

*Welcome to the
Bergthaler Mennonite Church
of Altona*



Greetings people of ABC. I hope this note finds you feeling well and comfortable in your homes waiting out this virus. So many hard decisions being made these days. One of them being to suspend church services indefinitely. But, as a Church Council we agreed that the health and wellness of our Church community and our community is of utmost importance right now. As a council we have also decided to follow the same course of action as the schools in our area. If schools are closed, we will be closed too. So as of right now, church services will not resume before April 12th - Easter Sunday. We really hope that we can be together for Easter Sunday and will keep you posted as we get closer to that date. For now though, our facility will officially be closed to everyone except for staff. This is also to allow our staff to work from home when necessary at a time when they are also being affected by school closures. That doesn't mean that our pastors are unavailable to you. They are still reachable by phone - office or cell - or email. All of that information can be found in this bulletin. While our Sunday morning services and our programs are suspended, many of our expenses are not. We ask that you consider continued giving during this time. One way is through on-line giving. Call the church office or Don and Grace if you would like to get set up for this option. Other options include through the post office or contact the office to have someone from church council pick up your gift. It is our desire to continue in Christ's service during these uncertain times. We ask for your prayers for our world, our pastors, and our leaders as they navigate this unprecedented situation. We look forward to gathering with all of you again soon.

Your Church Council Team

Sunday, March 22, 2020

**BERGTHALER MENNONITE CHURCH OF ALTONA
WORSHIP SERVICE**

March 22, 2020

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you".
1 Peter 5:7*

Sermon & Scripture: Mark Tiessen-Dyck

Worship Leader: Amanda Wiens

Music: Jennifer Klassen

Dramatization: Amanda Wiens & Dawson Wiens

Children's Story: Mark Tiessen-Dyck

Sound Tech: Gord Sawatzky & Vern Friesen

Our worship service will be posted to:
abchurch.libsyn.com *and to*
abchurchcommunity.ca
first thing Sunday morning.

Our guiding scripture passage for this time of worship is
Jeremiah 13:1-11.

WORSHIP CALENDAR

Weekly Worship Services will be available online until further notice.

Even though we are not doing in person pastoral visits at this time, we are eager to make many phone calls to people in our community who would value a regular connection to the Church. If you or a loved one would appreciate a weekly phone call from the church, please let myself or Amanda know – Mark Tiessen-Dyck

PRAYER & PRAISE CORNER

- ~ **Congratulations to:** Michael & Nicole Friesen on the birth of Maverick James, born on March 15, a new brother for Atlas. Proud grandparents are Elmer & Elaine Friesen.
- ~ **Pray for people** deeply affected by the COVID-19. People who have lost jobs, people who are homeless, people who are ill. Also pray for people in our Church and community who will be isolated during this time.
- ~ **Mennonite Church Canada:**
As the COVID-19 emergency begins to ease for Witness workers in China, South Korea and the Philippines, they now report the beginning of their time of self-isolation. They report on the devastating effects of this pandemic on the poor in the cities.
Pray that God's healing and hope will flow through us to those around us at this difficult time.

"The church has never been limited to Sunday mornings and these challenging times are not an exception! Continue to reach out to each other in prayer, friendship, and encouragement. Look for ways to physically aid your fellow congregational members and your neighbours and acquaintances as you are safely able. Some of our members are experiencing temporary layoffs from their work. This can be a very anxious time! Reach out if you need support....We encourage you to continue to be generous. Most congregations have the capacity to receive donations online. The financial capacity of our congregations to do the work of The Church is more needed in times of crisis so please help. Also, if you cannot work due to layoff or whatever, perhaps this is a time to engage in volunteer work. Many organizations rely on volunteers who are in a vulnerable population demographic. These older volunteers are encouraged to stay home so organizations who have benefitted from their generosity now need others to step up." Excerpts from a letter to Mennonite Church Manitoba Congregation from Ken Warkentin, MCM Executive Minister

Because we know that God is at work, we would like to hear your testimonies from this time of pandemic. Have the disruptions enabled you to experience God in a new way? What are you doing to stay connected? Have you had the opportunity to do something you don't normally do? How are you growing in your walk with Jesus? Where have you seen beauty, shalom, or joy? If you have something to share, please be in touch with me or one of the other pastors. With your permission we would also love to share some experiences with the congregation to help us stay connected in a time of social distancing and to remain centered on Christ.
– Mark Tiessen-Dyck

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **If you did not receive an email from the church** on Friday with the bulletin, you are not on our church email list and we encourage you to be in touch with the church office to ensure that you are. Also, check your junk email to see if it is going there.
- **Beginning March 30, Pastor Josh** will be taking a 4 week unpaid leave of absence. This was an arrangement that the Personnel Commission negotiated with Josh prior to his beginning ministry in our congregation. See Josh's attached letter.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **March 26, 3-7pm** - Canadian Blood Services Community Donor Clinic at Rhineland Pioneer Center, 227 - 10th Ave NW, Altona
Mennonite Church Manitoba www.mennochurch.mb.ca 896-1616
Mennonite Church Canada updates pandemic web resources
Increasing threats to pastors and farmers in Colombia
 - As schools cancel classes across the country and congregations gauge whether or not to hold services, Mennonite Church Canada has updated web resources created by the Mennonite Church Canada Pandemic and Response Taskforce during the last flu pandemic in 2009-2010.
Go to <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/outbreakresources> for information on how to adjust congregational practices before, during and after an outbreak. At this time, Mennonite Church Canada urges every congregation to stay up to date with recommendations from their provincial health authorities on appropriate measures to take for limit the spread of COVID-19.
 - The Colombian Mennonite Church ask us to pray for peace in Colombia. Although there has been a peace plan signed with the FARC forces (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), they report an increase in threats and violence against peasant leaders and pastors in some areas.
Pray that God's peace that transforms lives will reign in this region.
- Canadian Mennonite University** – www.cmu.ca
Mennonite Collegiate Institute – info@mciblues.net 327-5891
Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba – Manitoba@mccmb.ca
- **DaytoPray** - During this time of uncertainty, we need to come together as a community and lean into our faith. We're inviting everyone to join us as we pause on **Wednesday, March 25 for a Day to Pray** – for our neighbours, for our families and for the world.

Beloved ones of ABC – from Josh Janzen

As you may or may not know, I am scheduled to take a leave of absence for my wedding to Steph, beginning Monday March 30. My original plan was to reside here in Altona and work in the office up until that point. However, because of the uncertainty and concern around COVID-19, as of this morning (Wednesday), the United States and Canada have mutually agreed to temporarily close the border between the two countries. So in order to make sure that we will be in the United States for our wedding, Steph and I will be leaving Altona and returning to the United States today (Wednesday).

While at a distance, it is my hope to continue to minister among you until my leave begins. I will be in communication with parents and youth by email and by instagram, offering encouragement, prayer, and support during this time of uncertainty.

Steph and I ask for prayers from you our church family as we make final preparations for our wedding. The current health situation in the States is more serious than in Canada, and the most recent guidelines mandate gathering in groups of less than 10 for the next eight weeks. So it is with sadness that Steph and I acknowledge that our wedding as we have planned it will not happen. Instead we are working towards the smallest ceremony that we can plan, with the hope of our wedding day still being Saturday April 11. Pray for us as we begin our life together.

And finally, in my time serving as one of your pastors, I have been able to learn a couple things about you as the people of God. ABC family, you are resilient and you live out your faith, loving and supporting those who need it. It is in times like this that those qualities will serve us well. Beloved of God, serve one another; love one another. Call a friend, make a grocery run for an elderly neighbor.

As 2nd Timothy 1:7 says, For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

In the name of Jesus,
Josh Janzen

From the Pastor – Amanda Wiens

How did you spend this past Sunday? Did it feel unusual, lonely or empty without attending our church service? For me it did feel a little unusual and a bit lonely, going to church kick starts my week just like brushing my teeth gets me ready for the day. I could choose to go without but it's just so refreshing and energizing that your day does not feel the same without it. I woke up feeling unsure of what to do with this "free" time, but it didn't take long for me to adjust my mindset, this is our reality for the time being and it's up to me to make the most of it, to worship at home as I am able. I poured myself a large cup of coffee and sat down to enjoy the view outside my living room window. We have some amazing trees in our front yard and this winter two squirrels have made their home in our large oak trees. I've watched them countless times as they run up and down every branch, jump and tackle each other over and over again. I haven't decided yet if they are best friends having fun or two siblings in an all out brawl but either way I marvel at their ability to run from limb to limb. As I study the giant oaks and the energetic squirrels I think of all that God's hands have made and I am thankful.

Next on my new agenda, put on some music and make lunch for my family. I put on my favorite "songs of praise" playlist and sang as if I was an award winning recording artist, as the words rested on my heart, it was a warm reminder that I am loved. As the smell of bacon wafted through our home, it reminded my boys that they are loved, and as we sat and ate together I was thankful for the people around the table and the meal that we shared.

Worship may have looked very different this past Sunday, but it was a good reminder for me that worship takes all forms and the quiet time with family this past Sunday was just what I needed.

May you find ways to worship from home in the coming weeks.

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Associate Pastor of Youth Ministry: Josh Janzen, 324-6717, 1-402-631-3481 joshj@abchurch.ca