

New Holland Mennonite Church

December 31, 2023 • Volume 68, No. 53
Fellowship: 9:30 a.m. • Worship: 10:00 am



How does a weary world rejoice?

*We root ourselves
in ritual*

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

After eight days have passed, Mary and Joseph circumcise their child and give him the name Jesus. They return to the temple in Jerusalem to enact the sacred birth rituals of their culture and tradition. While they are doing what is customary, the unexpected occurs. A man named Simeon is led by the Spirit into the temple to proclaim Jesus as the “light of revelation.” Then, a prophet named Anna suddenly approaches them; she praises God and speaks about Jesus to everyone longing for redemption. Rituals mark sacred turning points in our lives. They can help us make meaning of celebrations, losses, and transitions. As new parents to Jesus, Mary and Joseph could feel weary for what lies ahead, but perhaps these sacred rituals—and those who bear witness to them—bolster them and give them courage for the journey. How do our sacred rituals root us and help us live into new chapters with courage?

Gathering & Praising God

Come, Now Is The Time Worship (VT 29)
Call to Worship
Prayer for Illumination
Everlasting God

Kelsey Means
Karina Morales

Hearing God's Voice

Offering
Offertory
Scripture: Luke 2:21-38
Conversation with Children
Sermon: “We Root Ourselves in Ritual:
Those We See and Those We Don’t”

Kelsey Means

Ray Hurst
Kevin Ressler*

Responding

Affirmation of Faith
Heart of Worship
Sharing and Announcements
Congregational Prayer

Kevin Ressler

Brenda Martin Hurst

Sending

It Is You
Benediction

Karina Morales

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

Coffee: Pat Thomas; **Greeters:** Francy Bailey; **Close:** Jim Bailey
Sound: Mike Good; **Offering:** Francy Bailey & Brenda Martin Hurst

* **Kevin Ressler** serves as CEO of The Alliance for Health Equity. Previously, he spent five years growing Meals on Wheels of Lancaster and then as President and CEO of United Way of Lancaster County. He earned a Master of Divinity through Lancaster Theological Seminary, hoping to integrate his spiritual and moral concerns with the professional activities he could engage in through non-profit leadership. Kevin received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Justice, Peace and Conflict Studies from Eastern Mennonite University and enjoys public speaking and preaching, writing, and acting. Kevin is married to Melissa and they have 2 daughters, Acacia (9) and Iriana (6). Kevin is the author of the adult Sunday School lessons for this quarter.

Projected Artwork: "Revelation"

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity • inspired by Luke 2:21-38
Acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing

I wonder what Mary and Joseph expect when they enter the temple to dedicate their newborn son. This customary ritual quickly unravels into an astonishing scene. A stranger named Simeon pronounces Jesus to be a "light" and "revelation," and his dying wish is fulfilled. A prophet named Anna also draws near to the child, praising God for the redemption he will bring.

Simeon and Anna's words fill Mary and Joseph with amazement. But that can't be the only emotion taking up space in the room. For Simeon turns to Mary, perhaps privately, to continue sharing his message: the boy will also become the cause of great turmoil, the catalyst for opposition. He will expose the inner thoughts of many. A sword will pierce her innermost being. The mother of God will grieve as she bears witness to the suffering of the child she birthed.

In this image, Simeon bestows his blessing and prophecy with the urgency of a man desperate to say everything that needs to be said before his time runs out. Anna looks off into the distance, as if peering into the future. Her devotion to God over the years has sharpened her gaze; she knows redemption when she sees it.

In the top left, I depicted Jesus' hand being cradled by the hands of his parents. This tender moment is frozen in time, like a Polaroid photograph placed in a scrapbook. Mary and Joseph treasure their child as they receive the fullness of his calling. I imagine them memorizing each wrinkle and tiny fingernail, treasuring the smallness of a hand that will one day become a strong fist, fighting for justice for the oppressed and liberation for those held captive.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

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.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

January 2: Gloria Hartley; **January 5:** Steven Lantz & Lois Zimmerman

NEXT SUNDAY: January 7

Coffee: Ray Hurst; **Greeters:** Brenda Martin Hurst & Ray Hurst

Worship Leader: Sue Martin; **Sermon:** Dawn Ranck-Hower

Song Leader: Jenn Esbenshade; **Children:** Dawn Kaczor

Prayer: Dawn Ranck-Hower; **Sound:** Kai Esbenshade

Offering: Wade Esbenshade & Ruth Douglas Miller; **Close:** Jim Bailey

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 Farn

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

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

Church News

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.

What We Value

**With Jesus as our center, we commit to
including all people,
strengthening our relationships (and)
practicing peace and justice.**

(adopted February 2023)

Pastor: Dawn Ranck-Hower; dawn.ranck@verizon.net; 1/215/237-1485

Leadership Team: Wade Esbenshade, Steven Lantz

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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.** The group will meet on a video call to discuss the assigned chapters. "As a child, Elias Chacour lived in a small Palestinian village in Galilee. When tens of thousands of Palestinians were killed and nearly one million forced into refugee camps in 1948, Elias began a long struggle with how to respond. In *Blood Brothers*, he blends his riveting life story with historical research to reveal a little-known side of the Arab-Israeli conflict, exploring whether bitter enemies can ever be reconciled. This book offers hope and insight to help each of us learn to live at peace in a world of tension and terror." Ruth and Keith moderating. Sign up: atlanticcoastconference.net/common-read.