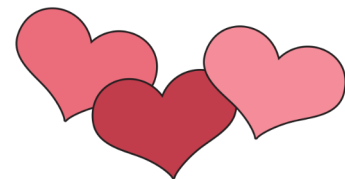


## From your Valentine

St. Valentine was a priest who was executed around 270 A.D. There are many things we don't know about this martyr, but there are numerous, sometimes conflicting, stories about his life and death. One says that he was slain for performing weddings in secret after the Roman Emperor, Claudius II, had outlawed them for his soldiers, because he wanted to make sure they could go to battle quickly. He thought family ties would make the men reluctant to leave home. Another legend says it was because he helped Christians escape from brutal Roman prisons.

In 498 A.D., just over 200 years after Valentine's execution, Pope Gelasius declared February 14 as St. Valentine's Day. Valentine's love for God and humanity has made him "the patron of love" in the Roman Catholic Church and for people around the world.

By the mid-1700s it was common practice for friends and sweethearts to exchange trinkets made in the shape of hearts or to send handwritten notes of affection on February 14. It's believed that Valentine himself sent the first "valentine" while imprisoned. He is said to have written a letter to the jailer's daughter who visited him in prison just before his death. He signed the letter, "From your Valentine," a sentiment still used today.



February 2026  
Volume 50, No. 2

# The Church Corner



**First Mennonite Church**  
427 W. 4th Street  
Halstead, KS 67056  
[www.firstmennonitehalstead.org](http://www.firstmennonitehalstead.org)  
Pastor Steve Wilcox

Phone: 316-835-2282  
Email: [office@firstmennonitehalstead.org](mailto:office@firstmennonitehalstead.org)

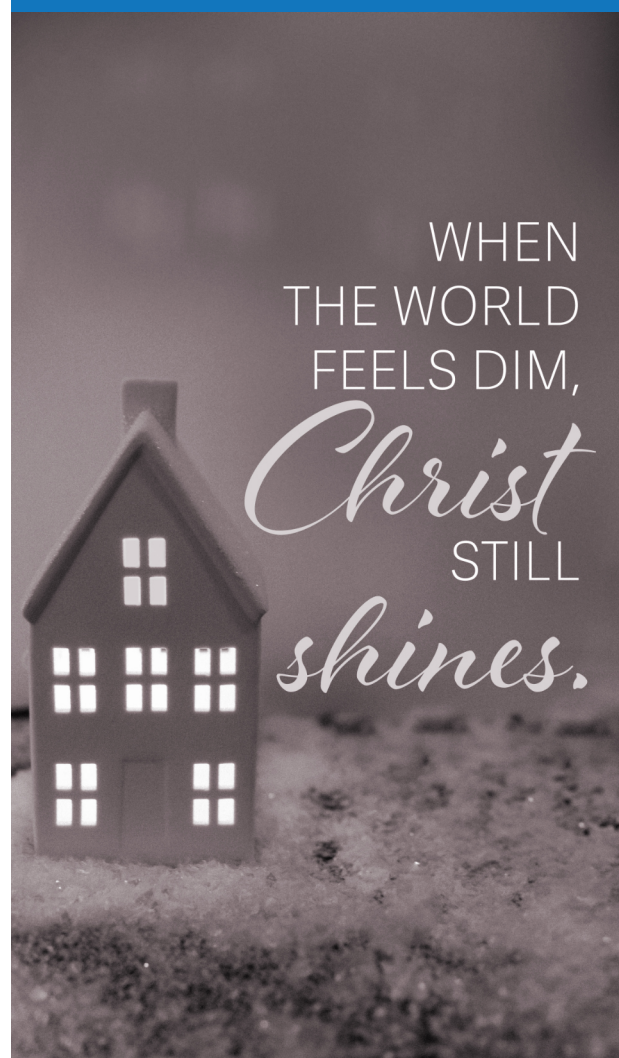
**Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.**  
**Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.**

*\*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.



## The Quest for a Cookie

*My newsletter article this month will be something a little different. Instead of reflections or announcements, I'd like to share a short story about our favorite resident suit of armor. I won't do this every month, but from time to time I hope to record new adventures as they unfold. So, may you enjoy the first recorded adventure of Sir Menno Knight!*

The moment the last light clicked off and the final door came to a close, the church came alive. Finally, the people were gone! Pews stirred. Hymnals started whispering. The old bulletin board sighed and gave up its heroic effort to stay straight. And then—clank—Sir Menno Knight came to life.

He stood proudly in the storage room, a full suit of slightly dented armor with flaking black paint, sword in hand, helmet plume drooping just a bit to the front. He stretched as much as a metal man could stretch, which sounded like a drawer full of silverware being shaken by an earthquake.

"Oof," he muttered. "I really must oil my joints sometime."

Sir Menno Knight had one great calling in life: to protect the church. He took this very seriously. He guarded against imaginary invaders, suspicious dust bunnies, and once spent three hours staring down a

particularly aggressive coat rack. But tonight, another calling tugged at his steel-clad heart—and his nonexistent stomach. The kitchen. Specifically: leftover cookies.

He ascended the stairs and peeked down the hallway toward the sanctuary. All was still. Moonlight spilled through stained glass, painting the hall blue and red and purple, which he felt was a very noble look. Slowly—clank... clink... squeeeak—he began his journey into the fellowship hall.

Not far in, he heard a sound, and immediately, he froze. Above the fellowship hall stage, something stirred. No... not... the Dragons.

They were not large, fire-breathing beasts. No, these Dragons were bats. Many bats. They lived above the stage ceiling, slept upside down, and had an alarming habit of waking up when armor tried to sneak past quietly.

Sir Menno crouched, which made his knees sound like an old hymn played on a broken organ.

"Stealth," he whispered, placing one careful foot forward. CLANG. The Dragons squeaked and Sir Menno dove behind a stack of folding chairs, knocking over not one, not two, but exactly three of them, which echoed through the hall like cymbals on Easter morning.

"This won't work," he whispered. "Time for Plan B."

Plan B was more dangerous, but it was a shorter route—it involved crossing the stage itself

*Continued on p. 4*

about doing a community worship service in connection with the I Heart Halstead Campaign. Eric Litwiller from Camp Mennoscah will be speaking on March 22.

- Offering schedule was presented, James made a motion to accept, Denice seconded, Council approved.
- Slate of officers - (discussion on paper ballot or verbal ballot). Larry affirmed the slate of officers, Dwight seconded, Council approved.
- Annual Meeting - January 25, 2026

*Next meeting: Feb. 23, 2026*

## Church Announcements

1. The church calendar can be found on the homepage of the church's website ([firstmennonitehalstead.org](http://firstmennonitehalstead.org)).
2. The deadline for the March newsletter is Monday, Feb. 23.
3. The Neighbors Store pantry requests pancake mix and canned fruit for the month of February.
4. Offering schedule for February:  
Feb. 1: MC USA  
Feb. 8: Church Budget  
Feb. 15: Western District Conf.  
Feb 22: Mennonite Biblical Seminary
5. The link for our church online library is [librarything.com catalog/FMCHalstead](http://librarything.com/catalog/FMCHalstead).



- Pray for the Senior High Youth Group as they travel to Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp for Snow Camp Feb. 13-15.
- Pray for the Verenike Supper committee as they make and carry out plans for the supper at the end of the month.
- Pray for the leaders of various ministries, teams and committees. Pray they will lead and serve well.
- Pray for the Hospitality Ministry that works hard to create events and spaces where we can fellowship with one another. Pray they have continued energy and strength for all they do.
- Praise God for new life! Give thanks for the addition of Ruby to the Whorton family.
- Pray for those who said good-bye to loved ones in 2025. Pray for them as they adjust to life without their loved one.
- Pray for those preparing the Easter cantata. Pray that it will be a community event that will bring honor and glory to God, as well as draw those in who need to know what Jesus did for them.
- Pray for Pastor Steve and his family as they minister and serve our congregation.



Council Meeting Minutes  
from Jan. 19, 2026

- Debbie opened the meeting with prayer. Minutes were approved from November as written (no December meeting).
- Discernment Team - Ruth reported they have been working on filling the slate of officers.
- Vision Team - Chuck reported that the Pastoral Review/evaluation-visitation was discussed. Trying to discern when or if someone wants a visit, phone call, etc. He said they are still working through meeting with all the ministries. More discussion on membership.
- Care Ministry - Ron reported that communion will be February 1. Memorials have been set up for Mary Cummings and Linda Aylward. Ron said they helped a family in Burrton with a tree removal (received matching grant money from Everence to help with the cost). The prayer chain has been updated (communication by email and phone).
- Hospitality Ministry - Brocia and Kaitlen reported they are working on revising their policies and procedures. There will be a Bob Ross painting night on February 1, Last Sunday Potlucks will continue, doing something different with the Easter brunch or having it at a different time was discussed, Valentine care packages will be taken to shut-ins, care packages will be sent to the college students in March, Camp Mennoscah will be May 2 and 3. An

- information sheet with church activities, programs, etc will be placed in the pews for visitors. Brocia will be stepping down as the co-chair for the ministry.
- Mission Ministry - Dwight reported that the mission supper proceeds was \$5,640 after expenses. One third went to the Neighbors Store and two-thirds went to the Givens. Dwight will be stepping down as the co-chair of this ministry.
  - Nurture Ministry - Debbie reported that they have updated their policies and procedures. The Winter quarter missions are USD 440 backpacks. Debbie said there was \$600 less given for Sunday School offering then last year and reminded everyone that that Sunday School materials are costly. Holy Week boxes will be given to families and Lent emails will go out starting February 18. We are also in need of more nursery workers.
  - Stewardship Ministry - Larry reported a budget balance of \$12,217.68 at the end of December. James reported they met to work through the budget draft. He presented the budget for 2026. Sandy Allen seconded and Council approved. The sidewalk on the west side of the church was discussed, Mick Bean will be joining Stewardship and Jason Mueller will be going off. Thank you to Larry for all his years of service as the church treasurer.
  - Worship Ministry - Denice reported there will be an Easter Cantata the Saturday evening before Easter Sunday, Erica will help Lauren with sanctuary visuals, Emmit is doing word searches to go along with the sermon.
  - Pastor Steve reported that the Halstead Community Foundation contacted him



February Calendar

Feb. 1	10:30 a.m.	Covenanting & Anointing Service
	12:00 p.m.	Sr. High Youth Group Fundraiser Lunch
	12:30 p.m.	Annual Meeting
Feb. 4	6:00 p.m.	Bob Ross Painting Party
	5:00 p.m.	Kids Club
	6:00 p.m.	Wed. night meal
Feb. 8	6:45 p.m.	Adult Bible study
	10:30 a.m.	Communion
	12:00 p.m.	Beginner Bells practice
Feb. 11	6:00 p.m.	Sr. High Youth Group
	5:00 p.m.	Kids Club
	6:00 p.m.	Wed. night meal
Feb. 13-15	6:45 p.m.	Adult Bible study
		Sr. High Youth Group to Snow Camp
		Beginner Bells practice
Feb. 15	12:00 p.m.	Beginner Bells practice
	6:00 p.m.	Women’s Bible Study

Feb. 17	7:30 p.m.	Vision Team meeting
Feb. 18	5:00 p.m.	Kids Club
	6:00 p.m.	Wed. night meal
	7:00 p.m.	Ash Wednesday Service
Feb. 19	9:00 a.m.	Prayer team meeting
Feb. 22	10:30 a.m.	Beginning Bells perform
	12:00 p.m.	Last Sunday Potluck
	12:30 p.m.	Advanced Bells practice
	6:00 p.m.	Jr. & Sr. High Youth Groups
	6:00 p.m.	Women’s Bible Study
	6:00 p.m.	Community Worship Service @ Halstead Life. Church
Feb. 23	6:00 p.m.	Nurture meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Church Council meeting
Feb. 25	5:00 p.m.	Kids Club
	6:00 p.m.	Wed. night meal
	6:45 p.m.	Adult Bible study
Feb. 28	4:30-7 p.m.	Verenike Supper

Looking Ahead

April 4	Easter Cantata
April 5	Easter
May 2-3	Camp Mennoscah Weekend

Upcoming Church Events

Easter Cantata

There will be an Easter cantata this year, and all those interested in singing are invited to participate. The cantata will be performed on Saturday, April 4, at 7:00 p.m. to allow for more community



involvement. Rehearsals for the cantata will begin on Wednesday, February 4. Talk with Gregg if you have any questions.

Join a Bell Choir!

Would you like to play with a bell choir? Let Casey know! Maybe you have played in the past or maybe you have never read music at all. There are intergenerational opportunities to interest all abilities every spring and fall. Just ask!

Verenike Supper

Make plans to join us for the Verenike Supper on Saturday, Feb. 28, from 4:30-7:00 p.m. in Stauffer Hall. The menu includes verenike, ham gravy, sausage, green beans, zwieback, relishes and pie and will be available for dine-in (in the fellowship hall) and carryout (on the west side of the church on Santa Fe Street). Proceeds from this year’s supper will support the MCC Relief Sale, FMC youth group and other local ministries.



Community & Broader Church Events

The churches of Halstead are planning a community worship service on Sunday, February 22, at 6 p.m. The service will be held at Halstead Life.Church located at 225 Main Street. Everyone is invited!

Share the love this Valentine’s Day by packing 350 MCC prisoner care kits for men at Hutchinson Correctional Facility on February 12 from 6:00-800 p.m. All ages are welcome to join us at MCC, 121 E. 30th St., in North Newton. Find out more at [mcc.org/prisoner-care](https://mcc.org/prisoner-care) or reach out to [brociamueller@mcc.org](mailto:brociamueller@mcc.org).

Pine Village invites you to join them for their Anchor’s Banquet on Saturday, Feb. 28, in Pine Village Wellness Center. Dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. with entertainment by “Open Road” and Woven.” Tickets are \$100 and all the proceeds will go to the Memorial Home Endowment Fund. Make your reservations by Monday, Feb. 23, either online at [www.pinevillageks.org](https://www.pinevillageks.org) or by calling Pine Village at 620-345-2901.

The 2026 WDC Annual Assembly will be held on Aug 7-9, 2026, at Iglesia Luz del Evangelio, Dallas, TX, with activities for all ages, worship, fellowship and delegate sessions. Lodging will be at area hotels. Check <https://mennowdc.org/2026-annual-assembly/> for more details in the coming months!



1	Karen Colbert
1	Carolyn Whitesell
2	Kent Dick
2	Shirley Rodenberg
4	Don Haury
5	Hannah Unruh
8	Rebecca Regier
9	Matthew Rodenberg
10	Kyle Regier
12	Leila Dalke
12	Teresa Gundy
13	Cindy Siemens
13	Mandy Evanoff
13	Andrew Kaldenbach
15	Steve Koehn
19	David Siemens
21	Brett Berger
22	Kaitlen Ortman
26	Michael Groom
26	Marie Regier
28	Ron Auernheimer
28 (A)	Dwight & Sharenne Lohrenz
28	Brocia Mueller
28	Daniel Rodenber~





Verenike Making Day

The proverb “many hands make light work” accurately describes our annual verenike making day, which was held on January 10. Thank you to everyone who joined in the fun. We couldn't have done it without you!

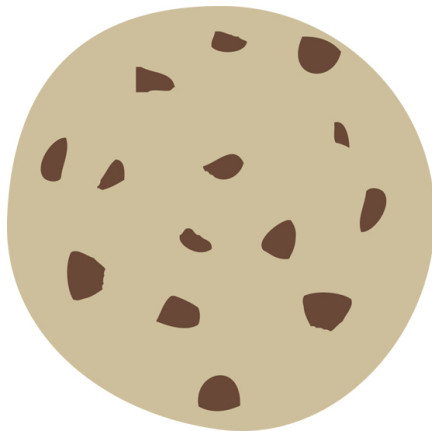


The Quest for a Cookie, cont'd

right below the lurking Dragons. After going around and reaching the stage entrance, he tiptoed up the steps, holding his breath (which was impressive, given he technically did not need to breathe). He crept across the wooden floor, inch by inch. SQUEAK. The sound of a rusty knee joint—his own.

Suddenly, there was the sound of many dragon wings fluttering above. Fearing for his life, Sir Menno screamed. Well—screamed as much as a knight could scream, having only an empty helmet. He spun, slipped on an imaginary banana peel (which he later insisted was definitely there), and slid across the stage, colliding with a table and getting wrapped in the curtains. He became perfectly still, having once heard of a great legend where a young lad was able to hide in these very curtains for an exceedingly long time despite the heroic efforts of people to find him.

The Dragons, fully awake now, were squeaking and clawing at the ceiling tiles above, trying to find their way down. Sir Menno waited a long time, until the clawing had faded into intermittent scratching. At that point, he scrambled off the stage and raced to the safety of the front hallway, whispering prayers he half-remembered. “Though I



walk through the fellowship hall of the shadow of bats, I will not fear... well, actually I will fear at least a little bit.”

After a moment of contemplation, he remembered that Mennonites often have a third way.

“Oh yes!” he exclaimed. “There are stairs on the southeast side that lead right into the kitchen!”

Quietly, very quietly, he descended the steps to the lower level, each step a heroic act of restraint to not just rush ahead. He reached the kitchen entrance opposite the stage entrance and gently moved into the kitchen. Silence. No dragons. No squeaks. Just the hum of the refrigerator. Sir Menno Knight whispered his thanks.

“Oh, thank you,” he said, clasping his gauntlets together. “Sometimes the bravest thing is not charging forward, but choosing the wiser path.”

He stood, retrieved exactly one cookie, and returned to his post before dawn. By morning, he was motionless once more.

But if you listen closely, you might hear a faint clank of contentment—and learn, as Sir Menno Knight had, that courage is not the absence of fear, but faithfulness in the face of it... and sometimes taking the long way around is the best way, especially around Dragons.



This month features Karen Siebert who has been connected to FMC her entire life.

**How long have you attended FMC?** Karen has attended First Mennonite Church nearly all of her life. Her parents, Cecil and Hazel Keller, were members of FMC, and she was born into the church. She has lived in Halstead for most of her life as well.

**What do you recall about FMC from your childhood?** Karen recalls three people who made an impact on her as a child at FMC: Helen Dick, Amelia Mueller and Edna Ruth Mueller. Helen was her mother’s best friend and poured into Karen’s life through that friendship. Amelia and Edna Ruth were her Sunday School teachers, and both were strict and focused on memorization of all biblical material.

Karen remembers their class meeting in the old furnace room, where

they memorized everything possible. The class had exams and received bookmarks as rewards, which Karen still has today. “They were very kind but very serious, spiritual teachers,” Karen said. “I was always so grateful to those two ladies.”

**What ways have you served or been involved at FMC over the years?** Karen has been involved in many different areas during her years at FMC: teaching Sunday School, helping with Vacation Bible School, singing with the choir, playing in the bell choir, quilting with The 76ers, and most recently serving as treasurer of the Women’s Mission Society.

Karen was one of the original ringers when Phyllis Neufeld formed the bell choir, playing medium-sized bells at the beginning and eventually moving to the larger bells. “I just loved that, we had so much fun,” Karen said. “We would pack up the bells and travel to local churches and give concerts, and we felt like we were big stuff. They’re still so enjoyable, especially with the chimes. It



Karen Siebert

thrills me to see the little kids playing bells too.”

**What about the church (FMC) means the most to you?** The church’s legacy, history and connection to Bethel College are all meaningful to Karen. She attended Bethel for two years following her graduation from Halstead High School. She also has a long family history at FMC with one set of great-grandparents, grandparents on both sides of her family, and aunts and uncles all having been part of the congregation at one time or another.

“There’s just too much history and legacy, I couldn't go anywhere else,” said Karen. “First Mennonite is a very special place and a very special congregation. I think we have been blessed with wonderful leadership in our ministers.”

**What’s a special memory you have connected to FMC?** In 1976, Marilyn Balzer and Amanda Nightingale started a quilting group. For lack of a better name, they called themselves “The 76ers” so they would always know when they began quilting together. The group made quilts for MCC and was also hired by other people to make personal quilts. The money earned from those quilts was used to buy materials to create quilts for MCC, which were often displayed in storefronts in Hutchinson.

Karen was part of this group for its entire existence and it is her fondest memory of FMC. “It was the most wonderful group of ladies,” Karen said. “Those quilting sessions were my therapy sessions. Those ladies didn’t know it, but they were saving my sanity and my life. They were just angels, every one of them.”

**What’s something people might be surprised to learn about you?** “Quilting was my life at one time,” Karen said. “When I retired, I was always going to make sure I had quilts going, but it was too easy to just go buy them.” So Karen found a new hobby in gardening. She enjoys planting flowers and has an ornamental fish pond that requires a lot of work.

Karen worked in a number of different businesses throughout her life. She spent 25 years at The Halstead Bank, then worked at the Hertzler Clinic, a law office, a truss manufacturing plant and finished her career as the director of the Halstead Housing Authority. She has two children, three grandchildren, six bonus grandchildren and two bonus great-granddaughters.

Treasurer’s Report

Budget Balance @1-1-25	239.32
Jan-Nov Receipts	135,576.55
Jan-Nov Expenses	(132,841.05)
Budget balance @11-30-25	2,974.82
December Receipts	23,577.32
December Expenses	(14,334.46)
Budget balance @12-31-25	12,217.68