

# The Messenger

December 2015 Edition



## Advent 2015: Freedom Bound

The Advent season is a time of waiting in expectation for God's coming into our world. We are again using the Advent materials provided in *Leader* magazine which is published by MennoMedia. The theme for this Advent season is "Freedom Bound." We live in the paradox that we are both bound and free, on a march to freedom but encumbered by the burden and sin we carry; we are carrying the scars of struggle but living with a new hope. God's freedom takes us down pathways of justice, mercy, trust, and love. "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths" (Psalm 25:4).

Whether from imprisonment in Roman jails (Paul's letters), or from exile in Babylon (the context of the prophets), or from the second-class citizenship of Jews in first century Palestine ruled by Rome (the gospels), our Advent-Epiphany Scriptures speak to us of people struggling to live in difficult political, social, and personal situations. In our North American context, it is impossible to think of freedom without bringing to mind the experience of African slaves brought to our continent against their will. The desire for dignity, release from unfair labor conditions, freedom from physical violence and the right to advocate for change marked the Civil Rights Movement. Living with that legacy of hurt and pain with those who suffered most takes us on a journey of solidarity and healing.

When we hear the Advent Scriptures within this context of longing for freedom, then Jeremiah's words in the first week of Advent to a beleaguered people take on new meaning. "I will fulfill the promise . . . [to] execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 33:15). Jesus also inspires in his hearers a sense of God's inbreaking freedom when he urges his listeners to an alert activism for "your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).

This Advent theme of "Freedom Bound" invites us to see with bifocal vision: to have one eye on ourselves and the world and another eye on the Scriptural stories that, with the Spirit's help, can enliven and deepen our faith. Advent is typically seen as a season of waiting, but with all that God has yet to do through us we cannot be satisfied with a passive waiting. Our waiting is active, full of energy, lamenting, mindful of suffering, and hope-filled. Advent is a time set aside for spiritual renewal, a time to develop a more robust and resilient faith.

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### Vision: Healing & Hope

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

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Freedom is coming! The restless prophets of old, John the Baptist, Elizabeth and John, Mary and Joseph, and Jesus himself sing this same song of God's longing for mercy and justice for all. Will we join them singing on the paths of justice, mercy, trust, and love? Will we confront the parts of ourselves that keep us from hearing the clarion call to freedom? To his listeners in the Gospel of John who heed his teaching, Jesus says, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). What truth are we being asked to see more clearly? What obstacles in God's path to freedom are we being asked to put aside so that we may abound in love? Then, alive in the Spirit, we too may become communities of joy and peace sharing God's song of grace with the world.

"Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved" (Psalm 80:7). Our Scripture texts shine a light on the sins that bind us; they point the spotlight on those on the margins and call us to the gospel way of freedom. We invite you to set aside some time each week of Advent to meditate and reflect on the scriptures that will be used in our Sunday worship services.

*We also want to invite the congregation to an Open House at our house (504 East Main) on Sunday, December 20 from 4-7 pm. We are grateful for our church family and wish to extend our thanks to you by opening our home for a relaxed time of conversation and snacks during this holiday time.*

May we all experience God's special blessing during this season of welcoming Jesus.

*Pastors Dennis & Dianne*

## Budget Update

as of 11/22/15

2015 Income Budget	=	\$176,252
Money received as of 11/22	=	149,081
Money needed by 12/31/15	=	27,171

**Giving per Sunday needed  
to meet our goal is \$5,434.**

We are grateful for everyone who is able to give in order for us to meet our goal.

The holiday season is normally a time of joy, but when someone you love has died, it can be a time of loneliness and pain. To help ease the pain and provide some comfort, Chiles-Laman Funeral & Cremation Services is offering a **Tree of Remembrance Memorial Service**.

On **Sunday, December 7th** at the Centre at Bluffton, 601 N. Main Street, Bluffton all families in attendance will receive a free glass ornament personalized with the name and dates of their loved one that will be placed on the Christmas Tree. Families may begin arriving at 1:00 PM followed by a brief memorial service at 2:00 PM. At the conclusion of the service, the ornament is yours to take home. Additional ornaments will be available for purchase. If you would like additional ornaments please call prior to the service date to order so that we may have them ready for you.

Chiles-Laman Funeral & Cremation Services presents the Tree of Remembrance Memorial Service as a gift to the community. **All families are welcome regardless of which funeral home provided the services.** Light refreshments will be provided following the service.



# December 2015



***Advent: Freedom Bound***

**Sunday, November 29—Advent 1**

***The Path of Justice***

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:14-16,  
Psalm 25:1-10

**Sunday, December 6—Advent 2**

***The Path of Mercy***

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4;  
Luke 1:68-79

**Sunday, December 13—Advent 3**

***The Path of Trust***

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20;  
Isaiah 12:1-6

**Sunday, December 20—Advent 4**

***The Path of Love***

Scriptures: Micah 5:2-5a;  
Luke 1:39-56

**Thursday, December 24**

***Christmas Eve Candlelight Service***

**Sunday, December 27**

***Singing the Story of Christmas***



## MCC School and Hygiene Kits

Grace church has a tradition of putting together MCC school and hygiene kits every year. ..125 of each kind. In the past we collected the money to purchase items for the kits through our blessing bags. Things were purchased, kits were filled, and bags and money, for MCC to ship these bags, were sent to MCC.

**This year everyone in the church family will have an opportunity to not only give money toward this project but also help purchase some of the items needed for the kits.**

You can give your **Winter quarter Sunday School offering and noisy offering** in two ways. You can give money and you can purchase items for the school and/or hygiene kits as your offering. Items needed for the kits will be on ornaments on a tree in the foyer. Take an ornament, purchase the amount of the item listed on it, and give those items as your offering by placing them in a box by the tree.

Items that will be needed are: 70 sheet spiral notebooks, unsharpened pencils, package of 12 colored pencils, large pencil eraser, adult size toothbrush in original packaging, large bar of soap in original packaging.

57,640 hygiene kits shipped last year to Jordan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria, Serbia, Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea), Honduras, Lebanon, Ukraine, Iraq, Canada, Ethiopia and the U.S.



**Mennonite  
Central  
Committee**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Friday, February 12, 2016**

***Labor of Love***

**Assembling kits together  
as a church family.**

## Central District NEWS

*Dear Mennonite Women of Central District Conference,*

*I write as your Executive Committee President, and I'm excited to welcome Amy, Janet, and Phoebe as new members of our committee. We will get together three times this year and we look forward to new friendships.*

*We will plan the women's' banquet at CDC in Columbus, an event you won't want to miss! Be sure to sign up when you register for the Central District Conference Gathering in June. All women are invited.*

*Each year we have the enjoyable task of giving donations on behalf of Mennonite Women CDC. This is a meaningful process. Sure, we could give money as individuals, but we have a stronger voice together as we support our institutions which value our mission to encourage women in leadership. Please send your donation to Mennonite Women CDC so that we can continue our collective mothering of the church.*

*Women young and old, near and far, can keep in touch by joining our Facebook group "Central District Conference Mennonite Women." Share your activities and ideas, and we will share information about resources Mennonite Women USA creates to encourage and inspire our sisterhood network.*

*Blessings and Peace,  
Wendy Chappell-Dick*

### **Mission and Vision of CDC Mennonite Women**

Our mission is to encourage women of Central District Conference in our faith in God through Jesus Christ by fellowshipping with one another, by supporting each other, by nurturing our spirituality and our gifts and by providing opportunities for service.

Our vision is to invite women across generations, cultures, and places to share and honor our stories, care for each other, and express our prophetic voice boldly as we seek to follow Christ.

Central District conference Mennonite Women is affiliated with Mennonite Women USA.

We are your Committee!

Wendy Chappell-Dick, President ([wendy@mennofolk.org](mailto:wendy@mennofolk.org))

Deb Martins, Secretary ([djsmartens@msn.com](mailto:djsmartens@msn.com))

Rosalie Grove, Treasurer ([rosalieg1@msn.com](mailto:rosalieg1@msn.com))

Cyneatha Milsaps, Past President ([cyneatha@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cyneatha@sbcglobal.net))

Janet Liechty, First Vice President ([liechtymartens@comcast.net](mailto:liechtymartens@comcast.net))

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## **Abounding in Love. . .Abiding in Grace**

Mark your calendars for the 2016 Regional Gathering

**CDC East Regional Gathering: Mar 5, 2016 at Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship, Berne, Ind**

## “News Among Our Members & Friends”

Submitted By: Shirley Sommer

### Happenings in and around Grace...

◆ **Sunday, November 1** — The sermon was “I Want to See” with scripture of Mark 10:46-52. Bartimaeus just wanted to see, very simple. Jesus will always be there for you. Jesus’ answer was, “your faith has made you well.” Our littlest children’s choir, the Cherubic Choir, sang, “Jesus wants me for a Sunbeam,” and “This Little Light of Mine.” They had flashlights and shone them around when singing and was very effective! **Joyce Schumacher** directed them and **Rudi Kauffman** accompanied them with his guitar. The fall arrangement on the Communion Table was beautiful!

◆ **Thursday, November 5** — This was a knotting comforts day. About 9 women present and they finished 13 comforts and enjoyed a delicious noon meal along with the fellowship.

◆ **Friday, November 6** — Maple Crest held their yearly Pie Baking Contest for which **Lydia Lugibihl** and **Ollie Lugibihl** both baked pies. **Lydia** won third place with her pecan pie and **Ollie** made a black walnut pie which **Keith** bid on and got it. **Norma Sommer** baked a Shoo-fly pie using her mother’s (**Lucille Bucher**) recipe.

◆ **Sunday, November 8** — **Pastor Dennis** gave the sermon entitled, “The Widow’s Offering” with the scripture from Mark 12:43-44. He reminded us how the widow was in poverty but gave everything she had which was more than others who had much. Following the sermon we sang the hymn, “Take my Life and Let it Be,” which was so appropriate. Following the service, the congregation and guests were invited to the fellowship hall for lunch provided by the **MYF** consisting of “haystacks” with ice cream and cookies for dessert. What a great meal and all seemed to enjoy it very much.

In the evening **Fred Suter** had a program giving us an update on the Congo Water Project that he oversees in Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo). A few facts he mentioned were weight of water that African women carry on their heads is 40 pounds. Households in rural Africa spend an average of 26% of their time fetching water and women generally do it all. Lastly, Africans living in rural areas use 2 1/2 gallons of water a day whereas Americans use 100 gallons a day. It was presented to folks from Grace and First Mennonite or others who attended.

◆ **Sunday, November 15** — **Pastor Dianne** preached today, “Falling Stones.” She used the scripture, Mark 13:1-8 for the basis of her sermon. Dianne mentioned how one survives with the falling stones in the present: be aware no one leads you astray; follow Jesus; be calm; be firm and be faithful. God is always present and in control!

**Grace Notes Choir**, directed by **Carolyn McDaniel** had the worship music for us. They are few in number but loud enough you can hear them sing and proud of them being in front of everyone. They did a nice job!

◆ **Friday, November 20, BOOK SALE & MYF BAKE SALE** — As usual, a great variety of bake goods were available to buy and many different items. A hard decision what to buy but usually one buys one or two. The book display was unbelievable like she usually has! Great Christmas gifts for young or old. Personally, I have a nice time visiting others there and the fellowship we share along with buying several books.

### December Anniversaries

December 15, 1945—Francis & Mary Geiger (70 years)

27, 1968—Terry & Beth Schey

9, 1972—Tim & Cindy Luginbill

15, 1979—Ted & Beth Diller

20, 1980—Guy & Barb Verhoff

21, 1985—Gordon & Jodi Diller

19, 1998—Brent & Heather Clum

15, 2000—Tom & Christie Suter



◆ **Saturday, November 21, PANCAKE & SAUSAGE BREAKFAST** — The Today's Disciples' class prepared and served the breakfast. Proceeds were for Pastor Max Villatoro from Iowa City, Iowa Mennonite Church. The book sale continued plus a few items for sale from the Ten Thousand Villages store and Joan Niswander was there to autograph her new book, "Reflections from Maple Crest Pond."

◆ **Sunday, November 22, MISSION SUNDAY Celebration** — Guest speakers, **Jerrell & Jane Ross Richer** of Ecuador and Goshen, Ind. shared during the Sunday School hour of their work in Ecuador including photos. **Jerrell** preached during the worship service and **Jane** shared the children's story. In Ecuador, they support educational programs with indigenous pastors and church leaders, and help with community development initiatives. This program is with Mennonite Mission Network. They work in Ecuador for the half the year and then he teaches at Goshen College the other half of the year. During the sermon, **Jerrell** left us all with the mission to tell someone something about how God has worked around you or with you this coming week. At noon we were served a meal in the fellowship hall with a Latin American flavor. The tables were festive looking. (Thanks to **Joyce Schumacher** for the decorations.)

### Other items of interest involving our church family

- **Laura Fish**, daughter of **Jenny & Jeff Fish**, will graduate from Ohio State University in December.
- **Ryan Johnson-Evers** (Muskego, Wisconsin) earned a Honorable Mention by coaches to the Heartland Conf. Men's Soccer team. He attends our church with other Bluffton University students, plays saxophone in the Jazz and Concert bands, and sings in the choirs. Congratulations, **Ryan**!
- **Meghan Gibson**, daughter of **Sarah Sprunger**, is a freshman at Bluffton University and a very busy young lady! She was in the drama production last month, plays percussion for the Concert & Jazz bands and sings in Camerata and other choirs. During all of these activities, she ended up breaking her thumb at a band rehearsal but had it set and continued to play. She truly loves her music! Wishing her the best in all of her musical career!
- **Jodi & Gordon Diller** returned home safe and sound from their trip to Amsterdam and Switzerland on Saturday Nov 14th. **Gordon** said they had nice weather, lots of food, beautiful scenery and was just GREAT!
- **Terry & Beth Schey** spent about a week visiting her mother, **Rachel Rupp** in Moundridge, Kansas. They were joined by her sister, **Nancy** and husband, **Mark**, along with her brother **Jim** and his wife, **Chris** from Oregon. The weather was nice but they had rain to drive through going and returning home. A wonderful time with her mother and family plus enjoyed an early Thanksgiving meal all together before they departed to their homes.
- Again, we have had several of our members recovering from surgeries or illness: **Pat Meyer** had back surgery; **Wendell Badertscher** recovering from shoulder repair and now dealing with the pain that goes with it; **Jodi Diller** recovering from pneumonia and **Dylan Sommer** still dealing with healing to his lungs and trying to gain energy to fight it all. Prayers are needed for all and patience!

## Grace Birthdays



Grace Mennonite Church would like to wish Happy Birthday to the following members...

### December

- 1 Jenny Baumgartner
- 2 Shirley Sommer
- 5 Mark Huber, Erin Suderman
- 6 Gordon Diller
- 8 Juli Suter

- 9 Don Basinger (83 years old), Scott Kempf
- 13 Annalise Nisly
- 15 Steve Smucker
- 19 Gary Augsburg, Carolyn McDaniel
- 21 Frank Gibbs
- 31 Anne Reichenbach (95 years old)

## Christmas at Grace

### Christmas Breakfast

*Sunday, Dec 20, 9:30-10:15 am*

*Come for breakfast with your church family in the Fellowship Hall*



### Christmas Open House

*Sunday, Dec 20, 4:00-7:00 pm*

*Pastors' Dennis & Dianne invite the congregation to their house (504 East Main) to enjoy snacks and conversation. Come and go as you wish.*

### Christmas Eve Service

*Thursday, Dec 24, 7:00 pm*

*Come celebrate the birth of Christ in this candlelight service which will include scripture, special musical selections, a children's story and singing of Christmas carols.*

*Our Special Christmas Eve Offering will be taken to support three organizations. We also invite everyone to bring nonperishable food items.*



**Deadline for the next Messenger is December 27, 2015.**