



FIRST  
MENNONITE  
CHURCH,  
NEWTON

**OUR VISION:** Together in Christ: rooted deeply, reaching widely, loving well

**OUR MISSION:** With Jesus as our center, we are called to be:

- Faith-Focused—Growing spiritually, anchored in God's love and faithfulness
- Mission-Minded—Sharing hope and grace through Spirit-inspired, passion-driven faith in action
- Community-Connected—Worshiping together, welcoming, accepting, encouraging, and inviting all to follow Christ.

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# FMC CONNECTIONS

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## COMMUNION THEN AND NOW

I love a good communion service! It didn't take me long after leading my first communion service to decide that leading and participating in communion is one of my favorite rituals to perform as a pastor. There is something awe-inspiring about watching everyone, from the elder whose hand shakes bringing the cup to his lips, to the teenager wearing her athletic hoodie, sharing in this holy experience of God together. But actually, it isn't quite everyone participating in this ritual together. Traditionally, the Mennonite Church has limited participation in communion to baptized youth and adults.

With the belief of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Anabaptist Reformers in adult baptism (i.e. making faith in Jesus a conscious choice), communion, too, became a marker of this chosen church. Instead of taking communion in state-approved churches, early Anabaptists took communion in houses, barns, or caves, symbolizing this group's chosen separateness from the automated culture of an imposed state religion. Like re-baptism as an adult, the act of sharing communion outside a state church could result in imprisonment or death. . . another good reason to link communion and baptism and reserve such choices and commitments for adults.

What I find interesting, is that many Mennonite churches in the United States today continue to link baptism and com-

munion and insist that children and youth wait until a certain age (usually somewhere in high school) at which point we (adults) feel they are mature enough to make a commitment to Jesus that (we hope) is as deep and radical as our Anabaptist forbears who were prepared to die at the stake for their faith.

But wait a minute. Was it Jesus' expectation that his disciples be prepared to die for him before they received communion? Jesus serves Judas and Peter at his Last Supper, and afterwards promptly tells his disciples, "You will all become deserters because of me this night" (Matt. 26:31). Jesus knew his disciples weren't yet ready to stand by him in persecution and death, but he served them communion anyway. Communion was about what Jesus was doing for them, not about what they were prepared to do for Jesus. Communion is only a response to Jesus in that we choose to receive what Jesus offers us. So, if we no longer live in a setting in which participating in communion has truly deadly consequences, why would we place expectations upon those who take communion that Jesus didn't place on his disciples? Would it not be more Anabaptist to encourage people of all ages to reflect carefully on Jesus' invitation to the table each time communion is served, and respond freely as they feel the Spirit's leading? Relying solely on age or some other outward, procedural marker to determine communion participation seems



Pastor Laura Goertzen

to contradict the free, chosen response to Jesus Christ that Anabaptists wanted to cultivate.

Many of us may choose to continue the tradition of linking baptism and communion. Many of us find deep meaning through this path. Many of us may also be surprised when a child or youth sitting next to us says, "I want to eat Jesus' food. I feel a part of this church family. Can I take communion?" How should we respond? I wonder how Jesus would respond? Maybe the most faithful path for us is to remember that the host of the table we serve from is Jesus Christ. We all participate in this meal by His invitation, dependent upon His grace, and, as guests on equal footing, we have not necessarily been given license to vet His guest list. So, I encourage us all to enjoy being guests, rather than hosts, of this beautiful ritual called communion.

## KANSAS MENNONITE RELIEF SALE INFORMATION

The Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale will be held on April 14 and 15 this year. Mark your calendars for the annual event.

### Run/Walk for Relief 5k—8:00 AM, April 15, 2023

The Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale (KMRS) is a fundraising event for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) whose mission is to provide world relief and development in the name of Christ. The KMRS is an event held annually with this year's event occurring on April 14 and 15 at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson, KS. Event includes automatic race timing, age group awards, and post race food! Register by March 31st to be guaranteed a T-Shirt!

Raise \$500 in the "Go The Extra Mile" Fundraising Challenge and you will earn a crewneck sweatshirt! During registration click 'Become a Fundraiser' to start your own online fundraising page that you can easily share and promote!

If you are unable to attend this year's event in person we encourage you to sign up for the 'Remote' option and run or walk the 5k from your location and

share your experience on our Facebook page. We greatly value your support of this race and want to include all who desire to be a part of it! Please watch our Facebook page and your email inbox for race updates. Note, remote participants will not receive T-Shirt or goodie bag.

Want to Participate Remotely—Here's what to do!

1. Register yourself for the 2023 Run/Walk for Relief 5k (Remote)
2. Join us on April 15 by putting on your favorite Run for Relief or MCC Sale t-shirt from a past year (if you have one) and run or walk a 5K on your own or better yet with family or friends.
3. Take your picture and post it on the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale Run for Relief Facebook page. Feel free to post your time and amount of money you raised (if you invited others to sponsor your run), and any other details you would like to share!
4. Send your collected sponsor donations as instructed by race emails.
6. Ask family, friends, or neighbors if they would also consider signing up to

participate with you and help raise additional funds for MCC.

All of the proceeds from the race, and greater Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale, benefit the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and provide for material needs and community development in North America and across the world in the name of Christ.

Online registration will include a processing fee. Printable registration at: <https://kansas.mccsale.org/run-for-relief/>

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**WANTED** — Cars, Trucks, Motorcycles, RVs, Campers, Tractors, Modern Farm Equipment, etc. for the Kansas MCC Sale. Items you no longer need can help Feed and Clothe thousands in desperate living conditions. ALL donations are Tax Deductible. Call Jerry Toews for info: 620 367 8257. Help make a difference.

## STARTING SOMETHING NEW—WDC STORIES

I didn't make any New Year's Resolutions this year. In the past I've set goals for myself—more exercise, reading through the Bible before the end of the year, finishing that quilt I started in 2009 when I was in MVS (no—it's still not done) and more. This year I was thankful for the end of a personally challenging year that included a lot of loss and transition, while being hopeful for new and beautiful things in 2023.

This Dec/Jan I have been thinking more intentionally that I not only have an opportunity to start something new at the changing of the year—but that each new month, each new week can be the opportunity to reset, to try again, and to make a change for the better. Last year in a support group, each week we were encouraged to make a courageous

commitment to change—changing in some way to grow more into the person God has created us to be. This could be a commitment to more time with God, more time caring for self, resisting unhealthy activities or uses of time, or caring for relationships with others. One of the most important pieces of this commitment is that it is small, something achievable.

So how about you? Did you set any New Year's Resolutions this year? If you did, how is that going? If not (or even if you have), what steps might you consider taking to grow more into the person God created you to be? The Western District Conference Resource Library is here to support you in your work of living fully into your identity as a member of God's family. We

have 13,000+ resources in the library for individuals, families, small groups, and congregations, but I'm also excited to announce that we now have two digital streaming options as well. Individuals, groups, and congregations are welcome to take advantage of our subscriptions to *Paraclete Press* and *Study Gateway*. Please contact the library at [crlib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crlib@mennowdc.org) for information on taking care of advantage of either of these services. Please contact the library at [crlib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crlib@mennowdc.org) for information on taking advantage of either of these services.

Jennie Wintermote, WDC Resource Library Director





# FEBRUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Staff Meeting 10AM  Youth Group 7PM	2 Nurture Comm. 7PM  Warkentin Room reserved 7PM	3 FH/Kitchen reserved 5-9PM	4 Jr. High—Know Jesus weekend in Hesston
5 Jr. High—Know Jesus weekend in Hesston  Casa Betania service 4PM	6	7 Worship Commission 6:30 PM	8 Staff Meeting 10AM  Youth Group 6:15PM	9 Caregiving Comm. 7PM Warkentin room reserved	10	11 Gathering Area/Kitchen reserved 9AM-noon
12 <i>Open Road</i> sings for FMC Worship 10:30 AM  Casa Betania service 4PM	13	14 Church Board 7PM	15 Staff Meeting 10AM  Youth Group 7PM  Outreach Commission 7PM	16	17	18
19  Casa Betania service 4PM	20	21	22 Staff Meeting 10AM  Youth Group 7PM	23	24	25
26  Casa Betania service 4PM	27	28				

All events must be scheduled in the Church Office and cannot be schedule more than six months in advance.

## FMC Connections

First Mennonite Church  
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429 East First Street  
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February 2023

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!



## FEBRUARY OFFERING SCHEDULE

February 5—Mennonite Central Committee  
February 12—Local Mission  
February 19—Local Mission  
February 26—Local Mission