

The Osler Mennonite Church

December 2023 Newsletter



Our Statement of Purpose

The purpose of Osler Mennonite Church is to be a supportive community in which people can meet God through worship and fellowship.

We seek to teach
an Anabaptist understanding of scripture,
led by the Spirit to imitate Christ in word and deed.

We strive to nurture faith and discipleship,
committing ourselves individually and corporately
to respond to the needs of others.

*We gather on Treaty Six Lands, Nehiyaw Territory,
and the Homeland of the Métis*

Osler Mennonite Church
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Volume XVI Eleventh Edition
A WELCOMING COMMUNITY FOR PEACE
Following Jesus on the Path of Reconciliation

Lighting the Advent Wreath at Home

“The people who walked in darkness/have seen a great light...” (Isaiah 9:1) Our lives are an “advent,” a “coming” from our time to the time of God. We live our advents in the eternal hope and expectation of the ever-burning light of God’s risen One, the perfect Light who shatters the darkness of separation.

The Advent wreath originated from the custom of German and Northern European communities of fashioning wreaths or wheels of candles to light their homes during the cold, dark days of winter. By the nineteenth century, the Advent wreath had become the devotion we know today. In our own busy whirl of shopping, decorating, cooking and celebrating during the holiday season, the Advent wreath is a beautiful and simple ritual for individuals, families and communities to keep the real meaning of Christmas before us.

The four candles of the Advent wreath represent the four weeks of Advent and the thousands of years that the people of God awaited the promised Messiah. The candles are purple, the liturgical colour of penance and prayer that marks the Advent season (one of the candles may be rose for the Third Sunday of Advent, traditionally known as Mary’s Sunday.). Each week, one candle is lit until all four are aglow on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24.

The round wreath itself symbolizes the eternity of God throughout human history. Evergreen branches are often used in decorating the wreath, reminds us of the evergreen or eternal life of God in Christ.

For a daily candle lighting at breakfast or supper:

Candle lighter: The night is far spent; the day draws near.

All: *The light of God has dawned, shattering the darkness.*

Reading: Romans 13:11b-12. (May be best read at breakfast!)

It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep! For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the light. (*Pause for reflection.*)

L: As we await the coming of Jesus, the Light and Word of God, let us join our hearts in prayer that prayer and our interactions may be the light that shatters the winter darkness, we pray

All: *Christ, be our light.*

L: That all our Christmas preparations will proclaim the joy of the Saviour's coming, we pray...

All: Christ, be our light.

L: That the risen Jesus may bring our friends and relatives to dwell with him, (especially...) we pray...

All: Christ, be our light.

L: Holy God, we await the dawning of your Light, Jesus Christ. May his coming dispel the darkness of hatred and violence, of fear and despair. Illuminate our home with the light of Christ's peace and mercy, that our house may be a place of welcome to all who knock on our door and come to our table. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Light to the world.

All: Amen.

Advent Services: In our Scriptures, we hear the stories of those who have been waiting, waiting, waiting to hear from God, who have felt the silence of God as they long for restoration, for vindication, for hope. We, too, have been those who wait. When we watch the news, when we hear of wars and rumors of war, when children don't have enough to eat, when cancers and illnesses impact lives, we cry out with our spiritual ancestors, "How long, O Lord?" How long must we wait? The answer is not forthcoming, yet we know: God is with us in the waiting.

Calendar

First Advent-December 3, 10:00 a.m. Hanging of the Greens,
Luke Bushman preaching

Second Advent-December 10, 10:00 a.m. The Mess of Incarnation,
Patty Friesen preaching

Christmas Program-December 17, 10:00 a.m.

Candlelight Christmas Eve December 24, 7:00 p.m. only

New Year's Eve December 31, 10:00 a.m. Communion

11:00 a.m. Borscht & New Year's Cookies

Bring crokinole and other board games

Christmas Prayer by Kate Bowler

Blessed are we who wait with bated breath. who wait for something new to be born —for new hope or new joy or new life.

Blessed are we
whose patience grows thinner by the day.
We who are tired of the world as it is
—in all of its heartache and loss and hopelessness. We who want more.
More hope. More joy. More life.

Blessed are we who sit here,
waiting
at the still point between desire and expectation. We who are making
room for more of you,
oh God, this Christmas.

Surprise us with joy in the midst of the mundane, abundance in the
midst of so much scarcity, presence in the midst of the Christmas chaos.

*“May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with
hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

—Romans 15:13 (NIV)

We have quieted our souls to listen,
to wait for you, oh God,
for your Word-Made-Flesh is life to us.
Amen.

Need some Christmas Music in your Life? – here’s some ideas:
December 10, Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Saskatoon Men’s Chorus at Knox
United Church (Doug McKinnell)
December 17, Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Chamber Singers at Knox United
Church (Michelle McKinnell)
December 15, Friday, 7:30 p.m. Handel’s Messiah at Knox United
Church (Kathryn, & Lynette Janzen)

Pastor Patty's Ponderings

I'm not ready for Advent and ironically Advent is about being ready for the coming of Christ and I'm not ready for that either! I'm psychologically/spiritually still back in August in Missinippe relishing my women's canoe trip - warm summer days of swimming in the lake and laughing around the campfire. It's where I'd like to stay forever and do so in my mind when I feel stressed. I'm trying to fast forward mentally and spiritually to Advent but am not quite there yet. I'm thankful for the structure of the church year to help me move through nature's seasons. I can't linger in the glory days of summer. I have to enter these darkest days of winter whether or not I'm ready for them. Advent with its growing number of lit candles helps me move forward and open up to the gifts of Christ's coming.

I'm thankful for our church as we conclude the church year with extra giving, Christmas choir and glorious services. May we all experience measures of grace and peace and joy even if we don't feel ready for them or can even see or hear them.

Waiting on a Heartbeat by Clint Smith

The doctor says you are there
Even though we cannot hear you
And you know what they say about the tree
Falling in the forest
And I know I have never heard a tree
I could not see
But I have seen trees I could not hear
Little one
They tell me you are half the size of a fingernail
And when I hear that I look down at my cuticles
And imagine you sitting there
Telling me dad it's going to be okay
There is nothing
to worry about

There is joy in being
A father to a mystery

There is grace in observing the tulip
And knowing it will bud before your eyes

Little one
You are my daily reminder

That you do not go to a garden to watch
The flowers grow

You go to give thanks
For what has already bloomed.

Luke's Little Lessons (*Lies?*)

Christmas is fast approaching. A season that for me means Eggnog and the 1960's Claymation Rudolph. A season to listen to the August Burns Red Christmas album (Sleddin Hill), and hang up colorful lights. A season marked by parties, family gatherings, and beautiful church services. Christmas for many is also a season that means sadness. Loneliness seems to be amplified at the holidays, and once filled chairs at the table that are now vacant feel haunting. This season has a wide range of emotions. Some are happy, some are sad, and some are on a complex rollercoaster of both. I hope this season that if you are missing someone you find someone to talk to (feel free to contact us at church if this is you). And I pray that we may all be sensitive to the needs of those around us. May God give us extra intuition to know when someone needs a friend. When I was younger I once had a very sad Christmas, and I am forever thankful for my little brother, who let me sleep on his floor because I did not want to be alone. I hope everyone has someone like that in sad times.

Album Recommendation: I have really liked recommending albums. This month, I recommend: Christmas Collection, Volume One by Sleeping at Last.

Mennonite Church SK Leadership Assembly on Camps
At Eigenheim, Saturday November 25
Report by Patty Friesen, Luke Bushman

Due to high liability but low involvement in daily operations of church-owned but not church-run MC SK Camps - the MC SK Camps Subcommittee proposes:

1. Not selling camps.
2. Incorporating camps (like RJC was incorporated decades ago)
3. Paying costs for incorporation.
4. Leasing land to camps.

Pros: more intentional relationship between MC SK and camps like with RJC, camp board independence to diversify board members and form other alliances with environmental groups, etc. with broader donor base.

Cons: less control/ theological influence on camps (which is limited anyhow). Elim and Youth Farm more financially viable than Shekinah due to other income streams.

We love our camps and see these proposals as more operationally responsible. Feel free to talk to Patty and Luke, MC SK about these proposals. More to come at MC SK Annual Delegate Session March 8/9 North Star Mennonite Church, Drake.

MCC

Petition for Peace @ mcc.org.

Dear Prime Minister, I lament the unfolding tragedy in Palestine and Israel and mourn the lives that have been lost already. I oppose the use of violence as a response to injustice or as retaliation for violence. I urge world leaders to encourage immediate de-escalation, including calling for a ceasefire, and hold all parties to the same standard of international law regarding the protection of civilians and respect for human rights.

As you consider how to respond, I ask that you: (1) Urge restraint and de-escalation, including calling for a ceasefire and release of hostages, rather than support militarized responses that will only increase violence, leading to more civilian deaths and a worsened humanitarian crisis. Urge all actors to prioritize the preservation of human life above all else. (2) Support funding and urge access to humanitarian aid, particularly for residents in Gaza, and all those impacted by conflict. (3) Hold all parties accountable for upholding international law, including by opposing the bombing and killing of civilians by both Hamas and Israel. (4) Work with the international community to address underlying systems of oppression that create circumstances ripe for violence, including the military occupation of Palestine, the Gaza blockade, lack of equal rights and self-determination, and the inability to meet basic needs. I urge you to work constructively toward a future where all Palestinians and Israelis can live in peace.

MDS NEWS

Hello Church,

Many times, the disasters we respond to are large. That was in the case in Cape Breton, where we repaired 44 homes damaged by Hurricane Fiona. But sometimes it's just one house we fix up or rebuild. That's what's happening in Alberta following a tornado in Carstairs.

Led by the Alberta Unit, we are building a new home for a multigenerational household of Elisa Humphreys, her son, daughter-in-law and their family.

Both families lost their houses when the tornado struck on July 1. When Elisa returned to her property after the tornado passed by, "everything was gone," she said. "Vanished. All there was was a debris field. Even the fence posts were sucked right out of the ground." (You can read the full story about the tornado in the link below.)

The community turned out to clean up the property, but now MDS is providing them with a new home where they will live together. To make that possible, a total of \$120,000 is needed for materials. You are invited to be part of the rebuilding effort by donating to help Elisa and her family return home. You can give at <https://mds.org/donate-canada> or

send a cheque to MDS Canada, 200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, R3P 2J1.

Whether it's many homes or just one, disasters still have a profound impact on those who experience them. And whether it's many homes or just one, MDS is glad to respond to help people get home. Thanks for helping bring families home.

Executive Director
Mennonite Disaster Service Canada

P.S. While our service in Canada has ended for the year, MDS still needs volunteers in the U.S. If you can serve this fall or winter, go to our website for more information or to sign up. www.mds.org.

**Helping others "what the Lord
is leading us to do"**

For Abe Wiebe of Winkler, Manitoba, service with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in Cape Breton was a way to honour his father. "My dad was a servant of the Lord all his life," he said of his father, also named Abe.

The senior Wiebe was a minister in the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church for 45 years and served on the Mennonite Central Committee Canada board.

"He instilled that same passion for service in me," Wiebe said. "He showed us that is what we should be doing with our lives."

MDS Early Response explained

Early Response, which begins when search-and-rescue is complete, can be removing trees, tarping houses, or mucking out houses after a flood. If a roof is partially blown off, we may tarp that roof to mitigate further damage. Or a fallen tree might be resting on the house, and we might saw the tree off, then tarp the roof so the rain doesn't come in.

Join the MDS Annual Celebration!

Join us for the Annual Celebration, February 23 & 24 in Fresno, California. Be inspired by stories about volunteers making a difference across the U.S. and Canada.

For more information and more stories, go to the MDS website

CPT

Celebrate Palestine and experience the spirit of resistance and solidarity this Advent!

As many Christian communities anticipate Advent, join us daily to discover profiles of Palestinians who embody resistance through impactful art, music, and poetry. Explore narratives of strength and unity, featuring individuals dedicated to cultivating solidarity with Palestine. Let's celebrate the season with interconnectedness and shared stories, working together toward a free Palestine!

While CPT continues its vital work on the ground in Palestine we invite you to engage in Advent content highlighting Palestinian resilience in the fight for freedom and justice. Unite in raising awareness and supporting initiatives for an end to the occupation and lasting peace. Together, let's weave a narrative of strength, hope, and solidarity for a better future.

Embrace the spirit of Palestine Solidarity with CPT's daily celebration from December 1st - 25th. Each day reveals diverse contributions from our CPT teams.

Immerse yourself in radical love through captivating stories. Share joy through Palestinian resistance artwork, inspire hope through meaningful actions, and work towards peace through solidarity's harmonies. May this December be a month of connection and celebration centered around Palestinian resistance and solidarity.

As Advent brings anticipation and excitement, connect with us by taking a daily pause. Open each window to look into culture and solidarity for the liberation of Palestine. We're thrilled to have you participate! Explore the CPT Advent calendar in English or Spanish and share it with your friends and family.

Let's celebrate Advent together as a community of peacemakers!

MC Sask Council is pleased to announce the creation a new Special Projects Fund

When reviewing current finances, Council determined that MC Sask's current reserves held a significant surplus, and that the funds could be put to better use by congregations and related organizations. Tim Wiens, MC Sask Finance Chair, states "Previous Councils had set aside specified donations and bequests to be used as a reserve fund. We determined that these dollars had grown to a level where some could be best used now, rather than waiting for a time in the future. We will still have a reserve fund that would cover potential shut down costs and budget shortfalls."

These funds can provide opportunities both within MC Sask and to other related organizations. The special projects would be one-time endeavors designed to build organizational capacity, or seed money for new programs. All MC Sask programs and related organizations are encouraged to apply. The next submission deadline is February 1, 2024.

Interim Moderator, Sharon Schultz adds "There may be new ideas from our related organizations that need co-funding to be implemented. Budgets are tight with many organizations and if we can provide some financing to help get these new projects started, we are pleased to offer assistance. Projects of a capital construction are eligible. Projects which make the organization better by providing professional development for staff, new marketing initiatives, or improved governance will also. The entire policy and application process can be found at <http://mcsask.ca/specialprojectsreservefund>. For additional information, contact Tim Wiens at finance@mcsask.ca (new)

LECTIONARY PASSAGES FOR DECEMBER

First Sunday of Advent - December 3, 2023

- Isaiah 64:1-9
- Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
- 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
- Mark 13:24-37

Second Sunday of Advent - December 10, 2023

- Isaiah 40:1-11
- Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
- 2 Peter 3:8-15a
- Mark 1:1-8

Third Sunday of Advent - December 17, 2023

- Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
- Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
- John 1:6-8, 19-28

Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 24, 2023

- 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
- Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
- Romans 16:25-27
- Luke 1:26-38

December Birthdates

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2 – Oren Bird | 19 – Shelley Penner |
| 2 – Noah Doell | 21 – Charlie Clark |
| 3 – Theresa Loewen | 22 – Jacob B Friesen (100) |
| 4 – Rachel Clark | 24 – Norman Tataryn |
| 6 – Braden Martens-Funk | 28 – Frieda Rempel |
| 11 – Terri Lynn Friesen | 31 – Linda Stucky |
| 15 – Benjamin Doell | 31 – Adam Boldt |