

BERGTHALER MENNONITE CHURCH of ALTONA

Sunday, December 22, 2024, 10:30 am

For a child has been born to us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Children's Christmas Program

Welcome

Song We Come VT 225

Call to Worship and Prayer

Sunday School Singing We Will Follow/ There's No One in this World
like Jesus

Readings

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Scenes 1-5 – Prophets, Gabriel's announcement, Ceaser's decree,
travel and Bethlehem

Song O Little Town of Bethlehem VT 245, v 1,2

Offering

Scene 6 – Birth proclaimed

Song Away in a Manger VT 257, vs 1

Scene 7 – Shepherds

Song The First Noel VT 250, vs 1,2

Song Joy to the World

Scene 8 – Wise Men

Song The First Noel VT 250 vs. 3,5

Silent Night VT 244 vs 1

We Wish you a Merry Christmas

Go Tell it on the Mountain VT 252 vs 1,3

There will be no kid's coin offering

This year's Advent theme is "Together on a Journey." Together as a congregation we will travel along a path that draws us closer to God and prepares us to welcome Christ anew into our hearts and our lives.

Dec 1: "Opening Hearts: What do we ask for?"- Virginia

Dec 8: "Anointing for Justice: Who Belongs?"- Mark

Dec 15: "Embodying God's Spirit: Who Lends a Hand?"- Terrell

Dec 22: Children's Christmas program

Dec 24, Tue, 6:30 pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight service at Altona Mennonite Church

Dec 25, Wed., 10:30 am Christmas Day worship at ABC - Virginia

FROM THE PASTOR – Terrell Wiebe

In the past few weeks, I have seen the play of Charles' Dickens *A Christmas Carol* three times (due to family involvement) and watched two different film adaptations. With all this time spent in the world of Ebenezer Scrooge, I have been thinking about the concept of transformation. Scrooge begins the tale as a grumpy, uncaring, solitary and covetous businessman, but through the aid of three ghosts reinvents his life by righting his wrongs and embracing charity.

What makes someone change? In some faith circles, fear of hell has been a driving force for change. The threat of some kind of eternal punishment has been found to have great effect. As I repeatedly watched Scrooge transform his ways, it struck me that *A Christmas Carol* does not rely on any kind of fear to drive Scrooge to change. Instead, the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future, share with him his affects on the world around him. Scrooge transforms because he is made to see that his actions on earth matter, not for determining his afterlife, but for the sake of life on earth now.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" The "new creation" Paul speaks of refers to God's Kingdom, which is arriving now, transforming our world. To be "in Christ" is to join the work that God is already doing on earth and be transformed by our taking part in God's justice, love and peace. Our actions matter for the here and now because they are part of the new creation that God has already begun in Jesus.

To be "in Christ", however is not something we can do on our own. We need community to hold up a mirror and show us how our actions affect the world around us as the ghosts did for Scrooge. We also need community to show us how to live a virtuous life as many characters in his past and present did for Scrooge. I suggest that Christian community can fulfill both of these roles. Though never perfect, the church can help us see ourselves for who we truly are and give us examples of the Christlike people we seek to become. Like Scrooge, it is only by first transforming ourselves that we will be able to transform the world around us and join in the new creation.

Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona 117-2nd St NW/R0G 0B1

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- CAST -

Narrators: Hannah Tiessen-Dyck, Emma Falk

Prophets: Jack Wiens, Natalie Toews, Élyse Falk

Townsppeople: Anique Falk, Evie Fast, Lennox Braun

Mary: Hazel Ginter

Joseph: Rowan Wiebe

Gabriel: Tessa Fast

Junior Angels: Cora Richert, Maizy Hildebrand

Caesar Augustus: Carter Penner

Roman Soldier: Clare Ginter

Innkeepers: Penny Wahl, Carter Penner, Clare Ginter

Shepherds: Maida Richert, Leah Tiessen-Dyck, Lily Niemczak, Caroline Norton, Leyah Doell

Wise Men: Ben Falk, Miles Hildebrand, Jack Fast

Star of Bethlehem: Atlas Friesen

Animal witnesses: Ivan Wiebe, Maverick Friesen, Tucker Braun, Oliver Neufeld, Zach Falk, Jackson Doell

Organizers: Lisa Hiebert Penner, Virginia Gerbrandt Richert

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

- PRAYER AND PRAISE -

We wish a happy birthday and God's blessing to:

Myrian Arias- Dec. 24, Tina Braun- Dec. 25,

Esme Ginter- Dec. 25, Melissa Tiessen-Dyck- Dec. 27

Hospitalized: Henry Klassen, Art Dyck and Edna Klippenstein are in the Altona Health Centre.

Congratulations to Julia Wiens whose art was chosen as one of five winners in Altona's tote bag design contest! You can purchase one of Julia's sunflower tote bags at the Town of Altona administration office.

Our condolences go to Mary and Art Dyck at the passing of their sister-in-law Joan Suderman, who died on Dec. 18 in Winnipeg.

Adult Sunday school is on pause starting December 15 until Mark is back from his Sabbatical in February. If you are interested in helping to organize Sunday School for adults in January, please be in touch with Mark. **There will be no children's Sunday school** on Dec. 29 and Jan. 5.

The church office will be closed on December 25, 26, 27 and January 1.

Dec. 24: Tuesday coffee is *cancelled*.

Dec. 31: Tuesday coffee *will go ahead*

Virginia will be on vacation from December 30 to January 6.

Terrell will be on vacation from December 26 to January 2.

Mark will be on sabbatical from January 1 – January 31.

Year end donations can be dropped off at the church office *before noon on Tuesday December 31*. Due to the postal strike here are some alternatives to deliver your donation:

- to Ang during administrative office hours (T-F, 9 am-noon), the "mail drop box" right beside Ang's office,
- to Laurie Enns' home (168 Elmcrest), or Keystone Kat.
- call/text Laurie for arrangements at 204.981.4248.

Christmas Day impromptu choir- If you would like to be a part of the Christmas day choir practice begins at 9:30 am Dec 25. All ages welcome

Thank you for your comments and suggestions at our recent fall congregational meeting. As you may recall, there was some discussion regarding the offering. The kids coin collection is very well received by the children (and the adults!) It's helped connect the children with the efforts of international organizations like Canadian Food Grains Bank, and others closer to home. Also, following a suggestion from the congregation, and initial discussion at our AGM, we committed to some changes with the adult offering. Beginning in 2025 (Jan. 5th) a clearly marked secure offering box will be placed in the foyer (at the double doors entering the sanctuary) to insert cheques, cash and envelopes. This will take the place of the ushers receiving the offering, although for the month of January, the ushers will still be present for those of us who have not yet made the transition to the offering box. If you prefer, you can also hand your offering to an usher on your way into the worship service or drop off your offering at the office Tues. through Fri., 9 - noon. We thank you for your willingness to proceed on this suggestion from the congregation. Merry Christmas from your Church Council

Pray for our Congregations: River East Church: Pray that God's Spirit will work in people's lives through the ministry of River East Church, specifically through the initiatives of this year's goal of nurturing a culture of God-centered storytelling.