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Salina Mennonite Church
September 1, 2019
Text: Matthew 5-7

Inaugural Address

Each year in our congregation, we observe several new beginnings. There's January 1st, of course. Our fiscal year and our volunteer assignments follow the calendar year. We also join the Catholic Church and many Protestant denominations by observing the church year which begins with Advent around the beginning of December and concludes in November. Today marks a third beginning point. The Sunday school year corresponds with the academic year and begins on the first Sunday in September. As students of all ages begin a new school year, they also begin a new Sunday school class. Similar to the Sunday school schedule, we often end a summer worship series in August and begin a new one in September.

This fall we're going to take time to remind ourselves of who we are as Anabaptist Christians. This is in preparation for a day of retreat – Saturday, October 26 – when we will talk about our vision for our congregation, what our priorities are for the future.

It seems appropriate to me to begin this new year by hearing the words of Jesus. We often read scripture in bits and pieces. This morning I'll be reading the entire Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5-7 and as paraphrased by Eugene Peterson in his version of the Bible called *The Message*. This collection of Jesus' teachings is sometimes referred to as his inaugural address, the sermon kicks off his ministry.

After the introduction above, I read Matthew 5-7 from *The Message*. I encourage you to read the Sermon on the Mount straight through in a version of your choice. You can access the reading from *The Message* through this link:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+5&version=MSG>

Before you read, you might pray a prayer similar to this: *Spirit of God, help me to hear these familiar words in a new way today. Move in my heart as I seek to follow you. Amen.*