

New Holland Mennonite Church

December 24, 2023 • Volume 68, No. 52
Christmas Brunch: 9 am • Worship: 10:00 am

Merry Christmas!



How does a
weary world
rejoice? *We make
room*

About the Logo: “Two people—one radiating joy & the other wading into weariness—hold the world together.”

Luke’s Gospel tells us that when Mary gives birth to Jesus, she lays him in a manger, for there was no place for them in the guest room. Scholars argue about where, exactly, the birth occurs—and why. Was it in an inn or the living room of a simple peasant home? Was Bethlehem teeming with visitors who were also there to be counted in the census? Was Joseph’s family inhospitable because they disapproved of his marital situation? Regardless of where the birth occurs, we know that Christ is born in a crowded, unlikely place. And yet, God makes a place here anyway. God draws the circle wider as shepherds and unexpected guests arrive. This Christmas, let us also make room—for strangers and neighbors alike. For this is good news of great joy for all people.

Gathering & Praising God

O Come, All Ye Faithful (VT 241) Dawn Kaczor & Steven Lantz

Call to Worship

Pastor Dawn Ranck-Hower

There is room for you here.

If you’re weary and worn,
or hopeful and patient.

**If you’re tired and lost,
or wrapped up in hope.**

If you’re new to this place,
or have been here before

Come in, come in.

There is room for you here.

The angels are singing,

“Be not afraid.”

The angels are singing,

“Good news and great joy!”

So come in, come in!

There is room for us here.

Candle Lighting

Prayer for Illumination

Joy to the World (VT 240)

Sharing our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

Ellie Good

Hearing God’s Voice

The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey

Brenda Hurst

The Christmas Story

Scripture: Micah 5:2-4

Bryan Hower

O Little Town of Bethlehem (VT 245)

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10

Jen Morales

Peace Before Us (SS 16)

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

Judy Schweitzer

Away in a Manger (VT 257)

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14

Jordyn & Ava Reese

Angels We Have Heard on High (VT 249)

Scripture: Luke 2:15-20

Ray Hurst

Silent Night, Holy Night (VT 244)

Responding

Affirmation of Faith Pastor Dawn Ranck-Hower

We believe in a God who makes room for us—
who opens the door,
pulls up a seat,
puts the kettle on, and says,
“Tell me everything.”

We believe that God not only treats us this way
**but also makes room for
our neighbors,
for strangers,
and for our enemies.**

Jesus modeled this kind of room-making love
when he said,
**“Let the children come to me,”
and, “Let me wash your feet,”
so we try to follow suit.**

In a world of closed doors,
we believe in saying,
“There is room for you here.”

Love Came Down at Christmas (VT 255)

Sharing and Announcements Pastor Dawn Ranck-Hower
Prayers of the People

Sending

To Us a Child of Hope is Born (VT 259)

Benediction

Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Coffee: Sue Martin; **Greeters:** Good Family; **Close:** Tim Martin
Sound: Bryan Hower; **Offering:** Sue Martin & Keith Miller

NEXT SUNDAY: December 31 (No Sunday School)

Coffee: Pat Thomas; **Greeter:** Francy Bailey; **Close:** Jim Bailey
Worship Leader: Karina Morales; **Sermon:** Kevin Ressler

Song Leader: Kelsey Means

Children: Ray Hurst; **Prayer:** Brenda Martin Hurst; **Sound:** Mike Good
Offering: Francy Bailey & Brenda Martin Hurst

Banner on Left Wall: “Surrogacy”

by Hannah Garrity • inspired by Luke 2:1-20
Oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas

Dr. Christena Cleveland published a book in 2023 called, *God is a Black Woman*. In it, she shares her powerful testimony describing her journey to meet the Black Madonnas carved centuries ago from lava rock. This resonates with my lifelong yearning for Mother God.

Male language for God has always been a wall to my ability to connect in worship. Now, it is a wall that I break through every week—changing words, rewriting liturgy in the moment, saying “Mother” where “Father” is printed, trying “Lady” where “Lord” is printed. In this case, “Yahweh” is actually best. Who are we to squash God into patriarchy so perpetually? But when someone else joins me in this necessary work, that is when the barrier is removed. I hear it sometimes: “She,” “Mother.” Almost always, the liturgist feels the need to explain themselves. In liturgy discussion, gaslighting is common. “We should be more inclusive.” All of a sudden?

Recently, I was standing at The Dwelling at Richmond Hill. The former slave quarters are open and offered for visitation. After our tour, the idea that one should remove their shoes before entering this holy haven came up. Our tour group was all white people and we discussed this idea from a theoretical standpoint. But earlier, before we entered, I felt it. I was holding a seltzer water can from lunch and felt incredibly rude entering the space with it, so, without understanding, I backtracked and placed my purse and the can outside. I knew not why. After the tour, in our discussion about shoes,

(continued on next page)

Land Acknowledgment: We acknowledge, with humility, that the land where we sit and stand today is land that was home to the Susquehannock, Shawnee, and Lenape people. Let us be aware that we occupy their homeland, and that their presence is imbued in this land.

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our white tour guide mentioned that Black members of the staff felt a great reverence, a holy presence at The Dwelling. The space held the presence of God; it was like entering a sanctuary.

I remember the same feeling when I was young, touring the slave quarters at Monticello. But now, listening to the Richmond Hill staff testimony, I understood these spaces in a new way, with a reverence for the God-like presence of the Black mother in the depths of oppression. "Listen to Black women." This cry has become a mantra over the last few years. I saw in that moment what Cleveland so eloquently explains in her book. In the pigmentocracy we inhabit, the Black mother is the closest figure to God, and "whitemalegod" is the very farthest. He promotes oppression; She is the savior of the most oppressed. And so I listen.

In this painting, Black Mother God has asked her daughter Mary to hold the role of surrogate for the pregnancy of infant Creator. Mary has carried the child to term. She has given birth. God embraces Mary as well as the Holy Infant in gratitude. For without Mary's surrogacy, the incarnation could not be. —Hannah Garritty

UPCOMING EVENTS

All events are at New Holland Mennonite Church unless otherwise indicated

January 10: Men's Dinner, 5:30/6 p.m. Garden Spot Village

January 12: Book Club: *Americanah*, 7 p.m. Esbenshade Farm

January 17: Women's Dinner, 5:30/6 p.m. GSV

February 11: Annual Congregational Meeting, 9 a.m.

December 17

Attendance: 42 (3 on zoom) • **Offering: \$2,490.00**

Church News

Vacation: Pastor Dawn and Bryan are on vacation December 25-January 1. Contact Steven Lantz with pastoral care concerns.

CrossNet Food Drive Donation: 257 pounds of groceries and a money contribution were given through the church December collection.

Church News continued

Afghans for Union Community Care: This year we donated 276 baby afghans & hats, 24 baby quilts, and 160 crocheted bibs to Union Community Care. (Last year's numbers: 198 afghans, 49 quilts, 155 bibs). Thanks to everyone who contributed!

First Men's Dinner: 6 p.m. at Garden Spot Village, on **Wednesday, January 10** and every second Wednesday of the month through 2024. Room is reserved from 5:30-8:00, so feel free to come anytime after 5:30. Note: Food is available to purchase only until 6:30 p.m.

Book Club: Friday, January 12, 7 p.m. Esbenshade Farm. Jenn will lead a discussion about *Americanah*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Please RSVP: <https://forms.gle/qsrXJ5jEa3A2sNf38>

Community News

Financial Training: Discover personal financial training with which help people develop strong habits for personal finances. This 7-week series includes one-hour online sessions facilitated by Everence Stewardship Consultants. To register, go to everence.com/national to find the session that works best for you. **(300 vouchers are available at a special \$19 cost, instead of \$99. So sign up today!)**

Peacemaking Initiatives in Palestine/Israel: You are invited to hear Jonathan Kuttub, Palestinian lawyer and peace activist, speak on **Sunday, January 14**, 2 p.m., Akron Mennonite Church, 1131 Diamond St, Akron, PA. This event is sponsored by Pilgrims Mennonite Church and Akron Mennonite Church.

Invitation to Common Read: ACC's Peace & Justice Committee will host its first Common Read with a focus on Elias Chacour's *Blood Brothers*. You are invited to read the book and join conversation **every other Tuesday beginning January 16 at 7:00 pm**. This book offers hope and insight to help each of us learn to live at peace in a world of tension and terror." Sign up: atlanticcoastconference.net/common-read.