

BERGTHALER MENNONITE CHURCH OF ALTONA

Sunday, December 8, 2024, 10:30 am

Second Advent

Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. Daniel 6:10

Gathering and Praise

Welcome and Announcements

Music Let's Walk Together VT 6

Call to Worship, Prayer and Candle Lighting

Music Hark! The Glad Sound! VT 217

Entering God's Story

Scripture "Muzzled" based on Daniel 6 from the Peace Table

Prayer for Offering

Children's Story

Theme Song We Come VT 225

Scripture Isaiah 61

Sermon A Steady Faith in Difficult Times

Responding in Faith

Music Let Justice Flow Down VT 791

Prayer for the Church and the World

Benediction

Music Hark! The Herald Angels Sing VT 247

Sermon: Mark Tiessen-Dyck **Worship Leading:** Rick Neufeld

Music: ABC Ensemble **Children's Story:** Josh Neufeld

Candle Lighters: Tom Braun and Frank Braun

- **CALL TO WORSHIP** based on Isaiah 61:1 -

Leader: Merciful One: you anoint us for justice, you call us to you.

People: **Your Spirit is poured out upon us.**

Leader: Yours is the way of release and restoration.

People: **May your love flow through us to heal the brokenhearted.**

May we declare your good news to bring hope to the poor.

Leader: You anoint us; we are yours.

People: **We delight and rejoice in you.**

FROM THE PASTOR – Mark Tiessen-Dyck

Our church is part of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute society of churches which means we are one of twelve churches that "own" the school. It has been several years since we had a student at MCI and there have only been a handful in the last generation. We have been unsuccessful in appointing someone to the board which is a significant right/responsibility of a society church. We do, however, contribute to the school financially (\$15,000 in 2024 as per the budget we approved).

It's not a secret that the school has faced immense challenges including enrollment (they currently have 47 students) and finances. Compounding this, MCI is a victim of the culture wars; some families have opted out of sending their kids and some churches have left the society because the school has sought to be a "large tent" and not taken sides or defined its stance on certain issues.

MCI's board and new staff leadership team are understandably focused on the enrollment challenges and exploring significant changes to the school to turn the tide. Even though there is unanimous agreement that change is needed, change can be difficult and unsettling and there may not be agreement on the direction change should go. The transition to a new leadership team this school year has not been without its challenges. The three staff leaders are not from the historic MCI constituency and they bring different style, vision, and questions than what many of us are familiar with. Some people, including myself, have raised concerns and I also spoke at the school AGM requesting more transparency from the board about the possible changes it was exploring.

As a church, there are also conversations we will need to have in the future: Are we willing and able to meet the responsibilities of being an MCI society church? What is our vision for Christian/Anabaptist/Mennonite private education? Are we willing to release the school if it is no longer viable or if changes to the school and its vision mean we cannot invest in it?

I encourage us all to uphold the school in our prayers; asking for God's wisdom, Christ's imagination, and the Holy Spirit's energy for the school board, leadership team, teachers, staff, and students

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

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CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

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. We will explore such themes as God's guidance, who is included on this journey and where we find our support. May we find hope and joy along this journey, assured that our loving God is faithful in walking with us.

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

- PRAYER AND PRAISE -

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

Denise Fast- December 9

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

Pastor Virginia is taking her weekend off.

International Witness: Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg invites you to join them in supporting the Iglesia Evangelica Menonita de Bolivia (IEMB), and the Guardería (Day Care) Samuelito in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The [Guardería Samuelito](#) is a church run day care that serves the lowest income people in their community. For more information and to donate [click here](#). You can also donate through your local or Regional Church. Mark donations: "Bolivia – IEMB – Samuelito". Join Charleswood and IEMB as they work together to care for the most vulnerable.

ABC has been asked to help contribute *financially* to the **Community Christmas dinner**. Contributions can be made to the church designated "Community Christmas dinner" or can be given directly to Carol Rempel by December 8.

- THIS WEEK AT ABC -

Sun. Dec. 8, 9:15 am: Sunday School for all ages.

Sun. Dec. 8, 10:30 am: Worship service.

Tue. Dec. 10, 10:30 am: Coffee with the Church staff.

Wed. Dec. 11, 6-8 pm: Gr. 7-12 Youth Christmas Potluck Banquet! Bring a finger food item to share for the meal. Christmas activities and games as well.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Many of the community announcements have posters in the lobby for more extensive information

Annual Longest Night Memorial Service on Dec 21. In this busy time before all the Christmas and Holiday celebrations, grief over losing a beloved person in our lives can be very hard. This service is meant to give those who attend a time and space specifically to recognize and mourn their lost loved ones, or to recognize losses of ANY kind. It is a time for quiet reflection, music, and candle lighting, with a short meditation. The names of loved ones will be read out loud for those who wish. This year the Longest Night Memorial Service is at the Altona United Church at 7:00 pm. All are welcome.

Camps With Meaning: Camps with Meaning is looking for a health officer to volunteer the Adults with Disabilities Winter Retreat at Camp Assiniboia February 17-19, 2025. Contact the office at camps@mennochurch.mb.ca or call 204-896-1616.

CMU Festival Chorus and the WSO perform Handel's Messiah, December 12-15 at 7:30 PM at Knox United Church. Purchase tickets at wso.ca/whats-on/sp8-handels-messiah-25.

Altona Food Bank: Donations can be made electronically at the Access Credit Union: rhinelandfoodbankinc@gmail.com.

Blood Donor Clinic: Thursday, Dec. 12 at the Pioneer Centre. Register with Blood.ca.

Pray for our Congregations: Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite Church: We are grateful for the unique opportunity of being the only church in Gretna. While we have limited programming, we continue to look for opportunities to be an outreach into our community. We give thanks for each person that joins us in being the church