

THE MIDWEEK



WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY 9:30 AM

This Sunday, Kevin Chupp will preach a sermon titled *A Different Diligence* using 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

When Paul takes up a collection for the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem, he asks the Corinthians to be inspired by the generosity of the Macedonians who gave joyfully and generously despite their own challenges. Instead of being merely a request, he asks the Corinthians to receive this as a test about something essential to the meaning of the gospel and the story of God's provision throughout history. Mutual aid is one expression of what Paul is talking about here. How do we talk about God's provision and generosity and our part in it?

The service will be live streamed on YouTube at this [link](#).
The bulletins get posted under the Worship tab of our [website](#).

After Worship

Adult CE
Rooms 5 & 7



**Mennonite
Church
of Normal**

A congregation of
Mennonite Church USA



"Last call" for Vision Team Ballot

Deadline for Voting: Today, July 29 at 5 pm

Ben's term as Vision Team chair will end on December 31, 2026. He will step down from the Vision Team at that time. Helen will also leave Vision Team on December 31, 2026—the end of her term. The congregation will need to select two people to join Amy and Joe and Pastoral Team representative Lauren Satchwell on the Vision Team. **Please vote for two members to join the Vision Team using [this form](#) today. Deadline: 5 p.m. tonight!**

Shared by the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team



Yard Hymn Sing

Today, July 29 at 6:30 pm

You are invited to sing with Mark and Jane at their home on Wednesday evening, July 29 at 6:30 pm. This is a time of deep connection and support for Mark and Jane and their family as well as those who know and love them well. Please bring a hymnal (*Voices Together*) if you have one and a lawn chair. Hymnals will also be available for those that don't have a copy. Come and share in this time of care and compassion.



Celebration of Life for Ardys Serpette

This Saturday, August 1: Visitation at 9:00 am and Service at 10:00 am

A Celebration of Life service for Ardys Serpette will be held on August 1 at the Mennonite Church of Normal. Visitation will be at 9:00 am, Service will be at 10:00 am, Lunch will follow immediately afterwards. The Interment service will be at 3:00 pm at Pike Township Cemetery in Graymont, Illinois. Read Ardys's obituary [here](#). Please remember her family in prayers as they grieve.

Meal for Celebration of Life



There will be a shared meal following the Celebration of Life for Ardys Serpette on August 1. If you are willing to provide a salad (to serve 10) or dessert for this, contact Marge. Thank you!

Presentation on MMN Service Adventure

This Sunday, August 2 at 5 pm at the MRC Community Building

Our own Ian will share about his year in Alaska with Mennonite Mission Network's Service Adventure, a 10-month gap-year program. Everyone is welcome at the Mennonite Residential Community Community Building at 5pm.

Shared by the Community Life Commission

Menno Haven Sunday



Sunday, August 16 at 10:00 am

WHEN: Sunday, August 16

WHERE: Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center, Tiskilwa, IL

WHAT:

- Worship Service, 10:00 a.m.
- Lunch, noon.
- Afternoon activities available - swimming, canoeing, paddle boating, lawn games, fishing (bring your gear), zip lining (sign up available soon), hiking, relaxing and visiting

DETAILS:

- **Sign up** at the table in the fellowship area or contact Marge
- There will be a lifeguard on duty.
- Lunch suggested donations: Adults \$15.00, Children 10 and under \$7.00, Children 3 and under free
- There will be no services at MCN on this day.

Please join together for a fun filled day of worship and fellowship!

From the Community Life Commission

Meals for Jane and Mark

Many of you would like to be supportive of Jane and Mark during this time. I will be coordinating meals as requested by Jane. The needs are changing week by week and so I would appreciate knowing if you could be available with relatively short notice to prepare a meal. If I have a list of folks to call, that would be most helpful. Please email me with your availability. Thank you.

Shared by Lynn on behalf of the Congregational Care Committee

Little Free Library



If you know where the book cabinet went that was damaged in a storm for the free little library at our South entrance, please contact Lauren Satchwell (lauren@normalmennonite.org). Thanks!

Shared by Lauren Satchwell

CDC Connector



The newest edition of Central District Conference's monthly Connector publication is now available to read [here](#). The July issue of the Connector is full of photos and reflections from last month's Annual Meeting at EMU. We also celebrate recent graduates from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, including the first DMin program graduates! **If you would like a paper copy, they are now available to take from the Library Table.**

It's that time of year again. SCHOOL KITS FOR MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. You have all been so supportive in the past so LETS DO IT AGAIN. Each kit costs approximately \$5, give or take. We did over 300 last year, lets do more this year!!! We have several ways you can help.

1. Go and buy the supplies yourself. There is a list of supplies below.
2. Donate to the church and designate for SCHOOL KITS. This allows us to order bulk quantities, tax free, and it comes right to the church.
3. Sew bags. Deanna has precut bags and fabric. See her, or you can do your own.
View instructions [here](#).
4. You can help assemble kits when we have all the supplies

QUESTIONS SEE: Deanna and Louise

Contents of a School Kit (NEW items only)

- 4 spiral or perforated-page notebooks: 8.5 in x 10.5 in; 70 sheets each
- 8 new unsharpened pencils
- 1 ruler: flat, good quality; must indicate 30 cm (inch markings optional)
- 12 colored pencils in packaging
- 1 large eraser
- 4 new black or blue ballpoint pens
- MCN will provide pencil sharpeners that meet MCC requirements



Summer Worship Series

Collaborative Formation: How Working for Peace Forms and Connects Us.

One very tired claim from religious people is that those committed to social justice tend to neglect spiritual life. However, if we recognize how working for justice is itself formative, we can offer a counter argument. Perhaps those who are committed to "spiritual life," at the expense of justice work are in fact, ironically, neglecting their formation. And just like spiritual practice, justice work ought to be unifying, shared work rather than isolating, private piety.

- **August 2 - Mutual Aid**
- August 9 - Divestment
- August 16 - Menno Haven

- August 23 - Patience
- August 30 - Impatience
- September 6 - Hope

Bite-sized pieces of our shared history leading up to our 50th anniversary celebration 9/27/26. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) is over 200 miles away, but some things make it seem closer to home. The C.J. & Wilma Dyck Guesthouse should sound familiar to MCN folks since C.J. and Wilma moved here after he retired from teaching at AMBS. Could Waltner Hall be named for James (Jim) Waltner who was an MCN pastor at the time of the merger? Answer: actually, no! Jim did indeed teach at AMBS and wrote the commentary on Psalms for the Believer's Church Bible Commentary, but the building is named after Erland Waltner, the first president of AMBS. *Do you have a factoid to share? Send it to: kevin@normalmennonite.org*



This Week at MCN



A BRIEF LOOK AT THE CHURCH CALENDAR:

Wednesday, July 29

1:00 pm Quilting

6:30 pm Hymn Sing at Mark & Jane's Home

Thursday, July 30

7:00 am Next Man Bible Study

9:30 am Women's Bible Study

Saturday, August 1

9:00 am Visitation for Ardys Serpette

10:00 am Celebration of Life for Ardys Serpette

Sunday, August 2

5:00 pm Presentation on MMN Service Adventure

Tuesday, August 4

3:00 pm Pastoral Team (Zoom)

Wednesday, August 5

1:00 pm Quilting



Those Serving This Week





Birthdays & Anniversaries

CELEBRATING LIFE'S MOMENTS AT MCN



Sharing of Joys and Concerns



MCN IS ASKED TO BE IN CONTINUED PRAYER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AT CARLE BROMENN MEDICAL CENTER—OUR PARTNER IN HEALING FOR 2026

Prayer Requests and Announcements

Prayer requests can be shared during the Sharing Joys and Concerns portion of our Worship Service. For other announcements, please send them to Lauren Satchwell (lauren@normalmennonite.org) ahead of time so that these can be shared by the worship leader during the Community Life portion of the service. When sharing, it's helpful if your requests are succinct.



SCAI Conference at Hungry World Farm

October 1-4

SCAI (Sustainable Christian Agriculture Initiatives) Conference at Hungry World Farm: The conference happens October 1-4 at the farm near Princeton, IL. Come and learn from an exciting lineup of [speakers](#) about how sustainable, regenerative agriculture connects with our faith, our health and our human spirit. To register or sponsor someone else's attendance, scroll way down on the [conference web page](#) to the Magic Buttons. Thanks for your interest and support!

Shared by Susie Kauffman, Hungry World Farm Board Member

Urge Congress to oppose the MRCA and pass the Mining Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Prevention Act

Background: Mining for energy transition minerals and other critical minerals is expanding rapidly. These minerals are essential components for AI infrastructure, the weapons industry and the energy transition to solar, wind and electric batteries. Yet mining for them is governed by an 1872 law that fails to protect public lands and surrounding communities from harm. More than a century of reckless mining has poisoned air, water and land and has disproportionately impacted Indigenous communities. One proposed bill, the **Mining Regulatory Clarity Act (MRCA)**, would further limit the regulation of mining on public lands and allow mining companies to dump toxic waste without local consultation. Companies could also construct roads and pipelines through environmentally and culturally sensitive lands without a permit. Several members of Congress want to attach the MRCA to must-pass legislation or to energy permitting bills. An alternative bill, the **Mining Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Prevention Act**, would mandate strong environmental protections, encourage battery recycling, prioritize local consultation, and protect sacred sites. **Faith reflection:** We are called by God to love our neighbors. How can we be silent when the water and land our neighbors depend on is being poisoned? As part of God's Creation, our attitude toward the Earth should be one of humility and care, rather than blind extraction. **Action:** click [here](#) to urge Congress to oppose the MRCA and pass the Mining Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Prevention Act.

Shared by Mennonite Central Committee US National Peace & Justice Ministries

Seminary introduces Ecotheology Studies offerings

Interested in the relationship between faith and the natural environment? AMBS has developed three new Ecotheology Studies programs for people who want to grow in practicing ecological justice. These offerings grow out of the seminary's commitments to peace, justice, environmental sustainability and creation care. The programs are designed to meet students where they're at — whether they want to study on campus or from a distance, full time or part time, short term or long term. **Read Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's news release [here](#).**

Start where you stand: how young people are choosing local action over climate despair

In February 2025, I travelled to Guatemala with a group of MCC colleagues to hear first-hand from partners whose lives are being shaped by the climate crisis. What I found there — and what happened when I brought those stories home — is a reminder that meaningful change often starts very small, and very close to the ground. In the highlands of Alta Verapaz, young Indigenous Kekchi farmers described watching their harvests shrink year by year. Dario used to bring in 2,500 pounds of corn from his small farm. Lately, it's been less than half that. Cardamom yields — a cash crop that takes two to four years to grow — have dropped to about 10% of what they once were. As a result, people were moving away from their home communities — into the city, or even out of the country. A staggering 20% of Guatemala's economy is driven by remittances from Guatemalans working in the US. It's not just about crops failing. It's about livelihoods, relationships, and cultures being slowly eroded. But at MCC partner Centro Educativo Menonita Kekchi Bezaleel, a Mennonite boarding high school for low-income families, I met students and teachers who were doing something about it. They were learning new crops and new ways of growing them, and taking those lessons back to their communities. One student, a Grade 12 girl named Noreen, stood out. Rather than pointing fingers at the countries whose carbon emissions dwarf her own, she acknowledged her own role in the degradation of the land: *"We cut down too many trees. We don't have shade anymore. This is our fault."* If this young Indigenous woman is taking accountability and action, how much more responsibility do we have in industrialized, wealthy nations to do our part? I brought that story back to another Mennonite high school — Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ontario — where MCC had partnered with Rockway on an experiential learning program called Youth Leading Change. I shared what I'd seen in Guatemala and then led the students through a role-playing activity about community climate action. They discussed how they invest in certain climate actions and not others. But at the end of the day, they were spending hypothetical dollars. So I gave them \$800 in real Canadian dollars and asked them, "What climate action for peace will you invest in as Rockway Mennonite Collegiate students?" **Read Ken Ogasawara's blog post for Mennonite Central Committee [here](#).**

Settlers raided my house, and they stayed

A firsthand account from Masafer Yatta reveals how escalating settler violence is severing Palestinian communities from their land, livelihoods, and basic rights, threatening their very survival.

During the spring season, shepherds traditionally release their sheep into the green mountains. This is when Palestinians start producing local Palestinian foods like zibdeh (butter) and labn (yogurt). For the villagers of Masafer Yatta, this period is essential. This production is their main source of income and their way of life. **Read CPT Palestine's blog post for Community Peacemaker Teams [here](#).**

Wrestling with faith and nation

We could have kept our distance. Instead, we went all in.

"Why are we doing anything related to the United States' 250th year of independence?" a member of our church asked after looking at the brochure of our yearlong worship series, "USA at 250." "Shouldn't we just ignore it?" Should we ignore it? In our small village of Bluffton, Ohio, there are events throughout the year celebrating the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence. Small towns love their patriotic events! From hymn sings to cake-decorating contests to a parade, Bluffton is celebrating proudly. For many in my congregation, First Mennonite Church of Bluffton, it is an ongoing struggle to figure out how to engage in community events that have patriotic components. This year we were invited to create a float for the America at 250 parade. Some ideas have included building a float that says things like "Pray for Peace, Act for Peace" or "Love God, Love Neighbor." The easy solution that we normally take is not to participate. However, the tricky part of a Mennonite peace witness in small-town America is that creating change often happens through building relationships, not through shouting at people or creating a float that is essentially a "forget you" to our community. My fellow Blufftonites are people I will be working with on other village projects, who will deliver lumber from the hardware store to my house, give my child a sticker at the post office and help stock the town's food bank. Tact is of the utmost importance. Is it possible to participate in such events and give witness to the kingdom of God without burning bridges? **Read the rest of Phil Yoder's article published by the *Anabaptist World* [here](#).**

Almsgiving redefined

It's not mercy. It's justice.

In college, I traveled with a friend who, years later, said the way I freely gave money to beggars was morally formative. I had no recollection. This isn't to boast. On the contrary, giving alms didn't make me heroic or holy. And it wasn't hard. The way I see it, the money was never mine to begin with. My wife and I are among the poorest of our friends. We've lived our whole marriage practically paycheck-to-paycheck. Only recently have we been able to save money. We are not as frugal as my Mennonite ancestors might expect, but frugal enough. We practice voluntary poverty, in the spirit of many Christians before us, from Dorothy Day to Francis of Assisi. Imagine if every Christian with a guest room made it into a bedroom for strangers in need. It wouldn't end homelessness, but it sure would help a lot of people. Rather than some fantasy, this is how I was raised: My parents always had a spare room for those in need, and for most of my life someone occupied it. The first step to this conversion of heart and home is to stop pretending that helping the poor is a special, difficult or holy thing that us poor sinners are too confounded or corrupt to figure out. No, it's justice — what's owed to those who've been denied what every person has a right to have. We understand that it's not heroic to return the lost purse to the klutzy passerby. It's basic dignity. We must reframe a Christian view of alms — a task which the Anabaptist tradition, with its emphasis on community, discipleship and selfless action, is poised to accomplish. **Read the rest of James Boll's article published by the *Anabaptist World* [here](#).**

Mothers with HIV raise children free of the virus with support of free clinic in Nigeria

Mother of 2-year-old triplets shares her story.

In February 2024, Elizabeth Kamara went to Faith Alive Foundation's clinic in Jos, Nigeria, to get health care because she knew she was pregnant and had HIV. What she didn't know yet would shock her. An ultrasound revealed she was having not just one baby, but three babies. "I remember I jumped up from the scanning bed, and I almost fell down," Kamara said recently when Faith Alive staff visited her home for an interview. "I felt scared at first of how I would be able to take care of them. I felt a deep sense of anxiety, and I was perplexed." Faith Alive Foundation exists to provide free or low-cost, quality health care in Jos to families, like the Kamaras, who struggle financially. MCC partners with Faith Alive in a project that provides free care to pregnant or lactating women with HIV and their children under 5 years old. The goal is to prevent complications during pregnancy and childbirth, reduce rates of disease and death, improve maternal and child nutrition and prevent transmission of HIV to babies. Staff and 20 trained mentor mothers work with about 2,250 mothers and children to carry out the care at Faith Alive's hospital and outpatient clinic and during home visits. Kamara received antenatal care from the clinic and delivered two girls, Lovina and Loveth, and one boy, Lucky, by cesarean section in June 2024. Medical staff took care of her and her newborns, giving them medication at birth and at six weeks, which prevented them from developing HIV. Mothers who receive antenatal care at the hospital deliver HIV-free babies 100% of the time, says Jane Nwoke, deputy director of programs at Faith Alive. **Read the rest of Linda Espenshade's blog post for Mennonite Central Committee [here](#).**

Staff Contact and Building Open Hours

<u>Building Open:</u>	Standard Hours: Monday-Friday 9AM-11AM & 1:30PM-3PM Pastor Kevin designated office hours: Wednesdays, 8am-12pm (or call to plan a visit)
<u>Lydia Hedberg:</u>	Office Administrator; church@normalmennonite.org ; 309-452-6622
<u>Rita Munkakusi:</u>	Custodian
<u>Kevin Chupp:</u>	Pastor for Community Life Commission, Outreach Commission, Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team, & Worship Commission; kevin@normalmennonite.org
<u>Lauren Satchwell:</u>	Pastoral Team Lead & Pastor for Administration Commission, Discipling Commission, & Vision Team; lauren@normalmennonite.org

Items for the Midweek



Please send items to be included in the Midweek to the [Church Office](#) no later than **8am on Wednesday**. Thank you!