

# First Mennonite Church

Middlebury, Indiana

(574) 825-5135    [www.firstmennonite.net](http://www.firstmennonite.net)

Worship 9:00 a.m. -- Sunday School 10:20 a.m.

Transitional Lead Pastor: Gary Martin

Elders: Dean R. Miller, Maribeth Rhodes, Merle Mullet, Chris Blough, Ron Rheinheimer

## *“Welcoming the Unexpected”*

### Advent 2: December 4, 2011    “Changing the Landscape”

Repentance raises valleys, lower hills, and challenges the ways we're accustomed to living. Are we ready for things to be different, to let God's coming alter the landscape of our lives?

Worship Leader: Sonya Miller

Song Leader: Cindy Lederman

**Prelude:** Recorder Quartet (Weldon Friesen, LuEtta Friesen, Ruth Beasley, Maribeth Rhodes)

### Opening Song

### Welcome and Announcements

### Recognition of December Birthdays

### Worship Team

### Focus Words:

Leader: Lift up your heads to hear tender words of forgiveness.

**People: We have long waited for God's liberation.**

Leader: Prepare a way in the wilderness.

**People: We will make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

Leader: Plow the landscape and prepare the mountains.

**People: We will level the rough places to make ready for God's glory.**

**Tithes and Offering:** Recorder Quartet

**Children's Story:** Kris Rheinheimer (Jesus Loves Me)

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 40:1-11; Mark 1:1-8

**Message:** “Repentance Alters the Landscape” – Gary Martin

### Hymn of Response

### Dismissal of Bible Memory Participants

### Sharing Time and Prayer

### Blessing:

Leader: Go into the world, awake and aware of God's presence!

**People: We go into the world, listening for God's voice.**

Leader: Go into the world, watching for the activity in God's kingdom!

**People: We go into the world, following in the footsteps of Jesus.**

Leader: Go into the world, receiving the hope of salvation!

**People: We go into the world, reflecting the Spirit's radiance.**

*During the season of Advent, we will be blessed by a liturgical dance presented by three young ladies from our congregation. In anticipation of the joyous arrival of Jesus, they will dance to “Joy to the World”, adding a verse to the song each week. In keeping with the element of surprise, as Jesus did not come as expected, they will appear in a different part of the service each week, as will the arrival of the Advent candles. BE ALERT! You won't want to miss any part of our services! KEEP AWAKE! What awesome surprises will God have for us this season? Let's be watching for them and prepare to share them each week!*



Welcome Visitors!

### **Welcome to all of you who are visiting us today!**

Coffee and tea are served in the kitchen following worship. Sunday school is offered for adults in our fellowship hall and sanctuary; for all youth and children in the basement. Nursery care is available during our worship service and Sunday school hour. Children's bulletins are also available on the ledge just outside the sanctuary. May you have a meaningful time of worship and fellowship.

## Sermon Notes

1. Mark begins his Gospel with a story about a strange guy who gives up a cushy lifestyle, to preach repentance in the wilderness. Is that a clue about the radical, transforming nature of the rest of the story?
2. The way out of the wilderness becomes clear when we turn around. Repentance alters the landscape!
3. Do we really want God to change our lives? Congregational life? How can we know if we're headed in the wrong direction?
4. What do I need to repent of, to straighten out the path for God's coming anew into my life? What does First Mennonite need to repent of, to straighten out the path for God's coming anew into congregational life?

Daily Advent meditations written by Goshen College faculty, staff and students and based on the texts and themes we are following at FMC, are available at <http://blog.goshen.edu/devotions/subscribe>.

## This Week At First Mennonite

Today	Noon	<b>Potato Bar Fund Raiser for Menno-hof</b>
	4:00 p.m.	<b>Children's Christmas Program</b>
Wednesday	5:45-6:30 p.m.	<b>Wednesday Evening Meal</b> Hosts: Sonya Miller and GMSA
	6:00 p.m.	<b>POPS Board Meeting</b>
	6:30 p.m.	<b>Bible Memory</b> in Kids' Room
	7:00 p.m.	<b>Ladies' Prayer Time</b>
	7:00 p.m.	<b>MYF</b>
Thursday	6:00 a.m.	<b>Men's Prayer Breakfast</b> at Essenhaus
	All Day	<b>FMW:</b> Devotions-Aldine Wyse Please bring a scripture with the word "angel" in it.

## Upcoming Events at FMC

**Today the Searchers class is hosting a Potato Bar fundraiser after Sunday school.** All donations received will be given to Menno-Hof. Please plan to attend and enjoy a hot potato and a delicious dessert!

**The Children's Christmas Program is scheduled for tonight at 4:00 pm.** This year's program is entitled, "A Capital C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S". Plan to attend and bring finger foods to share afterward.

**GMSA Girls:** This Wednesday we will be helping Sonya Miller to set up, clean up, and serve the meal. Please bring 2-3 dozen of your favorite cookies for dessert.

## News and Announcements

**Due to the Children's program practice in the sanctuary during Sunday school today,** the Open Circle Class will meet in the associate pastor office and the Mosaic Class will meet down in the Prayer Room. Thank you!

**The GMSA will be collecting donations of hats, gloves, and scarves for their Tree of Warmth located by the elevator lift.** They will take donations December 1-21. All items collected will be donated to Food Pantry customers throughout the cold winter months ahead.

**The Elders have two opportunities for individuals to be a helping hand!**

-- Volunteers are needed to help drive individuals to doctor appointments or other places to give some relief to family members. If you want to help please see an Elder or Angela.

-- Volunteers are also needed to assist with parking on Sunday mornings during the winter snow and ice. If you are interested, a sign-up sheet is on the hallway bulletin board.

## News and Announcements

**Would you like to see "The Glory and Majesty of Christmas" at the Blue Gate on Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm?** If you are interested, please sign up on the sheet in the hallway. The cost will be \$19.00 per ticket if we have a group of 25 or more. A drawing will be held to give two **FREE** tickets away to two lucky winners on the sign up. Do not miss this fun and enjoyable evening!

**There is a budget worksheet from Everence located on the ledge outside the sanctuary.** If you want some assistance getting your budget organized for the new year, please feel free to take one.

**The Maple City Chamber Orchestra and the Goshen Community Chorale are presenting a free holiday concert entitled, "Sounds of Christmas".** It is on Sunday, December 11 at 3:00pm in Sauder Concert Hall at Goshen College. Our very own Weldon Friesen will be performing!

**Family Christian Bookstores offer special stamps to help church libraries.** They will give you a stamp for each \$5.00 that you spend and then when a card is filled up with 15 stamps, the library can redeem for \$5.00 in books. You will need to ask for the stamps, they do not automatically give them with your receipt. Keep your church library in mind as you are doing your Christmas shopping. You can give your stamps to Jan Yoder, Carolyn Miller, or Elnora Yoder. Family Christian Bookstore locations - Concord Mall, Erskine Village (South Bend), Grape Road (Mishawaka), Coldwater Crossing (Fort Wayne), Bradenton & Lakewood Florida and Scottsdale, AZ. Thank you for your assistance.

**Wilma Graber's birthday is December 10!** Let's remember her with a card and well wishes. Her address is 1300 Greencroft Drive, Apt. 105, Goshen, IN 46526.

**The floral arrangement at the front of the sanctuary is in memory of Chris Hochstetler.** Chris passed away two years ago today and Edna, Devon, Karen, and family would like to thank the church family for all the support the last two years.

*Please check hallway bulletin board for additional announcements!*

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## Third Sunday in Advent at First: A Gift Receiving Guide December 11, 2011

Theme: We have been promised a day when tears of sorrow will be transformed to shouts of joy. But we live in a “meantime” still marked by oppression, broken hearts, and loss of freedom. We are invited to hold fast to what is good, even while we wait for God’s intervention.

Texts: Psalm 126; Isaiah 61:1-11; John 1:6-8, 19-28; 1

Thessalonians 5:16-24

Sermon: “Oaks of Righteousness”

Reflection Questions:

1. What can we rejoice about in the “meantime?”
  2. Would I know an “oak of righteousness” if I saw one? (Isaiah 61:3)
  3. Am I being transformed by the Holy Spirit into an “oak of righteousness” which displays God’s glory?
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### Nursery Helpers

**Today:** Church – Nancy and Leah Bontreger  
Sunday School – Mike and Amy Ritchie

**Next Sunday:** Church – Steve and Shelley Bontrager  
Sunday School – Ron and Kris Rheinheimer

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### Stewardship Report for November 27

Attendance: 197    Sunday School: 159

Offering: \$5885.00 ~ Designated: \$3360.00 ~ Total: \$9245.00

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*Whole Wheat or White Wonder?*

*Milepost 20*

Christmas preparations require baked goods. Let’s check out a bakery at this milepost. For thousands of years, humans have made bread out of a variety of whole grains. Each culture has its own unique bread. Modern technology brought us a “new and improved, enriched with vitamins” bread: light, white, sliced just right and appropriately called “wonder bread.” I *wonder* what they were thinking!

Bread can be life extending or life shortening. Life giving bread is made from living food. Living food is in its natural state (e.g. whole grains and beans) and will grow when planted because it literally contains life! 3,000 year-old grain from Egyptian tombs will grow. Life shortening bread is made from processed to death food.

It is ironic that many of the things we call improvements have literally taken the life out of our foods. What enables whole grains to reproduce, the germ and the cellulose walls, are removed to make them look nicer, last longer and cook quicker. The multi-billion dollar synthetic flavor industry exists to “enhance” flavors to create addictive food purchasing behaviors.

God designed our bodies to burn complex carbohydrates (e.g. whole grains, lentils, potatoes) to produce energy. Complex carbohydrates help regulate blood sugar levels. Much of what is called “bread” today is primarily simple carbohydrates (refined sugar, processed white flour, etc.). Consuming simple carbohydrates causes blood sugar to rise quickly and then fall.

Jesus told his followers to be in, but not of the world. In the past, Mennonites attempted to not be “of the world” by being less in the world. As we moved more into the world, we have tended to be too “of the world.” To be in, but not of the world requires constant awareness of the subtle and seductive cultural influences in the church.

Have we inadvertently removed Life from our faith? We want our faith convenient, attractive, light and fast. We want the option of storing our faith for awhile when it gets in our way. But we don’t want our faith to spoil: we want it to be fresh even though it’s been on the shelf for a long time. We like fast food and fast faith! Have we been deceived in thinking that the additives (many of the things we do in church which distract us from biblical faith) are enriching our faith?

The sixth chapter of John’s gospel is packed with Living Food. Jesus is presented as “the Bread that gives Life.” He invited his followers to eat this Bread. Of several Greek words for eating, the one used refers to eating that requires time to really chew. Taking Jesus into our lives on a daily basis, like eating whole grain bread, takes time and energy. The cost is higher.

The chapter ends on a sobering note: *Because of what Jesus said, many of his disciples turned their backs on him and stopped following him. Jesus then asked his twelve disciples if they were going to leave him. Simon Peter answered, “Lord, there is no one else that we can go to. Your words give eternal life.”*

The vast majority preferred the addictive white wonder bread miracles that gave a quick burst of feel good spiritual energy, but left them in poor spiritual health, without sustained energy for the long haul. Only a few chose to take time to chew on the natural whole grain bread of Jesus’ words that provided sustained, Abundant Life.

2,000 years later, the two options have not changed. Whether it’s the dinner table or The Lord’s Table, choose Living Bread for Life!

