



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

focus

April 2020

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

Pastors address pandemic opportunities and fears

Praying and preaching this Lent

First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio

Prayer by Wanda Stopher, pastor
March 22, 2020

Jesus, Our brother kind
and good,
Light of the world,
Healer, Shepherd,
Bread of life,
Living water,
We give you thanks for the
many signs of your love and
care.
We give you thanks for your
provision for our basic needs:
food, water, companionship.
And we pause to remember ourselves and
others—
all who live in fear of not having enough.
Open our eyes to those around us
who need our care,
those who are lonely,
separated from loved ones or from their homes,
all who are burdened,
disappointed, or ill.
Shine in our hearts;
Show us the way to reach out to any in need
that they may find, in turn, you seeking them.
Calm our anxious hearts that we may be clear
minded and respond with compassion in the
present,
and with imagination and hope in the future.
Heal us with your love;
Heal all our disease;
Heal us with your peace, we pray to the glory of
God.



<https://bit.ly/2XaIWMR>

Americus (Ga.) Mennonite Fellowship

Sermon by Brian Killeffer, based on Psalm 23
March 29 2020

We want to trust in God in this time of
uncertainty. [In Psalm 23] the sheep is
being sustained by following the shepherd to
where it can find substance.

The Israelites in the wilderness had manna
raining down from heaven but it wasn't an all-
you-can eat buffet. They had to be sustained by
God—trust in God that they could get their daily
bread. They couldn't store it up the way people
are doing today with toilet paper. They had to be
sustained by God. This is a Psalm about radical
trust in God.

It's a scary time for a lot of people. It's a time
to trust in God, to rely on him to walk with [us],
to share our burdens so we can carry burdens
for each other. It's an important message for us
to trust in the Lord. We hope at this time we are
able to focus on what really matters—more time
in prayer. We are all struggling with anxiety, but
God will be our sustainer; he is our shepherd
who will guide us through this.



<https://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship/>

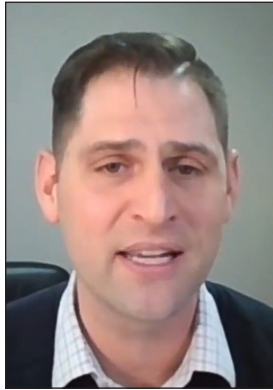
Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Sermon by Jeremy Shue, based on John 11:1-44
March 29, 2020

This pandemic is a perfect opportunity for us to do the hard internal work of saying what are the parts of me that I need to let go in the tomb so that the resurrected me—the baptized me—the person that God created me to be—can walk out.

How do we go about our week? What's the work we can do? What can we envision as Christians about God's kingdom and his coming? What can we do differently that lets the things that need to die stay in the tomb, but we have the audacity to say "Come out!" and envision something even better.

<https://bit.ly/34cvSrS>



Trenton (Ohio) Mennonite Church

Sermon by Pastor Ron Wenzel
March 29, 2020

In his sermon, Ron Wenzel drew connections between Jesus' words, "I thirst," from the cross and his offer of living water to the Samaritan woman at the well.

Jesus' message was, "Be a person whose life is a spring that wells up with living water. Living water is a life that recognizes need and in this time that we are living now, there are so many ways we can recognize need in others. Rather than being concerned about ourselves, we can reach out unselfishly and help other people. We can become living water in this situation we find ourselves in right now.

Being a life of living water starts with an active faith. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and our Savior, then we can become living water in the lives of other people.

<https://www.facebook.com/trentonmennonitechurch/>



Madison (Wisc.) Mennonite Church

Prayer by Pastor Valerie Showalter
March 29, 2020

Valerie Showalter noted that "all the gospel stories in Lent rely heavily on the goodness of the elements in order for the story to be good news." So each Sunday at Madison Mennonite they have been praying for the elements in our world as they light their peace lamp.

The focus on March 29 was dirt, as the service centered on the John 9 story of Jesus healing the blind man. Valerie acknowledged that we are facing our mortality more than ever these days, "we are afraid of becoming dirt again, for to dirt we shall return." So she prayed this prayer for the dirt:

Great creator,
who delights in the messiness of mud,
we praise you for the peace of the dirt.

...

We praise you
for the rich
earth beneath
our feet.

...

We praise you
for the dirt's
revolutionary
vocation,
breaking down
what is spent in
order to nurture new lives.

...

We praise you for the inherent goodness of mud,
slathered on our world as a healing salve. May
your gentle hands shape the earth each day,
enlivening the dirt with your breath of life.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the
peacemaker.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-e2D1wZaRBE>

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