

THE VINE

A Newsletter of First Mennonite Church

November 2021

The Color of Worship

by Dave Jackson

Pastor Michael's excellent article, *The Architecture of Worship*, in the last issue of *The Vine* reminded me of the book, *Sound of Worship*, by my good friend Doug Jones, Professor of Acoustics and co-founder of the Audio Arts and Acoustics department at Columbia College Chicago. He describes from the perspective of acoustics how the very shape of our worship space reflects and defines our theology of church. Baptists emphasize preaching so want to hear every word spoken from the pulpit. But for centuries the Catholic mass was in Latin that few understood, so the clarity of what people heard wasn't as important as the echoing chants that lifted their spirits heavenward. Anabaptists value the priesthood of all believers and need a design wherein each person can be heard. And on and on . . .

But more than architecture or sound systems or whether we sit in pews or chairs, our church culture determines whether people of color feel at home in our worship. While our dedication to social justice and antiracism can make us friends and allies, that doesn't necessarily create the church family that persons of color would choose to surround themselves with in their vulnerable moments of spiritual ecstasy or the depths of bereavement. Beyond trying to sing "Amazing Grace" (written by a white man, of course), we wouldn't know how to join them.

So how can we white people become church family to more people of color?

Recognize Our Cultural Depth

Unless someone suggests change, most of us think of ourselves as culturally neutral. We just happen to like the best music, food, entertainment; order our lives in the wisest ways (usually); and do church right (as best we can). And it works as long as we're swimming in our monocultural sea.

And as Mennonites, it's a very deep sea, purified by centuries of persecution and ethnic, language, and often geographic isolation. Until relatively modern times, Mennonites migrated to and lived in Mennonite communities, not unlike other Anabaptists or the Dutch Reformed or Jewish enclaves. That's why we can play the Mennonite name game—well, not Jackson, but Neta was a Thiessen.

It's hard to change culture that deep! And we don't need to renounce it. It's very good. All we need to do is recognize that other cultures are just as valuable and may be worth embracing for the sake of becoming a more inviting church family . . . and to provide us with a different kind of spiritual depth at the very moment we need it.

I did not grow up Mennonite, but I was attracted to the peace witness, which helped me become a conscientious objector and thereby get out of the Army, as well as the emphasis on community and simple living, which led us to join Reba Place in 1974. Reba was a soft landing because there were members from several Christian traditions. But still the Mennonite culture was *very* strong, and I did sometimes feel like an outsider.

Prior to that, Neta and I had been part of a black church in Portland, Oregon, and then a black storefront church on Chicago's near west side. Reba tried hard to reach out to African Americans, but for several years few responded. We made many mistakes, but a willingness to expand our music was one crucial step of cultural growth. It was hard work, but even I learned how to step and clap at the same time while singing black gospel without looking at the music. (Reba's Racial Reconciliation Choir was even invited to perform at Chicago's Gospel Fest one year.) But it wasn't just gospel that altered our musical culture, it was singing a lot of songs, even hymns, with more "soul." (Also, one downside to *always* using a hymnal: You can't

hold a hymnal and clap or raise your hands at the same time.)

In further efforts to become multicultural, Reba hired a black pastor. (Prior to this, Reba had never hired an outside pastor.) It was a good decision in that the number of African Americans attending rose to near 40, but—and this is where FMC is farther ahead—our antiracism trainings were too much for some people to handle as was the “style” of the black pastor (cultural issues again).

The tensions increased over these and other issues until the African American pastor resigned. It was at about that time that Neta and I also left to join *The Worship Center*, a dynamic black church in Evanston. Our earlier years in black churches had been with very poor congregations where we too easily fell into helper roles. But this time, I felt I just needed to put myself under black leadership and *learn*. It was rich! In ways I had never recognized before, my eyes were opened to the spiritual maturity and wisdom forged over the ages in the black church experience. I needed to learn in a way I’d never known how to “Hold to his hand, God’s unchanging hand. Build your hopes on things eternal,” as the song says. “Hold to God’s unchanging hand.”

After seven years at The Worship Center, Neta and I joined Living Water Community Church, a Mennonite church plant from Reba Place in Rogers Park/Chicago. (We’d maintained good relationships with Reba.) Living Water is very multicultural and multilingual—Nepalese, Cambodian, east African, Hispanic, African American, and white. A kaleidoscope of cultures, each bringing its own gift.

In this season of personal protracted change, loss, and isolation, I’ve needed more of that. And I know I still have so much more to learn. But thinking again about the color of worship may be a good place to start.

FMC Property Projects Update

by Ken Nisley-Nagele,
Property and Finance
Committee Chair



FMC’s HVAC project is conceived to require several phases over multiple years in order to address aging and inefficient equipment, and to consider fuel and power sources for the equipment that aligns with climate change mitigation goals. The hot water boiler is obsolete and has required tender loving care (most recently by Phil Martens) to maintain function. The air-cooled condensing units that are a part of the system that cools the Sanctuary are near the end of their service life and use a refrigerant that is no longer being produced and contributes to climate change more than the current refrigerants available.

The phases planned at this time are:

- Phase I: Heating and Cooling for the Office Wing, First Floor Restrooms, and Library - Evaluating multi-zone Mini-Split Units.
- Phase II: Obtain Proposals to Replace Hot Water Heating Boiler - Two Options: Gas Fired, and Electric. The boiler may be functional for another year or so. The boiler heats via exposed radiant finned tube radiation heaters on the first floor, which are anticipated to have more years of service life, but also via concealed under floor radiant heat system in the basement, which has had one leak due to corrosion and may need to be abandoned. The path forward for heating is not clear at this time and these cost proposals will be used to evaluate replacing the boiler against providing heating by other means in Phases III and IV.
- Phase III: Heating and Cooling for the Sanctuary. A proposal for Geothermal with vertical loops in the parking lot has been received, but we will be obtaining additional proposals for other systems, e.g., replacement-in-kind with air-cooled condensing units, and possibly

Mini-Split Units. The current system provides sufficient cooling, even though the attic ductwork has separated in some places, resulting in leaking air conditioning into the attic, but as mentioned above, the condensing units are at the end of their useful service life.

- Phase IV: Heating and Cooling for the Basement Areas. The perimeter rooms have not been adequately heated. The original architectural drawings show that finned tube radiation was planned for those rooms but was not installed. There also is a humidity issue due to moisture migration through the basement walls from ground water that has resulted in some mold in the past (mitigated last year and controlled by portable dehumidifiers that require ongoing attention). This humidity could be addressed by the moisture removal that occurs in the air conditioning process. Currently, the basement is not air conditioned, except by the cooler air from the first floor migrating down into the basement.

The Property and Finance Committee has a goal of starting construction on Phase I yet this year and are currently evaluating proposals.

MAKING SOOP WORK IN SPAIN

by P. Gregory Springer



What does mission mean? I recently read about the legal action of indigenous tribes in Brazil and their efforts to protect themselves from the invading missionaries who tromp into their protected lands and lives.

The question of being a missionary in a highly developed country like Spain is indeed hard to assess.

I was sent on my first mission with SOOP to the Catalan city of Barcelona by happenstance. *Service Opportunities with Our Partners* (SOOP) is Mennonite Mission Network program standing for. Before this trip, I was fully committed to working in Latin America and mostly on my own, freelancing with various organizations or independently. I had adopted Latin America for my efforts and exploration. I am an American in the sense that all of the Americas, North and South, are where I consider myself at home.

But after Guatemala and Colombia SOOP missions were put on hold through the pandemic, Arloa Bontrager, a SOOP coordinator, called. "This came across my desk," she said, offering a place in a new mission effort in Barcelona.

Joshua and Alisha Garber have been serving as missionaries in Europe for the past ten years – in the Czech Republic, in Lithuania, and now in Barcelona. Their five-year-old son Asher already speaks several languages well. Spanish, Catalan, and English flow interchangeably from him.

Young, tattooed, speaking of "post-Christianity," the couple are vitally creative and comfortable in their calling. Joshua has a large arm tattoo of Dirk Willem on the ice as well as full sleeves of artistic ink. They are talented in music, writing, and interacting with their communities, reaching out to homeless and neighbors. They have an excellent online blog about their work called Worthwhile Adventures.

The Garber family lived in a 200-year-old farmhouse preserved in a neighborhood of the modern and ancient city for a few years, waiting to move into the group home across the street. The group home is in the process of being renovated. Once a home for seniors, then housing for those with homeless or emotional issues, the building now serves as Barcelona's Mennonite Church and is preparing to be a temporary home for visiting students and travelers and those wanting a

short-term international experience. I was sent on a mission to assist in renovating this house.



Barcelona is a sophisticated, international city, Catalan speaking, rich in cuisine, with an architectural modernist landscape unmatched anywhere in the world. Antoni Gaudi's houses, designs, parks, and sculptures define the city. His crowning glory, the still unfinished cathedral, Sagrada Familia, emerges above the skyline like a fantastic feat of the imagination, something created by CGI (computer generated imagery) in the middle of a small modern metropolis. But it is real, and just a fraction of Gaudi's wild imagination put into reality.

The church welcomed me with a big paella dinner and church service, during which I was asked to speak about my visit and my past experiences in Latin America, something I was asked to do at all subsequent Sunday services. The church is small and undergoing many changes at the moment. They have many meetings deciding what to do in preparing the building. Consensus, I soon learned, was going to be a stumbling block in getting any actual work done.

We did paint some rooms and hallways, adjust doors and locks, fix plumbing failures, and move things from the old farmhouse into the group home, but mostly we waited for the go-ahead from committees. Even the color of what to paint the bathroom could become a delaying sticking point. One Saturday, Josh and Alisha decided to "go rogue" and went to the Lowe's-like home improvement store and also Ikea to gather supplies – clocks, furniture, shower curtains, faucets, etc. It was my first time in an Ikea store. Good meatballs.

With less than full-time work to be done, church leader and walking encyclopedia of

Catalan history, Arthur, and pastor Abel, insisted on taking me through the countryside and up steep jaunts of climbing to see the ancient wonders of their country. I got an exceptional inside look at Catalan life and Roman ruins and old traditions, including the rare castellers experience, when communities gather together to make human towers, with children climbing up the huddled bodies to the very top. "I get dizzy on a step-stool," my sister said, looking at the pictures I was sending back.



Is this mission work? It is, just as working here in Champaign-Urbana with immigrants or the homeless in our backyards can be called mission work. And I realized, with my days being spent more in exploring the country – the Salvador Dali hometown and museum, the bedazzling and outsized Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the mountaintop cathedral of Montserrat – than serving the needs of the people, I might be better off returning to Champaign-Urbana. I returned a couple weeks earlier than planned.

While I was in Barcelona, the person in charge of Mennonite Mission Network efforts in Europe and Africa, Sharon B. Norton, and Arloa Bontrager, and their husbands came to visit for a few days. More meetings ensued. And the sermon on that Sunday, delivered by Sharon, reminded me of the older idea of mission work, going somewhere to change people, rather than going somewhere to accompany people on their path, to impose one's own views on others in foreign lands rather than be allies, open to change and to hear the unpredictable call of God.

I expected, as is usually the case, to receive much more during my time there than I would ever be able to give. In that sense, mission

work can be selfish, embracing the joy of sharing.

I will continue to accompany, both in Champaign-Urbana, and in Latin America, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to have returned to Europe – my first time using Euros – before I die. I will pursue the path of mission work, but more than likely I will choose to stay home, at home everywhere throughout the Americas.

Green Team Highlights from the Faith in Place Green Summit

The Green Team met on a beautiful fall day at Carle Park in Urbana to share our experiences at the Faith in Place Green Team Summit. To view the recorded sessions, please Google Faith in Place Green Team Summit 2021.

On Sunday, the Eco-Womanist Keynote was a beautiful expression of black female spirituality and environmental justice through conversation at a kitchen table as the “board room” for designing and creating eco-justice organizations such as the Eco-Womanist Institute headed by Veronica Kyle. Andrea Blanton, Kimmie Gordon, Nicole Jackson and Ratasha Elise shared their grassroots initiatives to grow urban gardens, develop green spaces for brown faces, provide nature therapy for black women and revive the brown chocolate soul. The women shared important lessons including nature as healing and trustworthy, slowing down and rest as a form of resistance, how to heal the land which holds grief and traumatic memories for people of color, and the importance of learning what ails a community from the first-person accounts of people who reside in the land. Journaling is an important way to preserve stories and words. Three journal questions we were encouraged to write and share included: 1. What is your earliest “eco-memory” or experience in nature when your spiritual and physical nature connected? Was it a sweet or bitter memory? 2. What are your soul/self-care practices during the pandemic? 3. When have you pushed beyond your “comfort zone” to experience the other in someone else’s space?

How did you feel? Were you welcomed? What impressions did it leave with you?



Tuesday sessions included a beautiful, sensory walking meditation of Heron Pond located in southern Illinois,



a West African Libation Ceremony to honor and name those who have gone before us with a water ceremony of connection,



a self-compassion workshop of breath and touch for healing, and a conversation among the youth eco-ambassador on healing activities of self-care, community and Earth care during this time of covid.

On Wednesday, we learned from a panel of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) about healing and racial justice from an ancestral perspective including how to walk in justice even when justice is not served and BIPOC community experiences of being seen, heard and understood.

We were taken on a virtual tour of the Urbana Sola Gratia farms as well as learned from Executive Director of Sola Gratia, Traci Barkley, about the ways the farm has expanded eco-justice work in schools and impoverished neighborhoods through such programs at the Solidarity Garden Initiative. We learned about the benefits of a vegan diet and learned from Chef Johnny of Majani's Vegan Restaurant in Chicago how to make chickpea burgers and green curry noodles. Karen found the meditative coloring session very restful for the body and mind.



Stay tuned for FMC Green Team initiatives including one on Saturday, January 8 when Tom Sutter will share his journey with Veganism and demonstrate a vegan dish we can prepare.

FMC Joins Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Repair Network: A Coalition Weaving Together . . .

by Sharon Monday

Remembrance and Lament

“Our being and liberation are interconnected. Mennonite World Conference stands united with our Indigenous brothers and sisters for justice. The struggle of Indigenous Peoples is our struggle. And we recognize that peace is not possible while some are still suffering. We confess that the Church has benefited from the strategies of empires that have included violence, unsustainable extraction of natural resources, stolen land, colonial mission, genocide, environmental and water destruction, segregation, assimilation, imprisonment and ongoing racial marginalization in health, housing, employment

and education.” (Statement approved at 2018 Mennonite World Conference of Churches)

In 2014, the **Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, (DDofD Coalition)** a movement of Anabaptist people of faith came together to call on the Mennonite Church to stand with Indigenous and Vulnerable People and work to dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery.

The **Doctrine of Discovery** dates back to the 15th century. It gave Christian governments moral and legal rights to invade and seize Indigenous lands and dominate Indigenous Peoples. This pattern of oppression began with papal bulls, or decrees. One of the most infamous is Romanus Pontifex, issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1455, which justified enslaving and seizing the land and possessions of anyone who was not a Christian. Source: “Stories of Repair” Publication of dofdmennonite.org May 26, 2021.

Response

As a Christian Church FMC has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands of the Kickapoo, Piankeshaw, Peoria and Potawatomi Nations, as well as the history of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of our institution. We are obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that our religion has played in shaping them. (Land Acknowledgment Statement developed and written as a part of the 2019 FMC Adult Sunday class on the Doctrine of Discovery.)

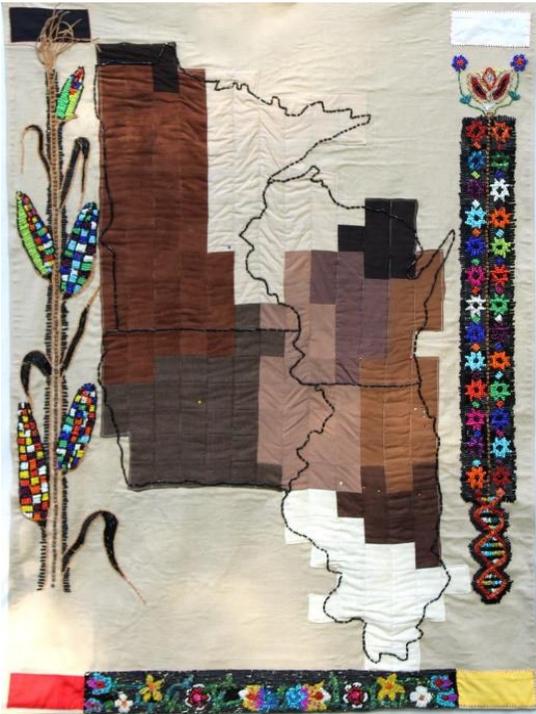
In 2020, the FMC Racial Justice Working Group (RJWG) and the Green Team (GT) began discussing how to deepen our commitment and participate in a new initiative of the Anabaptist Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, **Congregational Repair Network**. In 2021 the RJWG and GT recommended Council approval to join the **DDofD Coalition**. FMC council approved in August 2021. **The Congregational Repair Network** is a **commitment** by Anabaptist Congregations to engage in healing the harm of internalized White settler and Christian superiority which continues to adversely impact Indigenous Peoples in present times.

Resources, Reconnection and Restoration

We commit to ongoing weaving with other Anabaptist Repair Congregations with the support of the DDofD Coalition by:

Worship and Educational programs to transform our hearts and minds as we grieve the devastation caused by Church sponsored colonization and attitudes of superiority. Examples at FMC include the adult Sunday school class in 2019 on the Doctrine of Discovery; guest speakers such as Rich Myers during worship services; and a community read *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*.

Truth telling through land acknowledgments and remembrance of forced removals, signage, artwork, and use of Indigenous place names Examples are FMC Land Acknowledgement Statement located on the FMC Website under Racial Justice and the commissioned work of Rachel Horst Lehman by the Central District Conference of MCUSA to create fiber art which in Rachel's words "communicate(s) a sense of yearning for social justice, for claiming our part in history and actively seeking peace."



Accountability and Connection through a church working group or committee and a representative who attends the DDofD Coalition quarterly sharing meetings. FMC Racial Justice Working Group will continue this role with Sharon Monday designated as the current DDofD Coalition liaison member.

Restitution to further the work of the DDofD Coalition and regional, national and international repair partners. Each congregation determines the amount to be annually committed in their budget. The FMC Racial Justice Working Group has proposed \$1,000 designation in the FMC 2022 budget to be given to the DDofD Coalition of which 60% is given to a designated Indigenous Repair partner.

Response to calls for solidarity made by Indigenous Peoples working with the DDofD Coalition and other Indigenous relationships formed by each congregation, FMC provided hospitality (2017 and 2019) for multi-state trail walkers and joined at the Sidney Trail marker (2019) for remembrance and lament of the forced removal of members of the Potawatomi Nation by militia in 1838 from Indiana to reservation lands in what is now eastern Kansas.

Creation care by connecting the work of repair with earth care activities, FMC has formed a Green Team, volunteers with Sola Gratia Solidarity Gardens, and in the planting of pollinator garden and Indigenous plant pole planting on FMC church grounds

Share the work of repair in congregational spheres of influence including this article in the VINE!

For more information please visit:
[Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery.](#)

MCC Dignity Kits

by Hannah Lake Rayburn



If I asked you to think about an embarrassing moment in your life, what comes to mind? For anyone who menstruates, odds are good they have an embarrassing story about when a pad failed, or when they didn't have a hygienic product available when needed. No one enjoys the moment of wondering if there is blood visible to others or trying to figure out the quickest place to find a pad or a tampon.

And yet, for most of us living in this country, the products needed to save us from these moments are readily available. If we run out, we can go to the nearest store and have a wide variety of choices depending on preferences. We don't have to miss a week's worth of school or work due to lack of hygienic supplies. This isn't the case for people across the world, and MCC's newest kit aims to change that.

Dignity kits provide reusable pads, laundry soap, underwear, as well as other hygienic items such as a comb, nail clippers, bath soap, a washcloth and a hand towel. Homemade fleece pads and waterproof holders provide comfortable, clean, reliable dignity for those who do not have the access that we do. Since the initiation of this project in 2019, MCC has sent 16,659 of these kits to South Sudan and Ukraine.

Here at FMC, we have now contributed 23 dignity kits to this effort. Spearheaded by Kathy Springer and with the sewing skills of others in the congregation including Sheryl Dyck, Lynne Sancken, Mary Krick, Ally Welty Peachey, Marcia Nelson, Cindi Schieber and Kathy Anderson, 184 pads and 69 waterproof holders were made. The 23 assembled kits were taken by Kathy Springer to East Bend Mennonite Church where they were loaded into a truck. The truck then headed to MCC containing all

the items that had accumulated for more than a year at East Bend from many different churches. Soon, our kits will be making a difference in the lives of 23 different people living in South Sudan or Ukraine.

As these kits are so important for the people who use them, the Service and Outreach committee hopes to continue this ministry by assembling another 30 kits in January. So, keep your sewing machines ready, and your eyes out for more information to come!

On the left is Annette Sommer (from East Bend) and on the right is Nadine Zook Miller, who lives in Goshen IN and is the Material Resources Coordinator for MCC Great Lakes.



MCC truck loaded with comforters, school kits, and hygiene kits.



Greetings & Update from Matt Klopfenstein

I just wanted to drop a quick note to say that FMC's pride stance is making an impact in South Carolina! Recently, Amanda and I helped staff a booth for the church we are attending here, Reformation Lutheran, at Columbia's pride festival and wore our FMC pride shirts. We got lots of positive comments about the shirts and had to disappoint a few people who wanted to know where they could get one.



Thoughts on Pride Weekend

by Lynne Sancken

The Pride Parade has grown from being one event, a parade, to being a weekend of festivities, including an on-line auction. This is the first year since FMC began participating in this event four years ago that the parade has taken place in Urbana. FMC had about 20 participants of all ages in our group. Last year's parade was canceled due to COVID-19. The parade always feels like a love fest. The parade participants appreciate those watching the parade and vice versa. I hope we can continue to have a good turnout.



rainbow flags, fabulous drag queens, and experience the excitement of the crowd cheering us on? Randy Nelson's drumming kept us going, and in good cheer!

As I marched, I realized that this parade gave credibility and support to many, including a transgender youth there with his Grandmother (love you cool Grandmothers), as well as to many others who have had to work hard to believe and have others believe in their "rightness" and equality with all. I had the experience of a woman in my water aerobics class thanking me for marching in the parade as it gave her and her partner support and reassurance. It's funny that she said that they think each year that they don't need to attend the parade, but always do! Hmmm . . . So—will I be there next year? Yes! I plan to march and I hope to see you there marching with us or cheering us on.

More Thoughts on Pride Weekend

by Tammie Bouseman

I have to admit to thinking twice before participating in this year's Pride Parade. This is mostly because I feel like it is "preaching to the choir." Sure—it is always a joyful event with much to commend it, but are we really doing anything/helping anyone? I also admit, with some embarrassment, that the Urbana route was longer than the Champaign one and I am certainly not in the best shape of my life!

But I went. Partly because it was in Urbana, which, let's face it, is the better town, but mostly because I love the people who march in it each year. Also, I am so grateful to Lynne Sancken who lovingly arranges for us to participate each year and designed a killer t-shirt for us to wear.

I thoroughly enjoyed my participation, which I knew I would. Where else can you see Julie Pryde in drag, children and dogs marching with



Anita Break (aka Julie Pryde), Grand Master of the Pride Parade, head of the Champaign County Public Health District.

2021 Advent at FMC

Advent begins November 28 this year. The Advent Committee has been busy planning for Sunday worship as well as special services for the season.

The season begins with our annual Chrismon Service at 3:30 pm on Sunday, November 28. Join us in the sanctuary to decorate the tree with symbols of Christ's life, followed by singing carols in the fenced yard to the west of the building. This service is for all ages. More details soon.



The theme this Advent, “Dare to Imagine”, was developed by Mennonite Church USA. The writers state that *“so much has been put on hold or turned upside down [due to the pandemic] that we need to listen and respond to God’s presence with new ears and renewed hearts and minds. As we begin a new church year, let’s dare to imagine our path forward with God toward God’s good dream for our world. Rooted in our lives of faith and our trust in the Spirit, and arising from our engagement with the Scripture texts, this worship series dares all of us to speak aloud our laments, confessions, and hopes for coming days; to look for a new language to express our faithfulness; to engage and honor the imagination of our children; to offer sermons that call us beyond our comfort zones; and to explore new carols and melodies to loudly sing our praise to God...”*

The FMC Advent Committee is also planning special and special music and dramas for worship services. The dates and corresponding themes are listed below. Look for more details in the coming weeks.



November 28 Worship 9:15 am: Advent 1
Dare to Imagine God’s Goodness (HOPE)
Communion

November 28 at 3:30 pm:
Chrismon Service

December 5 Worship 9:15 am: Advent 2
Dare to Imagine God’s Embrace (PEACE)
Special Music: Kathy Springer

December 12 Worship 9:15 am: Advent 3
Dare to Imagine God’s Song (JOY)
Special Music: Choir Chime Ensemble

December 19 Worship 9:15 am: Advent 4
Dare to Imagine God’s Feast (LOVE)
Special Music: Ensemble coordinated by
Andrea Welty Peachey

December 24: Christmas Eve Service
Time: TBD

December 26 Worship: Christmas Sunday
Worship begins at 10 am
Dare to Imagine God’s Blessing (CHRIST)
Special Music: Rafael Luquis

January 2 Worship: Epiphany
Worship begins at 10 am
Dare to Imagine God’s Dance! (LIGHT)
Special Music: Mary Krick & Rachel Horst
Lehman