

Still Worth More Than You Know

A speaker opened his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill and asking a crowd of 200 people, "Who would like this?"

Nearly every hand went up.

"I'll give it to one of you," he said. "But first..." He crumpled the bill tightly in his fist. "Who still wants it?"

Hands remained in the air.

He dropped it to the floor and ground it under his shoe. Then he picked up the wrinkled, dirty bill. "How about now?"

The hands rose again.

"My friends," he said, "you've just learned an important lesson. No matter what I did to the money, it never lost its value. It was still worth \$20." Life can feel the same way. We are dropped, crumpled and ground down by our choices and by circumstances beyond our control. At times, we may even feel worthless. But our value does not change.

In God's eyes, you are never less than priceless. Clean or dirty, wrinkled or whole, you remain precious to Him. As Isaiah 43:4 says in the NIV, "You are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you."



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The Church Corner



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

Phone: 316-835-2282

Email: office@firstmennonitehalstead.org

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.

Praise in the Midst of the Busy

"Here I am staring down a week that is more than full, meetings, conversations to lead, responsibilities to carry, and the quiet weight of preparation pressing in between it all. I wouldn't say I am despairing, yet it feels daunting. There is a certain fatigue that comes not from what has already been done, but from what still lies ahead. And as I sat with the Scriptures this morning, preparing for Sunday, I found my thoughts turning toward praise, toward the curious and persistent call to worship God not after the storm, but in the midst of it.

I was preparing to preach on Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Beaten and imprisoned, their circumstances were far more severe than a crowded calendar. Yet there they were, praying and singing hymns at midnight (Acts 16:25). It is a humbling comparison. If pain and chains did not silence their praise, can busyness rightly silence mine? Can it silence ours?

The honest answer is no. And yet, if we are candid, busyness has a way of dulling our awareness of God. Not because He is absent, but because our attention is divided. Praise in such seasons rarely looks like extended, uninterrupted moments. Instead, it becomes something woven and threaded quietly into the fabric of the day. A whispered prayer between appointments. A hymn recalled while walking. A moment of gratitude offered in the midst of a task.

The Psalmist writes, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall

continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1). "All times" must surely include the hurried ones. And Paul later exhorts believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), not as an unrealistic burden, but as an invitation to a life lived in constant awareness of God's presence.

There is, I suspect, a hidden grace in learning to praise God in busy seasons. It reorients the heart. It reminds us that our worth is not measured by our productivity, nor our peace by the completion of our tasks. Instead, we find a steadiness that comes from walking with Christ through the noise rather than waiting for silence to return.

So perhaps the call is not to escape the busyness, but to redeem it—to look for those small openings where praise can take root. A breath prayer. A verse held close. A quiet acknowledgment that even here, God is near.

And here is the encouragement we cling to: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17). Even our busiest days fall within the "whatever." Even there, gratitude can grow, and worship can rise.

May we find, then, not only the strength to endure our full schedules, but the grace to praise God within them, and in doing so, discover that He has been present all along."

Blessings,
Pastor Steve

Stories of Motherhood

He could arrive any day. He had been using my bladder as a trampoline for months. And his 2-year-old brother had started asking, "Baby out? Baby out now?"

I was propped up on the couch finishing Francine Rivers' two novel set that follows one woman after another through generations of motherhood: Her Mother's Hope & Her Daughter's Dream.

I appreciated the way she wove each woman's story into the next, allowing me to imagine how their experiences and emotions cascaded into each other in ways that the women themselves never actually saw or understood.

It was inspired by Rivers' personal family lineage and made me think about where I stand in my generational stream.

I closed the book and considered going back to bed, but the contractions were getting fairly uncomfortable, so I never did. He was born two hours later!

I was always told that my own arrival into the world interrupted a bell choir rehearsal. Interestingly, I only learned what a bell choir was when I came to this church. I'm pleased to share these two thought-provoking books with the congregation that has taught me so much. I hope you'll check them out!

Casey Jacob, Church Librarian



- Pray for the graduates in our congregation as they move onto the next phase of their life. Pray they would hear from the Holy Spirit as they navigate the decisions, challenges and joys of the next part of their journey.
- Pray for VBS! Pray for kids to attend, enough volunteers, for good weather and for kids to remember what they learned about God's love for them.
- Pray for the Worship Ministry, that they would have Holy Spirit-inspired ideas to help lead our congregation into rich and meaningful worship.
- Pray for our farming families as they approach a busy harvest season. Pray for their safety, that equipment would work the way it should, and that bad weather would not damage the harvest.
- Pray for our teachers and school-aged kids, that they would finish the school year well.
- Pray for those experiencing health issues. Pray they would receive the help and relief they need.
- Pray for those who tired and worn out. Pray that the joy of the Lord would be their strength. Pray they would find ways to be refreshed and renewed.

Community Events



The Brick Street Classic Golf Tournament will be held Saturday, May 16, at Wedgewood Golf Course and will benefit both the Halstead Chamber of Commerce and Wedgewood Golf Course. To register, call the Wedgewood Clubhouse at 316-835-2991. For information on hole sponsorships or for volunteer opportunities, contact Macey Mueller at 405-880-4995.

BRICK STREET CLASSIC
Saturday, May 16, 2026
WEDGEWOOD GOLF COURSE - HALSTEAD
Benefiting the Halstead Chamber of Commerce and Wedgewood Golf Course

4-PERSON TEAM \$380 (Cash or Check)
Includes:
18-Hole Green Fees & Cart Rental
Two Mulligans Per Player
Lunch & Snacks
Prizes for Top Teams, Longest Putt & Closest to the Pin

HOLE SPONSORSHIPS
\$100 Per Sign
\$150 for Two Signs
Team + One Sign \$400
For more information, contact Macey Mueller at 405-880-4995

TOURNAMENT DETAILS
7:30 am - Registration
8:30 am - Shotgun Start
Call the Wedgewood Clubhouse at 316-835-2991 to Pre-Register by May 13
Carts Limited - Register Early

CASH PRIZES FOR 1ST AND 2ND PLACE TEAMS IN EACH FLIGHT!

Organizational Events

MCC Sale Celebration

Join us for a special evening of fellowship and gratitude on Friday, June 5, at 6:00 p.m., at the Maynard Knepp and Carol Duerksen Farm, 1582 Falcon, Hillsboro, as we celebrate the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale. This celebration is a reflection on a very successful decade for KMRS. An appreciation dinner will be provided at no cost for all who volunteered, attended, and supported the Sale. Enjoy an evening of music and a special presentation to MCC. Please bring lawn chairs. RSVP to Barb at 620-543-6863 (call/text) or bj.reeves@live.com by May 18. We look forward to celebrating with you!

Pine Village Benefit Day

Pine Village's Benefit Day will include their pulled pork and baby back ribs fundraiser and their annual car show on Saturday, May 9 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. A BBQ dinner (cost by donation) will be from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. The event is free for spectators and includes inflatables for the children. BBQ pre-orders can be picked up at the Wellness Center during the car show or on May 11 or from 12 - 3 p.m. If you have a vehicle you would like to show, sign up online at www.pinevillageks.org/eventsignup or call 620.345.2901. Car Show entries are \$20.



Middle School

- Garris Clarkson - Andover Central Middle School
- David Haspels - Halstead Middle School.
- Josie Whorton - Halstead Middle School.
- Max Whorton - Halstead Middle School.

Graduate School

- Erica Schlender - Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling from Colorado Christian University.



May Calendar

May 2-3		Camp Mennoscah weekend - no services in Halstead
May 17	6:00 p.m.	Jr. & Sr. High Youth Groups
	6:00 p.m.	Women's Bible Study
May 19	7:30 p.m.	Vision Team meeting
May 26	9:00 a.m.	VBS
May 27	9:00 a.m.	VBS
May 28	9:00 a.m.	VBS
May 29	9:00 a.m.	VBS
	7:00 p.m.	VBS program

Looking Ahead

June 7 Sunday School Picnic

Upcoming Church Events

Rainforest Falls Vacation Bible School

- Halstead & Bentley Community VBS
- May 26-29, 2026
- 9-11:30 a.m.
- Age 3 through rising 5th graders
- First Mennonite Church
- Register by scanning the QR code below or at firstmennonitehalstead.org/vbs



Volunteers

Volunteers are still needed for the week. Scan the QR code to sign up or register at firstmennonitehalstead.org/vbs

Closing Program

Join us Friday, May 29, at 7 p.m. for a fun recap of our VBS week. Kids will share daily Bible points and songs from the week. A cookie and lemonade fellowship will follow in Stauffer Hall.



Women's Bible Study Wrap-Up

The Women's Bible Study will wrap up their spring study on Gideon on Sunday, May 17, at 6:00 p.m. with an ice cream bar and time of fellowship. All women are invited to join us regardless of if you participated in the study or not. Sign up on the bulletin board or let Kaitlen or Melanie know if you can join us!



Church Picnic

The annual Church Picnic will be Sunday, June 7, beginning at 5 p.m. at the Nightingale's, 2819 N. Spring Lake Road. Please plan to attend and invite a friend or neighbor. The menu will be a carry-in meal so bring a yummy dish or two to share. Drinks and tableware will be provided. Don't forget a lawn chair or blanket to sit on. The Nurture Ministry will provide games and activities to participate in. This evening is always an enjoyable one of fellowship and connection, so please plan to join us! In case of inclement weather we will use Stauffer Hall.



Clockwise from top left: Jamison Smoker leads the Palm Sunday procession, youth hang around after the Verenike Supper, Easter Sunrise Service, Dwight Mueller with tasty green beans for the Verenike Supper, and the choir on Easter Sunday.



Verenike Supper and Easter at First Mennonite



The Verenike Supper on February 28 required all hands on deck and FMC is blessed with the very best! Clockwise from top left: Shirley Rodenberg and her granddaughter Eleanor; Garrett Whorton; Ron Dick; Arnita Haury; Cindy Siemens, Marilyn Schrag, Sara Dick and Marilyn Balzer.



- 1 (A) Dale & Janet Ortman
- 2 Adler Davis
- 2 Shelly Robinson
- 3 Mike Stahl
- 3 Duane Cummings
- 6 Jo Pjesky
- 6 Clea Jean Friesen
- 6 Chuck Mueller
- 9 (A) Rick & Cathy Frost
- 10 Joyce Koehn
- 10 Jill Backhus
- 11 Rick Frost
- 13 Jason Smoker
- 13 Larry Gaston
- 14 Tyler Regier
- 14 Charlotte Milne
- 15 Kris Mueller
- 16 Edith Unruh
- 17 Kalyn Ortman
- 17 Kyla Whorton
- 17 Jenna Wellman
- 18 Beatriz Rose
- 19 (A) Mike & Lise Bollinger
- 24 Jamison Smoker
- 24 (A) Brett & Casey Jacob
- 24 Heather Finley
- 25 Joe Regier
- 26 (A) Brett & Becca Rose
- 26 Ann Unruh

- 27 (A) Paul & Crescent Haury
- 28 (A) Michael & Kathleen Groom
- 29 (A) Brad & Joyce Rodenberg
- 30 (A) James & Debbie Nightingale
- 31 Tanner Regier

Church Announcements

1. The deadline for the June newsletter is Monday, May 25.
2. The Neighbors Store pantry requests canned tuna in water and canned fruit for May.
3. Offering schedule for May:
 - May 3: Church Budget
 - May 10: Western District Conf.
 - May 17: Church Budget
 - May 24: MCUSA
 - May 31: Harvey Co. Health Min.
4. The link for our church online library is librarything.com catalog/FMCHalstead.

Treasurer's Report

Budget Balance @2-28-26	\$6,223.35
March Receipts	\$8,642.89
March Expenses	(\$12,547.55)
Budget balance @3-31-26	\$2,318.69



Erica Schlender has been at FMC for two years. A graduate school requirement is what ultimately brought her here.

Erica grew up in Burrton, Kansas, in the United Methodist Church, where her dad was a lay leader and her mom played piano. She began taking piano lessons from her mom in second grade, and her mom continued as her teacher until Erica graduated from high school. They made that arrangement work by starting every lesson with prayer.

"We learned that prayer is the first thing you do," Erica said. "It helped calm both of us down and made everything go a little smoother."

Erica attended McPherson College, where she majored in elementary education and eventually became a piano teacher herself. She has continued teaching piano and currently has 16 students.

After graduating, she took a teaching job in Lewis, Kansas, where she lived for five years. There, she taught a combination of K-6 music and band, 3rd grade and 6th grade math.

"It was an amazing experience—the people and the community were very much like a family," Erica said of her time in Lewis.

"The superintendent took on a fatherly role for me, and I'm still close to my mentor teacher and the friends I made there."

When she felt it was time to return home, Erica left without a job or a place to live. She stayed with her grandmother, who needed some assistance at the time, while subbing and working with her dad in his agronomy business.

During that period, she also taught FMC youth member David Haspels while filling a long-term substitute role for his pre-K teacher.

After a three-year stint at the Rural Life Center in Walton, Erica realized her heart was no longer in the classroom. She transitioned to working full-time as an agronomist with her dad's business.



Erica Schlender

In that role, she worked closely with farmers, scouting fields to assess insects, weeds, crop stages, overall health, and irrigation needs. Through her conversations in the fields, she began to notice the anxiety and depression many farmers carry, which led her to consider graduate school in counseling.

"I told God that if I was accepted to Colorado Christian University, I would continue on this path," Erica said. "If not, I would stay in agronomy. It was definitely not something I saw coming."

A class requirement during her master's program ultimately led her to FMC.

"I had to immerse myself in a culture I didn't know, so I attended a Holderman Mennonite church for about a month," Erica said. "I was drawn to the quiet, smaller, and more intimate setting, and I wanted to continue in that type of environment. I knew Brocia (Mueller) really well and was drawn to the outreach to the community and the events that were done together. It just feels like a family within the congregation, so I decided to start attending."

That was in the spring of 2024, and since then, Erica has found many ways to get involved at FMC. She serves as one of the high school youth sponsors and will begin teaching the K-2 Sunday School class in May. She also shares her musical talents, often playing piano duets with Ruth Mueller.

What continues to mean the most to her about FMC is its outreach to the community and the way people come together to use their resources to bless one another.

Erica completed her master's degree in mental health counseling in December 2025 and will participate in graduation ceremonies on May 8. She is now a self-employed counselor, renting space for her practice at Shine Integrative Therapy in Newton, while also continuing her work as an agronomist with her dad's business.

When she's not working or teaching piano, Erica enjoys traveling. She has visited Egypt, Italy, Germany, and Austria, and she plans to travel to Ireland next year. She also has a goal of running a half marathon in every state. She has completed races in eight states so far and will cross Kansas off her list this October.

Backpacks & School Supplies

The Halstead Interfaith Council will donate funds to our Halstead / Bentley School District for backpacks and school supplies for families in need. Congregation members from all our community churches are invited to contribute. If you would like to donate to this fund, please write your checks to First Mennonite Church and designate Interfaith School Supplies. We may make our donations any time until the end of May. Thank you for helping to support our students and their families.

