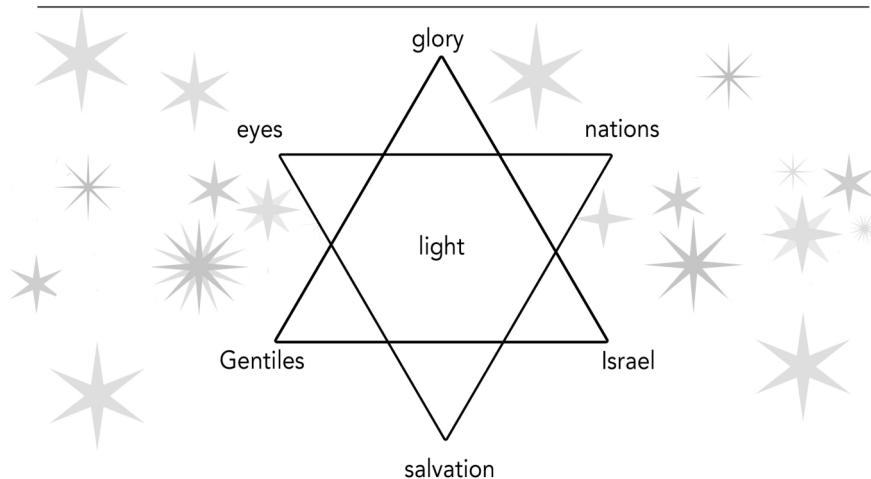




# SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my \_\_\_\_\_ have seen your \_\_\_\_\_, which you have prepared  
in the sight of all \_\_\_\_\_: a \_\_\_\_\_ for revelation to the  
\_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ of your people \_\_\_\_\_."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, light, Gentiles, glory, Israel



## Church Announcements

- The Neighbors Store pantry needs egg noodles and cereal for December.
- The deadline for the January newsletter is December 27.
- Offering schedule for December:  
**Dec. 3:** MCC Christmas Tree  
**Dec. 10:** Western District Conference  
**Dec. 17:** Mutual Aid Fund  
**Dec. 24:** Church Budget  
**Dec. 31:** MC USA
- The link for our church online library is [librarything.com/catalog/FMCHalstead](http://librarything.com/catalog/FMCHalstead).

## Treasurer's Report

Budget balance @ 01/01/23	11,449.83
Jan-September receipts	100,425.54
Jan-September expenses	(104,400.04)
Budget balance @ 09/30/23	7,475.33
October receipts	9,631.07
October expenses	(11,268.13)
Budget balance @ 10/31/23	5,838.27

**"Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall."**

—Larry Wilde

## December Calendar

Dec. 3	8:00 am	Waffle Breakfast
	10:30 am	Christmas Tree Décor.
	6:00 pm	Women's Bible Study
Dec. 4	12-6 pm	Blood Mobile
Dec. 6	7:00 pm	Choir Practice
Dec. 9	5-7 pm	Adoption & Foster Christmas Game Night
Dec. 10	6:00 pm	Women's Bible Study
	6:00 pm	Jr. & Sr. High Youth
Dec. 11	9:30 am	Women's Mission So.
Dec. 12	7:45 am	Early Birds Breakfast
	10:00 am	Prayer Group Meeting
Dec. 13	7:00 pm	Choir Practice
Dec. 18	6:00 pm	Mission Meeting
	7:00 pm	Church Council
Dec. 20	7:00 pm	Choir Practice
Dec. 24	7:00 pm	Christmas Eve Service
Dec. 26	7:45 am	Early Birds Breakfast
Dec. 31	6:00 pm	New Year's Eve Party

## Looking Ahead:

TBA	Verenike Making Day
Jan. 17	Kids Club Begins
Jan. 24	Adult Bible Study begins
Jan. 28	Annual Meeting



## Women's Mission Society

The Women's Mission Society will meet on Monday, December 11 at 9:30 am for a Christmas brunch. A devotion will be shared by Marlene Schmucker, our special guest. All women are welcome to attend!



## Prayer & Praises

- \* Pray for Dick VanWye as he recovers from a stroke.
- \* Pray for Cameron Nightingale as he is in intensive care for a variety of serious health issues. He is the nephew of James and Debbie.
- \* Pray for other unspoken health needs in our church and communities.
- \* Continue praying for the wars and conflicts that are happening worldwide. Pray for peace.
- \* As we begin Advent, pray for meaningful times to reflect on the precious gift of our Savior.
- \* Praise God for the successful Mission Supper. Around 210 people were served and contributions totaled around \$6,000 before expenses.

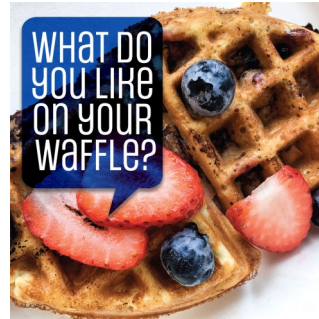


## Christmas Game Night

All foster, kinship and adoptive families are invited to a Christmas Game Night on Saturday, December 9 from 5-7 pm at the church. Tacos, games and crafts are on the agenda for the evening. If you are attending, please RSVP to Kaitlen.

A few volunteers are needed to make the evening run smoothly. If you can help, please sign up on the bulletin board.

## Annual Waffle Breakfast



The New Covenant Sunday School class invites you to our annual Waffle Breakfast on Sunday, December 3 from 8:15-9:15 am in Stauffer Hall. There will be waffles with all the expected toppings, bacon, sausage, eggs and drinks. Donations are welcome and will be used to assist Halstead community members with utility bills this winter. Invite a friend to join you and to stay for the annual Christmas tree decorating service afterwards

## MCC Christmas Tree

It's time for to decorate our Christmas tree at church! This year the items will be used as ornaments on the tree, so if you can, please bring them ready to hang. Items requested are things MCC generally runs out of to finish kits. Items needed are:

- \* Adult size toothbrushes
- \* New hand towels in dark colors
- \* New infant onesies (sizes 6-12 months)
- \* New infant sleepers (sizes 6-12 months)

The tree will be decorated on Dec. 3 following the waffle breakfast but items can be shared anytime during Advent.

## Developmental Screenings

Cooper Early Education Center provides FREE developmental screenings for children birth to age 5 who may have difficulties which interfere with development. The next screening will be held December 8 at the Cooper Early Education Center, 816 Oak Street, Newton. Please call 316-284-6510 to make an appointment.

## German Dinner

You are invited to a German Dinner Saturday, December 2 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at First Mennonite Church of McPherson, 1161 E. Ave A. The menu will be verenika with ham gravy, sausage, green beans, bohne beroggi with cream sauce, homemade sauerkraut, zwieback, and cherry moos. There will be a free will donation.



## Bethel College Events

If you're looking for some Christmas inspiration and entertainment, there are several opportunities at Bethel College for you!

**Fri., Dec. 1** - Student-directed one-act plays, 7:30 p.m., *Krehbiel Auditorium in Luyken Fine Arts Center*. Please note: May contain adult language and themes and may not be suitable for children.

**Sat., Dec. 2** – Kauffman Museum bird walk, 8 a.m. start time in the museum parking lot at the corner of Main and 27th streets (2801 N. Main St., North Newton 67117). Experienced birders lead a walk of 1-1.5 hours in Chisholm Park and on Sand Creek Trail (terrain is mostly wood-chip path and sometimes uneven/sloping).

**Sat., Dec. 2** – Five Places of Christmas, featuring Kauffman Museum and the Bethel College Women's Association at Goerz House, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Other locations are Carriage Factory Gallery, Harvey County Historical Museum and Warkentin House, all in Newton.

**Weds., Dec. 6** – Singalong to Christmas portions of Handel's *Messiah*, 11 a.m., with chamber orchestra and soloists, *Bethel College Mennonite Church*. Scores provided.

**Thurs., Dec. 7** – Gala Jazz, directed by Joel Boettger, 7:30 p.m., *Krehbiel Auditorium in Luyken Fine Arts Center*

**Sun., Dec. 10** – 37th annual Lighting of the Green, 8 p.m. on the Bethel College campus

## December Celebrations



- 1 Mette Davis
- 2 Lois Loflin
- 3 (A) Steven & Virginia Koehn
- 4 Aaron Koop
- 4 Jim Gundy
- 5 Ethan Wilcox
- 6 John Keller
- 7 Kristine Regier
- 8 Jim Loflin
- 8 Dwight Lohrenz
- 9 Bill Schowalter
- 9 Quinlan Kaufman
- 10 Mike Bollinger
- 10 Tom Rose Jr.
- 11 Melody Robinson
- 12 Lydia Regier
- 12 Sandy Lewis
- 14 Dwight Mueller
- 14 Julie Lee
- 14 Brianna Oneth
- 15 Joe Duerksen
- 15 (A) Shaun & Amanda Evanoff
- 15 (A) Tom and Bea Rose
- 16 Sara Dick
- 17 Manon Lee
- 17 Alan Franz
- 19 Duncan Haury
- 20 Thomas Koehn
- 21 Sandy Allen
- 21 James Nightingale
- 23 Josh Allen
- 24 Hannah Keiser
- 24 Scott Chandler
- 25 Larry Regier

- 26 Kirby Stucky
- 26 (A) Shaun & Sandra Whitesell
- 30 (A) John & Nancy Back
- 31 Barry Unruh
- 31 Marj Matula
- 31 Sharon Finley

## A Season of Relationship



For his Christmas album *Milk & Cookies*, worship leader David Crowder wanted to focus on the relationship aspect of the holidays and the mixed emotions involved. Deaths of loved ones, absence from home or having “no home to get back to,” he says, can wrap sadness into what’s supposed to be a joyful season.

Yet pain and separation perfectly mirror the meaning of Christmas, according to Crowder. “It’s about the created being at a distance from their Maker and ... God making a way back into communion with [them].” He adds, “I feel like most of the stuff that we experience around the season points to what is the miraculous — that there was the best gift ever given, and it was to make a way back into relationship with our Creator.”

## Nurture Ministry News

Our winter mission offering is designated for the USD 440 backpack project. It’s helpful to get our donation in early to the school district so they can plan for the next school year and order supplies. A portion of our Sunday school offering also supports Sunday school supplies and the curriculum.

The children’s Christmas Program will be shared during worship on December 17. The youth will share their bell music on Dec. 3 and the K-2 children will share their bell music on Dec. 10.

The next session of Kids Club will be January 17-March 6 from 5-6 pm. The theme is: *Go Deep: Taking Your Relationship with Jesus to the Next Level*. We will explore eight areas that can grow our faith: worship, prayer, baptism, communion, sharing our faith, Bible reading/memorization, attending church, and service. Please invite children you know ages 3 through 6 grade to participate!

The adult Wednesday study will begin on January 24. The topic is still being considered.

## Blood Mobile

Our church is hosting the December blood mobile at the Catholic Parish Center on Monday, Dec. 4 from 12-6 pm. Volunteer help is still needed for the kitchen and registration table. A sign-up genius email was sent recently but if you did not receive it and can help, please let Sara Dick know soon.

## Supper Clubs



Supper Clubs are back! The Hospitality Ministry invites you to join together with others in the church for Supper Clubs in January and February. Individuals and families can sign up to attend or host a Supper Club in your home (or at the church). Groups will be various sizes, based on how many a home can host. We can organize groups so rides can be given to those with that need. Be looking for a sign up sheet and more details in December.

## New Year’s Eve Party

Put this fun event on your calendar! Starting at 6 pm on New Year’s Eve, Dec. 31, we will gather for snacks, games and a white elephant gift exchange. Bring snacks to share and your favorite games along. If you want to participate in the gift exchange, scour your homes for a fantastic gift (anything goes!) and wrap it up in your leftover paper. It’s always a delight and a surprise to see what ends up being the sought after gift!



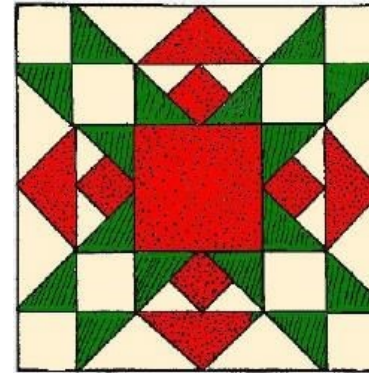


## Church Council Notes—November 27, 2023

- ⇒ The Discernment Team (Ruth) did not have a report.
- ⇒ The Vision Team (Chuck M.) hopes to complete the pastor evaluation from the focus groups by the end of January. Discussion was held regarding some ideas that were generated from the focus groups.
- ⇒ The Care Ministry (Ron D.) will meet soon. The last communion in October went well.
- ⇒ The Hospitality Ministry (Brocia) reported a foster, adoption, kinship game night has been planned for Dec. 9. The New Year's Eve party will begin at 6 pm. Supper Clubs are being organized for January and February as well as game afternoons. Welcome baskets for new Halstead residents are being discussed.
- ⇒ The Mission Ministry (Dwight) reported both the Hog Roast and the Mission Supper were well attended and made (before expenses) around \$2,600 and around \$6,000. The council had some discussion around the use of mission funds.
- ⇒ The Nurture Ministry (Debbie) reported the winter quarter mission offering will be for USD 440 backpacks. Our fall mission offering will purchase gifts for four angels and also gifts for the residents at the Halstead Health & Rehab. Our used Sunday school curriculum is donated to a group in Nebraska. Winter Wednesday Kids Club will be Jan. 17-March 6 and adult Bible study will be Jan. 24-March. 6. Advent emails will begin on Dec. 1 through Dec. 26.
- ⇒ The church treasurer (Larry R.) reported a budget balance at the end of October of \$5,838.
- ⇒ The Stewardship Ministry (James N.) reported the carpeting and painting in the alcove in front of the basements restrooms is complete. The refrigerator was repaired recently and a new garbage disposal on the south side of the kitchen was installed. When using the sink in that area, please move the faucet when not in use to the side of the sink opposite of the disposal so any drips will not go into the disposal and cause rust over time. Snow removal was completed and the 2024 budget is being prepared.
- ⇒ The Worship Ministry (Gregg) reported the theme for Advent is "Immanuel." The Christmas Eve service will be a choir cantata called "God With Us."
- ⇒ In New Business the 150th anniversary celebration is moving forward. The Flock & The Kingdom book will be updated and all parts of the book will be in one new book. The annual meeting was set for Sunday, January 28. Discussion was held regarding the future of the Mission Supper, the need for a men's group in the church as well as options for sound in the sanctuary for those hard of hearing.

*Next meeting:  
Monday, December 18 at 7:00 pm*

## MCC Comforters



### MCC Comforter update:

Thank you to all the hardworking MCC comforter makers who make beautiful, high-quality gifts to share with our partners around the world! The MCC guidelines for comforters were recently updated after receiving feedback from partners around the world. For complete MCC comforter information, including the updated guidelines, check out the Comforters page of our website ([mcc.org/get-involved/kits/comforters](https://mcc.org/get-involved/kits/comforters)). Please reach out to the Workroom Supervisor, Kate Mast ([katemast@mcc.org](mailto:katemast@mcc.org)), with any comforter questions!

### Save the date:

The MCC Comforter Blitz will be March 4-6, 2024, in Yoder, Kansas

**"With gratitude,  
optimism is sustainable."**

-Michael J. Fox

## Lights & Music!



**Music:** Prairie Bronze Handbell Ensemble (Kent Dick is a member) will share their music Friday, Dec. 1 at 6:30 & 7:15 pm at the Dyck Arboretum in Hesston and Sunday, Dec. 3 at 3 pm at First Presbyterian Church, 900 Columbus, Newton. All are welcome!



**Lights:** All area churches are invited to attend this year's PRAIRIE LIGHTS event at Dyck Arboretum in Hesston. Prairie Lights will be from 5:30-8:00 pm on Dec. 1-3. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for ages 12 and younger. Purchase tickets online at [dyckarboretum.org/prairie-lights](https://dyckarboretum.org/prairie-lights) or at the Arboretum office. Music, education and storytelling are scheduled each night from 6:15 to 8:00 pm in the Prairie Pavilion "snow globe". The Hesston scout troop will provide hot drinks for a free will donation.



**Merry Christmas!**