

## Spring Training for Christians



The word Lent comes from Middle English and German words for springtime. In light of the start of baseball season, some people call the pre-Easter season “spring training for Christians.” This fresh perspective moves away from the flawed understanding that Lent must be somber, or that giving something up for Lent is punishment for sin or a way to earn God’s favor.

As people of faith, we should never take a season off. But every so often — at least once a year! — we do well to examine where we need to get back in shape spiritually. Perhaps we will indeed opt to give something up: that swearing habit, sleeping in on Sundays, or the cost of a weekly treat so we can donate the money instead. Or maybe we’ll take on something new for Lent: a Bible study, prayer routine or service project.

Hebrews describes spiritual discipline as challenging in the moment but yielding righteousness later. The writer urges us, “Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees ... so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed” (12:11-13, ESV). May the spring training of Lent strengthen and heal us all.



## The Church Corner

February 2024

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### First Mennonite Church

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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.



## Reaching Out

During our Annual Meeting on January 28, Roger Neufeld Smith shared the results with us from our focus groups in November. While there were many good ideas shared during that time, I want to highlight one response to the question that asked for ways we would like to see the church grow. The most popular response was to increase ways that we build relationships with and engage in outreach to the community.

It is great to hear that there is a desire and interest in our congregation to grow this way. Our congregation is always very generous when raising funds for various projects. Our upcoming venenike supper is a great example of this. Funds from this meal will be given to the Halstead school district for school lunches and to the city of Halstead to help those who need assistance with their utility bills. These are worthy causes and will be a blessing to those in our community. However, I want to challenge us to think about ways we can give more than just money. How can we give ourselves?

In Mark 10:45 Jesus presents Himself as the ultimate servant. His life and sacrificial death are the epitome of service, an example for us to follow. By becoming the hands and feet of Jesus, we are to serve others selflessly, mirroring Jesus' own actions and echoing His love and compassion. What better place to do this than in our own community?

I sense within the responses offered by our focus groups a desire to not only help from the shadows but to meet people face-to-face, and to help with both our hearts and our hands. In John 13:14-15, Jesus gives us a visual of serving others with our hands by washing his disciple's feet. Afterward, he tells them to do just as he has done for them.

I think this is an exciting direction to consider how we can grow as we look for ways that we can interact more with and serve our community and neighbors. How in the coming year can we be the hands and feet of Christ to the people around us?

Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV): "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

Blessings, Pastor Steve



*"The only things we can truly give to each other are the only things that we truly need—  
an ear to listen, a heart to care, a word of  
encouragement and a hand to help."*

-Jimmy Carter

## Camp Mennoscah

- ⇒ Registration for 2024 Summer Youth Camps is open! Staff is still adjusting to the big Retreat Center project and some details are sure to have been missed—but that will not stop you from registering for a great week of camp. The theme for the summer is *Linked By Love* and looks at the many ways we experience God's love through relationships.
- ⇒ Two volunteers are needed daily to help with Retreat Center HVAC work from Monday through Friday for the next 12 weeks. Construction skills are not a requirement.
- ⇒ The phone system for Camp Mennoscah is changing. The 3014 number will no longer be a camp phone number. The main camp number of 620-297-3290 is the best number to use. The new system will not go in until after the Retreat Center HVAC project is complete. While offices are in the temporary spaces, there will be more limited access to staff by phone. Please leave a message at 620-297-3290 and we will get back to you as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Staff hours will be changing and offices have moved from the Retreat Center. These changes are happening with the start of the Retreat Center HVAC Project. Olivia may be pulled to help with the HVAC project, and some staff will also be working off-site.

Contact camp or register:  
(620) 297-3290

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

## Opportunities!

The Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale is just around the corner (April 12-13). Donations of cars, trucks, motorcycles, RV's, etc. are welcome. Be thinking of what you can make or donate for the general auction, silent auction, quilt auction or for the meals. Alan & Marilyn Mueller are our church liaisons if you have questions.

Western District Conference invites you to a come-and-go Open House on Feb. 10 from 10am to 1 pm at the WDC office, 2517 North Main, North Newton. There will also be a WDC library open house and book sale.

A Dismantling Racism Action Team is being formed in WDC. This group will follow up on the recommendations of the WDC antiracism audit team. Please contact Heidi Regier Kreider [heidirk@mennowdc.org](mailto:heidirk@mennowdc.org) to sign-up or for more information.

Buhler Mennonite Church is hosting their annual Chicken Noodle Soup Supper on Feb. 14. Orders are accepted through Feb. 2 at 620-664-7699 (call or text). Pick-up is from 4-6 pm at the church. Freewill donations accepted.





# Did You Know...?

Those of us who have been attending at FMC for a long time likely take for granted many of the things that happen or are available at our church. As a reminder and for those who are new, here are some things that you might enjoy knowing:

- ◆ The bi-monthly devotional *The Upper Room* is available on the literature table (outside of the library) and on the small ushers table in the narthex. Please feel free to take one! Other resources are available on the literature table as well.
- ◆ Publications like the Mennonite World Review, college newsletters, Mennonite Mission Network News and others are available to read in the church library. They are located on the west wall at the bottom of the bookcase.
- ◆ Church mailboxes are available for all who regularly attend. Please find your weekly bulletin there as well as other communication and for others of us to add cards, meeting minutes, etc. If you don't have one, please let Debbie know.
- ◆ The monthly newsletter (this publication) is mailed at the end of each month. If you are not receiving it, please get in touch with Debbie. In the months ahead it may become an electronic version with only those requesting a paper copy receiving it that way. Keep watching for more details about that!
- ◆ Copies of the church directory notebook are available in the church office if you are needing one. When updates are made you will receive those in your church mailbox to add to your notebook. Please keep Debbie informed of changes to your address, email, phone, etc. Copies of the

annual reports, which include the weekly offering schedule, were placed in your church mailbox if you missed the meeting.

- ◆ Children from around 2nd grade on up are sharing their talents by being taper lighters during worship. If your child would like to join the rotation, please talk with Melanie.
- ◆ Opportunities to serve in many capacities in the church are available! The Discernment Team of Ruth, Sara S. and John Will can assist you in finding just the right place to serve!
- ◆ Our church service is live streamed every Sunday (and occasionally for other special services). You can find the service on our church Facebook page. (First Mennonite Church of Halstead)

There are likely many other things not listed here that could be. If you think of something that would be of interest or help to others, please let Debbie know and they will be added in next month's newsletter! We are so thankful for all who choose to worship here and be part of our community. All are welcome and we encourage you to invite others to join us!

## The Realm of the Impossible

The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something and enter God's realm, where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for his almighty power. Nothing is too small for his love.

—Corrie ten Boom



## Church Announcements

1. The Neighbors Store pantry needs saltine crackers and pork and beans.
2. The deadline for the March newsletter is February 26.
3. Offering schedule for February:  
**Feb. 4:** MC USA  
**Feb. 11:** Church Budget  
**Feb. 18:** Western District Conference  
**Feb. 25:** Mennonite Biblical Seminary
4. 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.-November receipts	116,932.93
Jan.-November expenses	(125,796.02)
Budget balance @ 12/30/23	2,586.74
December receipts	19,919.75
December expenses	(13,893.23)
Budget balance @ 12/31/23	8,613.26



## February Calendar

Feb. 1	7:00 pm	Bell Concert at South Hutchinson
	7:00 pm	Girl Scouts
Feb. 6	7:45 am	Early Birds Breakfast
Feb. 7	5:00 pm	Kids Club
	6:00 pm	Supper
	6:45 pm	Adult Bible Study
Feb. 10	8:00 am	Boy Scouts Pinewood Derby
Feb. 12	9:30 am	WMS
Feb. 13	7:00 pm	VBS Meeting
Feb. 14	5:00 pm	Kids Club
	6:00 pm	Supper
	7:00 pm	Ash Wednesday Service
Feb. 17	4:30 pm	Verenike Supper
Feb. 18	3:00 pm	Game Afternoon
	6:00 pm	Mom's Group
Feb. 19	6:00 pm	Nurture & Mission
	7:00 pm	Church Council
Feb. 20	7:45 am	Early Birds Breakfast
Feb. 21	5:00 pm	Kids Club
	6:00 pm	Supper
	6:45 pm	Adult Bible Study
Feb. 25	6:00 pm	Mom's Group
	6:00 pm	Jr. & Sr. High Youth
Feb. 28	5:00 pm	Kids Club
	6:00 pm	Supper
	6:45 pm	Adult Bible Study

## Women's Mission Society

The Women's Mission Society will meet on Monday, February 12 at 9:30 am for a work day at Linda's downtown studio. All women are welcome to attend!

## Game Afternoon

An afternoon of playing games will be held from 3-5 pm on February 18. The Hospitality Ministry is hosting. More details to come!

# Prayer & Praises

- \* Continue praying for Cameron Nightingale as he continues his battle with pancreatitis and the long rehabilitation he will require. He is the nephew of James and Debbie.
- \* Continue to pray for Robin Hoss, Pauline’s daughter, as she continues her recovery from back surgery.
- \* Pray for Chuck & Ruth who will be finishing their term at Jubilee in a few weeks.
- \* Pray for the Verenike Supper on Feb. 17 as we prepare to host many people in our church and with carry-out. Pray for the school and the city who will be receiving the funds that they will be used to bless those in need.
- \* Praise God for our church and the annual meeting as we shared what we have accomplished in 2023 and look forward to how God will use us in 2024.

# Ash Wednesday

The Lenten season begins February 14. We will have an Ash Wednesday worship service at 7 pm. Please be considering how you can prepare your heart for the season of Lent and join us for a special service that evening. Supper will be available for all at 6 pm. The adult Bible study will not meet that evening.

# Verenike Supper

It’s almost time for the annual Verenike Supper! The supper will be held February 17 from 4:30-7 pm with both dine-in and carry-out options available. Over 2500 Verenike were prepared in January so lots of food items are needed to complement them. Please see the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board for how you can help and for food donations. The money raised this year will support the USD 440 lunch program and the City of Halstead to support those in need of utility assistance.

# Wednesday Nights

Kids Club has been going strong with over 40 children involved this year. Praise God! The program will continue through March 6 from 5-6 pm. Supper is available for all from 6-6:45 pm. The adults began a study called “Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools” and will also continue through March 6 at 6:45 pm. All are welcome to join anytime!



# February Celebrations



- |        |                           |
|--------|---------------------------|
| 1      | Karen Colbert             |
| 1      | Carolyn Whitesell         |
| 2      | Kent Dick                 |
| 2      | Shirley Rodenberg         |
| 4      | Don Haury                 |
| 5      | Hannah Unruh              |
| 8      | Rebecca Regier            |
| 9      | Matthew Rodenberg         |
| 9      | Jessica Berger            |
| 10     | Kyle Regier               |
| 12     | Leila Dalke               |
| 12     | Teresa Gundy              |
| 13     | Cindy Siemens             |
| 13     | Mandy Evanoff             |
| 13     | Andrew Kaldenbach         |
| 15     | Steve Koehn               |
| 19     | David Siemens             |
| 21 (A) | Duane & Mary Cummings     |
| 21     | Brett Berger              |
| 22     | Kaitlen Ortman            |
| 23     | Mike Linscheid            |
| 26     | Marie Regier              |
| 26     | Michael Groom             |
| 28     | Ron Auernheimer           |
| 28 (A) | Dwight & Sharenne Lohrenz |
| 28     | Brocia Mueller            |
| 28     | Daniel Rodenberg          |

# God Shaped Hole



Have you ever neared the completion of a jigsaw puzzle, only to discover that a piece or two is missing? That’s an apt visual for what it’s like to live without God. Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century philosopher, observed: “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

Centuries earlier, St. Augustine proclaimed “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” And in the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes expounded on the meaninglessness of earthly striving and material pursuits. Only God’s Spirit can fill our emptiness and satisfy our eternal longings.

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,” says Jesus in John 10:10 (NIV). He alone provides the solution for emptiness. What comfort to be filled with — and to find our fulfillment in — our Savior!

**No Regrets!...** If you’ve ever regretted a big purchase and wondered if you could return it, you’re familiar with the nagging feeling of buyer’s remorse. Thankfully, our Redeemer never experienced that. As a church sign proclaims, “When Jesus bought you, he never had buyer’s remorse. And he never will!” To Jesus, the payment of suffering and death was well worth the payoff. “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2, NIV).

