

## Ephesians Fall Bible Study: Woven Together in Christ

### October 6-November 24



In July at the 2019 Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City, Tom Yoder Neufeld led the delegate body in a Bible study series on the book of Ephesians. Could a group of people that had been so divided at Kansas City four years earlier join together around a shared text? Could focusing on Biblical themes of *unity*, *gathering up*, and *grace through Christ* unify this fractured Mennonite body? The short answer was yes. By studying the Bible together, the delegate body did find ways of being together that were less hurtful and more life giving. Throughout the delegate sessions a feeling of shared purpose and convictions did seem to emerge. While the lasting fruits of this have yet to be seen, a group of people with significant theological diversity could hear the epistle's invitation to unity in Christ.

For us at Assembly, a Bible Study on Ephesians can also help us to explore forbearance, grace, right living, and unity. Ephesians is interested in addressing, "How does a follower of Christ act?" The basic response the letter offers is that our faith is lived out in community with the people we interact with most. Christ is the model for how we are called to love each other, and to live differently than those around us. We can engage this letter at that level even as we recoil from its culturally bound assumptions about gender inequality and slavery.

Ephesians also asks, "What does it mean for dividing walls to come down and for all of us to be adopted into God's family?" These are important questions as we continue to focus on hospitality and gathering in those on the margins. We might be challenged to think about what that might mean for the ways some of us differentiate -- between Cradle Mennonites and Convicted Mennonites, or long time Assembly attenders and more recent attenders, Goshen Redhawks and Bethany Bruins, or depth of connection to Goshen College. How might a vision of being woven together in Christ heal our divisions?

Over the next seven weeks, we'll be working our way through this short book, paying attention to the ways that God is weaving us together, inviting us to become one in the body of Christ without uniformity or legalism. Since Ephesians initially would have been read aloud, small groups or individuals may want to consider reading each week's passage aloud as preparation for Sunday. You can also check out this handy youtube intro to Ephesians. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q>

Throughout the series the children will be receiving letters from sister congregations as a way to connect and pray for the broader Mennonite church and a way to learn about how the early church circulated letters like Ephesians.

The series will begin with communion and a fellowship meal on World Communion Sunday and end with a Thanksgiving service. On October 13 we will worship at Camp Friedenswald at 10:30am. Second hours will be electives, which will include sermon discussion and watching parts of Tom Yoder Neufeld's presentations on Ephesians, Continuing to explore Capitalism and Discussing big questions of Faith. Look for additional information about the elective options.

Date	Text	Preacher	Other notes
10/ 6	Chapter 1:3-14 <b>Introduction and Blessing</b>	Anna Yoder Schlabach	World Communion Sunday <b>Fellowship Meal</b>
10/13	Chapter 4:4-16 <b>Weaving: Unity vs Uniformity</b>	Carmen Horst	Friedenswald Retreat- <b>Worship at Camp Friedenswald at 10:30.</b>  Hannah Friesen's baptism
10/20	Chapter 2:1-10 <b>By Grace you have been saved</b>	Regina Shands Stoltzfus	
10/27	Chapter 2:11-23, <b>Walls have come down!</b>	Doug Luginbill, Central District Conference Minister	Installation for new Assembly pastoral team member Scott Coulter <b>Return Pledge forms</b>
11/3	Chapter 3:14-4:3 <b>Forbearance</b>	Karl Shelly	All Saints remembrance
11/10	Chapter 4:17-6:9 <b>Standards without legalism</b>	Scott Coulter	
11/17	Chapter 6:10-20 <b>Whole armor of God</b>	Brenda Hostetler Meyer, (Alongside see-er) Benton Mennonite Church	
11/24	Decolonizing Thanksgiving Service	Lora Nafziger	Parent-Child Dedications

