

Fasting and Feasting
cont'd from p. 4

fasting are over and those occasions should instead become joyful and filled with gladness. They are to love truth and peace. In doing so, other people will recognize that their God dwells with them and sincerely desire to follow Him also.

With this mini summary of chapters 7-8, I hope you see with me that we don't fast to make God happy or to secure right standing before Him; our fast is an authentic sign of our love for God. It cannot merely be an external act; it must go deep—to stretch us spiritually, to open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters, to prepare us for what lies ahead. It must be an offering from the heart, like that of Jesus on the cross.

Our fast then becomes not an obligation but a gift, not a dead custom but a fruitful offering, not a cause for self-congratulation but an occasion of self-giving. When we choose to fast, may it strengthen us for what lies ahead, which is nothing less than death and resurrection.

Debbie Nightingale



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The Church Corner



First Mennonite Church
427 W. 4th Street
Halstead, KS 67056
www.firstmennonitehalstead.org
Pastor Steve Wilcox

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Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.

**The service is livestreamed on the church's Facebook page.*

"We are a community of believers who follow Jesus Christ as we receive and share God's love."

We, of First Mennonite Church, valuing the convictions of our faith, endeavor to:

- Engage our members in ministry
- Expand community outreach and
- Embrace new people in the love of Christ.

Stronger Together: Reflections on the Community Worship Service

There is something that happens when the body of Christ gathers across its many expressions. Something that feels less like a church service and more like a glimpse of eternity.

On February 22, something like that happened here in Halstead. Believers from our congregation joined brothers and sisters from United Methodist, Bethany Baptist, Halstead Life Church, and Halstead Bible Fellowship – different traditions, different styles, different ways of doing things – and we worshipped Jesus together. And it was sweet. Genuinely, deeply sweet.

The apostle Paul was saying it plainly when he wrote to the church at Ephesus: *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."* (Ephesians 4:3-6). One. He says it seven times in four verses. I don't think that's accidental.

And yet, how often do we let the non-essentials divide us? Worship style. Order of service. The way communion or baptism is done, or how the offering is received. C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* that the church is like a great hall with many rooms leading off of it – and that our first duty is to get into the hall before we start worrying too much about the particular room we'll eventually call home. What a delightful image, we share a hall, friends. We share a Lord.

I'll be honest, the service wasn't my

preferred style of worship. That's worth saying plainly, because I think pretending otherwise would miss the point. But I delighted in being a bit uncomfortable, enjoyed worshipping as I watched others worship differently. Some raising hands, some called out from pews, others were quiet in their own headspace, all worshipped Jesus. And He was there.

During the sermon, I started to think of the enemy in all of this. Scripture tells us that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). I suspect he is quite content when we let minor differences keep us in our separate corners, because a scattered church is a weakened church. Tertullian, writing in the second century, observed that what most astonished the pagan world about early Christians was simply this: *"See how they love one another."* That love – visible, cross-congregational, costly – was itself a form of spiritual warfare.

The thought that came to me and made me smile was that maybe nights like the one on February 22 make the enemy tremble a little.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that *"Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ."* We didn't manufacture what happened in February. We simply showed up – and God did what He does. Let's keep showing up. Beyond the walls of our own sanctuaries, into the wider family we already belong to.

To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations. Ephesians 3:21

Blessings,
Pastor Steve

They are planning a light supper with soups and bread/cheese boards.

- Pastor's Report: Pastor Steve reported that there was a Community Service at Halstead Life Church last night. It had good attendance. He is continuing to work through best ways to meet the needs of visiting church members and has begun using a journaling app, Day One, to help him stay organized with phone calls and meetings.
- New & Continuing Business: Membership Conversation: Plan for discussion with the congregation on April 26 following the Last Sunday Potluck. 2025 Birthday Offering: Debbie moved we give the Birthday Offering of approximately \$730 to Circles of Hope - Laundry of Love. 2nd from Denise. Motion carried.
- Other Items: David asked if they could have someone other than himself (the treasurer) sign for reimbursements for senior high youth group activities due to a conflict of interest. He and Brocia are sponsors and often have receipts to reimburse themselves. James agreed to sign for these reimbursements.

Next meeting: Mar. 23, 2026



- Pray for the plans and preparations being made for Easter. Pray that they would bring honor and glory to God and bring those who do not have a relationship with Jesus closer to him.
- Pray for those traveling during Spring Break, that they would be kept safe and be refreshed by their time away.
- Pray for those who are healing from surgeries, illnesses or accidents. Pray their bodies would heal and recover quickly.
- Pray for the Care Team, that they would have the time and resources needed to minister to those in our congregation.
- Pray for our Sunday School teachers who prepare lessons each week. Pray that they would continue to be inspired and motivated to teach their classes.
- Pray for those who are closely involved in the MCC sale planning. Pray they would get the volunteers and items they need for a successful sale.
- Pray for opportunities for the churches of Halstead to serve and love our community as a united body of Christ, and that it would be a visible demonstration of God's love and would change this community in a positive way.

Council Meeting Minutes

from Feb. 23, 2026

- Chuck Mueller opened the meeting with prayer. Minutes were approved from January as written.
- Discernment Team: Sara reported that they added some additional nursery workers this past month. They are continuing to look for help with running the projector upstairs. Jesse is training some youth for the role. We are still looking to add a member to Mission Ministry per their request.
- Vision Team: Chuck reported that the team talked about ways the church can be more aware of needs within the congregation. As a team, they evaluated the recent Covenanting and Anointing service and feel it has spiritual value for the church family. They are beginning the process of the next congregation/pastor review, which will take place later in 2026.
- Care Ministry: Ron reported that there are a number of people recovering from surgeries. Hospitality put together Valentine care boxes for those who haven't been able to attend due to winter weather conditions, health, etc. Care Ministry, and others delivered the boxes, which were well received. They used their phone chain to reach those that don't use email/facebook when church was canceled due to winter weather in Jan.
- Hospitality Ministry: Kaitlen reported that they have been active doing Valentine care packages; hosting a Bob Ross party; and creating information flyers to put in each pew.

- Mission Ministry: No report.
- Nurture Ministry: Debbie reported that Vision Team visited during their meeting. Spring SS offering will go for Mennonite Disaster Service. Wednesday night programming is wrapping up and has gone well. They completed background checks for new nursery workers. The Sr. High Youth Group enjoyed their trip to Rocky Mountain Mennonite Snow Camp last weekend. VBS is May 26-29.
- Easter schedule is as follows: Sunrise Service at 6:45 a.m. at Nightingale's Pond. We will not have the traditional carry-in breakfast but will have a social hour for adults while the children attend Sunday School as usual. The worship service will be at 10:30 a.m.
- Stewardship Ministry: David reported that most everything has been transferred to Quickbooks Online. James noted that \$25,000+ in Church Maintenance Fund is from the Insurance payout for the roof that will be fixed this summer. Kaitlen requested it not be done during VBS week. David will put a reminder in the bulletin to raise awareness about IRA giving and tax benefits. Gregg suggested looking into an online giving option. James reported that the fridge in kitchen isn't cooling like it should and he's looking into it. Cleaning of the carpets will take place mid-March. Leon is working on selling the large battery operated sweeper.
- Worship Ministry: Denice reported they have planned for Palm Sunday and Easter. They picked the Lenten season topic "Unbound." This is the year for Maundy Thursday service (alternates with Good Friday every other year).



March Calendar

Mar. 1	12:00 p.m.	Advanced Bells practice
Mar. 4	5:00 p.m.	Kids Club
	6:00 p.m.	Wed. night meal
	8:00 p.m.	Easter Cantata practice
Mar. 8	10:30 a.m.	Advanced Bells play during worship
	6:00 p.m.	Jr. & Sr. High Youth Groups
	6:00 p.m.	Women's Bible Study
Mar. 11	7:00 p.m.	Easter Cantata practice
Mar. 22	6:00 p.m.	Jr. & Sr. High Youth Groups
	6:00 p.m.	Women's Bible Study
Mar. 23	6:00 p.m.	Nurture meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Church Council meeting
Mar. 24	7:30 p.m.	Vision Team meeting
Mar. 25	7:00 p.m.	Easter Cantata practice

Mar. 26	9:00 a.m.	Prayer Team meeting
Mar. 29	12:00 p.m.	Last Sunday Potluck

Easter Weekend Schedule

April 2	6:00 p.m.	Maundy Thursday observance
April 4	7:00 p.m.	Jesus! Cantata
April 5	6:45 a.m.	Easter Sunrise Service at Nightingale's pond
	9:15 a.m.	Sunday School for Children & Youth/ Fellowship Hour for Adults
	10:30 a.m.	Worship Service

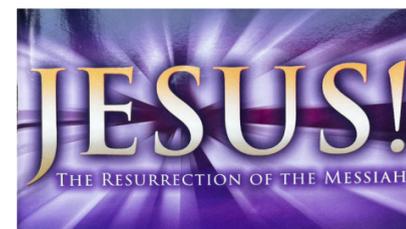
Looking Ahead

April 10-11	MCC Sale
April 11	Neighbors Store Taco Dinner
May 2-3	Camp Mennoscah Weekend
May 26-29	Vacation Bible School

Upcoming Church Events

Jesus! Cantata Easter Weekend

Celebrate Easter through song on Saturday, April 4, at 7:00 p.m., as we begin our Easter celebration. The resurrection of Jesus changed the world and continues to change the world today. *Jesus! The Resurrection of the Messiah* tells the intimate story of the



grief, the fear, the hope, the love, the tenderness, and the longing of God for His children expressed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. *Jesus!* will take you through the emotions of the Triumphant Entry, the raising of Lazarus, the Last Supper, the moment in the garden when Jesus is arrested, the Crucifixion, and finally to the joyous Resurrection. This worship experience is an inspiring reminder of the life-changing impact of this Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior...Jesus!

Care Packages for College Students

It's time to bless our college students again! We will be collecting snacks (tortilla chips, salsa queso, skittles, other candy, etc.) and gift cards (fast food, gas, etc.) We will be collecting items under the coat rack throughout the month of March. Thank you for your contributions!

Last Sunday Potluck

Join us for the March Last Sunday Potluck on March 29 following the worship service. All are welcome!

VBS 2026: Rainforest Falls

Save the Date! The Halstead Community VBS will be May 26-29, 2026, from 9-11:30 a.m. in our church. More info to come!



MCC & Camp Mennoscah

The MCC Comforter Blitz will be March 2-4 at Journey facilities at Yoder. More information can be found on their website: <https://mcc.org/events/mcc-comforter-blitz>

Online Registration for the 2026 Summer Youth Camps is open. The theme for the summer is "In the Wilderness." Through the new, strange and unknown of "wilderness," we will discover the sacred within each person and all creation and meet God there. Summer Youth Camps are for youth in grades 3-12 (Fall 2026). Register at <https://campmennoscah.campbrainregistration.com/>

Church Announcements

1. The deadline for the April newsletter is Monday, March 23.
2. The Neighbors Store pantry requests cash donations for Easter meal boxes for the month of March.
3. Offering schedule for March:
 - Mar. 1: MC USA
 - Mar. 8: Church Budget
 - Mar. 15: Bethel College
 - Mar. 22: Camp Mennoscah
 - Mar. 29: Western District Conf.
4. The link for our church online library is librarything.com/catalog/FMCHalstead.



- 1 Joyce Lee
- 2 Anna Lee Ewert (93 years)
- 3 Luann Yutzy
- 4 Tom Rose
- 5 Audra McEvoy
- 6 Maggie Black
- 6 Gregg Dalke
- 9 (A) Paul & Julia Kaufman
- 14 Joseph Cannon
- 14 (A) Barry & Ann Unruh
- 14 Joshua Finley
- 15 Larry Finley
- 15 (A) Terry & Karen Linn
- 17 Maranda Whorton
- 18 Lee Snell
- 19 (A) Brent and Amy Buchholz
- 20 Brian Penner
- 22 (A) Waldon & Rhonda Regier
- 23 Jarod Cannon
- 24 Jaxon Smoker
- 27 Joshua Heath
- 27 (A) Brian & Jennifer Penner
- 29 Emily Buchholz
- 29 Delton Klassen
- 29 Hannah Chandler
- 30 Jocelyn Kloepfer
- 31 Everett Pankratz

February Happenings at First Mennonite



Clockwise from right: Sr. High Youth attended Snow Camp at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp; Kids Club singing; Jr. High Youth served a meal at New Hope Shelter in Newton; Bob Ross Painting Party for all ages; Jr. High Youth service night where they packed hygiene kits for MCC.



Fasting and Feasting

It's the Lenten season and all around us people may choose to fast from this or that. Others may be adding something positive or adjusting attitudes, schedules or actions. As I contemplated these customs, I began to wonder what God thinks of this? What are the motivations for fasting or adjusting actions during Lent?

In the Bible study I'm attending, we just finished studying Zechariah 7-8. It is a timely scripture passage to look at during Lent. A remnant of the Jewish people had returned to Jerusalem after being in exile for 70 years. God was directing them, through the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed. Their priests were to be leading the people in correct worship of God and to encourage the people to return their hearts to God. There was opposition from their enemies as well as from their own self-centeredness. We read in Zechariah 7, finally, the work on the temple was making progress and a group of people came to Jerusalem to ask if they should continue to mourn and

fast as they had for all those years of exile.

Through the prophet Zechariah, God asked these people questions instead: "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?" (Zechariah 7:5-6). Later, in v. 8-10, the Lord's words continue saying: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow, or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other."

Thoughts on LENT

God was asking where their hearts were when they were fasting and feasting; was it really for God or was it for

themselves?

Moving into chapter 8 we see God desiring and promising to bless. He promises to return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem (8:3). After all, these were His chosen people (read Genesis 12:1-3). We see God, in Zechariah 8:1-19, finally answering the question asked in 7:5-6. He tells them that the months of

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Jim and Lois Loflin are this month's "sheep," and have been part of FMC's congregation for nearly 62 years.

Jim and Lois Loflin moved to Halstead in 1964 to teach at Halstead High School—Jim in social studies and Lois in English and journalism. They visited First Mennonite their first Sunday in town. It was a natural fit for them, and they've been here ever since.

Lois was raised in a Mennonite church, and her father was a pastor. During her childhood she lived in Goessel, Burrton, Newton, and Geary, Oklahoma. After graduating from high school, she enrolled at Bethel College. Around that time, her family moved to Fredonia, Kansas, following the hiring of her father to pastor two churches—the Mennonite church and the Church of the Brethren church. "Both churches were so tiny that they combined the two and met in the

Church of the Brethren's building," Lois said.

Jim, a native of Fredonia, attended the Church of the Brethren. After high school, he graduated from Independence Community Junior College (now Independence Community College) and Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. His schooling was interrupted when he enlisted in the Army for three years. He spent one year in Washington, D.C., and two years in northern Italy, working in supply and transporting officers where they needed to go. Following his graduation, he secured a social studies teaching position in the tiny, southwestern Kansas town of Moscow.



Jim and Lois Loflin

"Teaching in Moscow was an experience," Jim stated. "There were only 37 kids in the high school (at the time), and one year I had just two students in my geography class."

Both Jim and Lois would travel to Fredonia to visit their families, which also meant attending church together on Sundays. During one of these visits, Jim's mother suggested he call Lois. The suggestion proved to be a good one. The

couple married in 1963 and lived for one year in Moscow, where both held teaching positions.

They moved to Halstead in 1964 and spent the remainder of their careers at Halstead High School. Jim retired in 1999 after 38 years of teaching, 35 of them in Halstead. Lois retired a year later, having taught a total of 31 years in Moscow and Halstead. She also took time off while her children were young, returning to the classroom when their oldest entered kindergarten.

In their nearly 62 years at FMC, Jim and Lois have served in a wide variety of roles. Jim taught Sunday School and served on the Stewardship and Discernment committees. He also painted in the church following the attic fire in 1973. Lois taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School classes, directing the entire VBS program for a few years. She participated and served in the Women's Mission Society, served as a deacon, and sang in the choir, which was her personal favorite.

As a couple they served on the Social Committee for a long time (Jim's role on the Discernment Committee meant he often signed them up for the Social Committee when openings weren't filled by others.) and were youth sponsors. A highlight during their youth sponsor days was traveling to Kansas City to paint a house. Their life revolved around the church. "Whenever there was something, even like cleaning the church, we were there participating," Lois said.

In their retirement, the Loflins enjoyed traveling. They visited China twice, Italy, Jordan, Israel, and Alaska.

They also visited various locations in South America while on a cruise and followed the travels of Paul during a trip to Greece.

Two and a half years ago, the Loflins downsized and moved to North Newton. They are often asked why they do not attend a church closer to their current home. But their friends and their Sunday school class remain an integral part of their lives. "That church is home and where our friends are," Jim said. Lois added, "We're happy with our church. We think things are going very well."

Jim and Lois have two children, Joel and Linda, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



Treasurer's Report

Budget Balance @1-1-26	12,217.68
Jan. Receipts	7,941.00
Jan. Expenses	(11,562.74)
Budget balance @1-31-26	8,595.94