

West Swamp News

Volume 15, Issue 3

April/May 2026

Ready to play ball?

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FYI

- Join MCC at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg for the annual **Pennsylvania Relief Sale**, April 17-18. Visit PaReliefSale.org for more information.
- Summerfest at Camp Men-O-Lan is May 16, 9-2.

Spring is in full swing! It's the time of year when we get outdoors into God's vast creation and clear away the debris left over from the winter. Time to get ready for lawn maintenance, planting flower beds, vegetable gardens, taking walks without having to wear heavy coats, hats, gloves, and of course enjoying some baseball.

It feels good to be able to be outdoors and to take the time to enjoy God's talents with His paintbrush bringing a vast array of colors to everything that surrounds us. After all, He is the master artist and the one true Creator,

who works through each us, using our hands to help make this world a better place.

Just as in the game of baseball, when each of us step up to the plate, one of two things will happen. Sometimes in life, we can experience a streak of hitting the ball every time a pitch is sent towards us.

Then there will be other times when we just don't seem to be able to hit them. And we are not alone. We watch as our favorite players and teams experience the highs and lows all the time. And that is okay. There are times in life when we won't connect

with the ball. As I grow older, there are more times when it seems harder to hit the ball. However, we will have the opportunity to step up to the plate and try again, praying for a better result.

God is the Pitcher. He knows we are human, have imperfections and will not hit every pitch. However, for those that get missed, it is comforting to know that Jesus is our Catcher and will be there for those that we miss. And either way, the angels will be up in heaven cheering us on to do the best that we can.

Have a blessed spring!

~ *Carl Raub*

Worship: Choosing compassion

Last May, after much thought and discussion, the worship commission made a tough decision: we will no longer celebrate Mother's Day or Father's Day in

church. We know this could be controversial, so we want to explain our reasoning.

Certain holidays can cause pain after a loss:

hearing someone's name read at the Memorial Day Graveside service; the first Christmas Eve without a

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Pastor's Corner: Three buds on our tree

Spring has arrived, and Sue and I are watching our yard come back to life. Grass that had been buried under snow is starting to grow again, and bulbs are starting to push through the soil.

I wanted to let you know about three buds of new life that are emerging on the tree of West Swamp Mennonite Church. First, we are actively seeking a Spanish-speaking church planter to lead a new Mosaic church start in our meetinghouse. When we did our Legacy Planning last year, we decided that should we ever stop meeting, we would give the meetinghouse to Mosaic Mennonite Conference to use for a new church start. It then occurred to us that there wasn't any reason not to start hosting a new church start now.

So I have been in conversation

with Noel Santiago, the mission-al priority team leader for the conference, and with Marco Guete, who is in charge of Spanish-language church planting for the conference, and Marco is actively seeking a church planter with whom we could partner on a new Spanish-language church start housed at West Swamp. Please make it a matter of daily prayer that God would send us a church planter.

We are always looking for ways to be a blessing to our neighbors and build the kingdom of Jesus in Quakertown. In that spirit, we have begun to explore two other initiatives that together we are calling the Jubilee Project. First, many people are burdened by crushing medical debt, beyond their ability to pay. So we are reaching out to St. Luke's Hospi-

tal to see if there is a way that we could pay off medical debt for those who are in default. This is one way that we can live out the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5 verse 12 where Jesus tells us to forgive debts.

The other part of the Jubilee Project that we are developing is partnering with the Quakertown school district to provide food for students who are food insecure or pay off cafeteria accounts that have fallen into arrears. The Ministry Team and I will be developing ways that you can be a part of the Jubilee Project in the days to come,

As spring settles in, look for ways that you can be a part of cultivating new life.

Peace,

~ *Pastor Michael*

Do we need to support Hallmark holidays in church?

(Continued from page 1)

spouse; proclaiming the empty tomb of Easter after burying someone we love.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are emotionally laden for people struggling with the loss of a parent, loss of a child, or infertility. But unlike the other holy days mentioned, these days are not Christian holidays.

Mother's Day originated in 1870 with activist and writer Julia Ward Howe as a pacifist plea for women around the world to ad-

vocate for world peace. Though it was based on Christian values, today it brings billions of dollars to the greeting card, flower, and restaurant industries.

So do we as a church need to be highlighting a secular, commercialized holiday, especially when it can cause pain to people living with loss or infertility? Do they need a reminder of that loss in what should be the safe space of worship?

There are enough opportunities to celebrate your mothers and fathers outside of the church ser-

vice. (We hope you honor them *more* than just once a year!) But we won't be recognizing these days in our worship service. We have decided to choose compassion.

We know that this decision may not please everyone. If you have comments or questions, please share them with a member of the worship commission. We hope that you too will choose compassion and grace as we seek to honor God and love each other sacrificially.

~ *Worship Commission*

Community: Tending our friendships and our gardens

Join us at the Senior Luncheon on Thursday, Apr. 16 at 12 pm. Open to all those age 60 on up. We will continue to celebrate the Easter season with friends, fellowship, good food and lots of fun. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Room. See you there!



Becky Mosser, Denny Wieand and Deb Stevenback get the food out at the Marck Senior Luncheon.



The last luncheon of the season will be on Thursday, May 21. Save the date!

Do you enjoy a little gardening? Or need a good excuse to get outside? We're looking for people to help clean up the flower beds

and Prayer Garden this spring, then once or twice to pull weeds and help maintain them. Contact Don Jacobs directly if you are interested.

~ *Nancy Jacobs*

Worship: Easter is here! (Finally)

This newsletter issue comes out on Palm Sunday. We wave palm branches and shout "Hosanna" along with the crowd who will soon be yelling "Crucify!" What dissonance—how could these opposite cries come from the same people?

And that's what we've been looking at this Lenten season: Dwelling in Dissonance. We've been going through the story of Holy

Week since the end of February—and now Holy Week is here.

On Maundy Thursday, Apr. 2, join us for a simple soup meal and service that will include optional foot washing (a hand washing will also be available), communion, scripture and a dialogue between Jesus and the Adversary.

Then Easter—finally! We celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Death could not defeat him. Jesus lives! The Easter Dawn service is 7 am at Swamp. Then come to West Swamp at 10:30 to give thanks for Jesus dying and for the power that raised him from the dead. Lots of music, lots of celebration, lots of joy!

~ *Joan Hallman*

Mission: Weathering winter well

Code Blue update

Due to the unusual number of storms and frigid temperatures, Code Blue had a very busy year. The shelter was open for 63 nights. 33 offsite volunteers prepared and brought meals as needed. Also, guests were put up in hotels for an additional ten nights, with ready to eat meals provided. The Code Blue season ends Apr. 15.

In February we collected and delivered 18 relief kits to provide

valuable supplies to families whose lives have been disrupted by conflict or disaster. Thank you to everyone who donated items.

During Lent we have been collecting coins for MCC's educational programs around the world. Since the PA relief sale is later than usual, we'll continue collecting for My Coins Count through Apr. 12.

On Apr. 12 we will attend Ripple Church and provide a meal after

the service. Sign up to provide meal ingredients, to help prepare food, and/or to go along to worship and serve the meal.

The MCC Mobile Canner will be at the Harleysville Material Resource Center Apr. 13, 14 & 15. Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks. Sign up online or call 267-203-8074. I am sure they would welcome any and all help.

~ *Chris Allem*

Harleysville Material Resource Center Impact Report 2025

25,183 VOLUNTEER HOURS	15,890 CANS OF MEAT Monetary Value \$39,093	4,800 HYGIENE KITS Monetary Value \$14,400	3,520 SCHOOL KITS Monetary Value \$21,472
1,782 COMFORTERS Monetary Value \$44,550	3,822 RELIEF KITS Monetary Value \$84,848	199 SEWING KITS Monetary Value \$4,268	DARNING EGG GIFT SHOP \$31,527 SALE OF unique handmade gifts including quilts, purses, rugs and more
213 FOOD BOXES Monetary Value \$8,307	50 CHRISTMAS CARE PACKAGES Monetary Value \$3,200	101 INFANT CARE KITS Monetary Value \$1,383	WAREHOUSE SALES 1,045,700 POUNDS OF clothing, linens, shoes, toys, purses, luggage, cardboard, and egg flats diverted from landfills, resulting in \$115,486 of revenue to buy materials for kits
\$10,000 MONETARY DONATIONS TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS	\$287,721 Our contribution to the Mission of MCC		

Worship: What can we learn from art?

For several years the Worship Commission has been taking care of the bulletin boards at the front staircases, using works of religious art from around the globe. Sometimes the art that is chosen piques my interest and I do some research to learn about the artist or the work itself.

Christ Crucified, by John Petts, was one such work. Below is information gleaned from several articles I read.

John Petts (1914-1991) was born in London, but is considered a Welsh artist as he moved there when he was 21 and remained there for the rest of his life. He is especially known for his engravings and stained-glass works.

In September 1963 Petts was listening to the radio when he heard about a horrific event that had occurred at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. A splinter group of the Klu Klux Klan had planted fifteen sticks of dynamite in the church and the explosion caused the death of four young African American girls aged 11 to 14 and severely injured twenty others.

Amongst the damage to the church itself, a stained-glass window of Jesus was blown out. Petts described his reaction in this way: The news on the radio left me sick at heart. As a father, I was horrified by the death of the children; as an artist-craftsman, hearing that the stained-glass windows of the church had been destroyed, I was appalled. I thought to myself, what can we do about this?"

Petts continued, "Could not some of us join together in a positive gesture of Christian sympathy in the face of destructive evil, and as a token, put back at least one of those windows?"

Petts contacted David Cole, the edi-

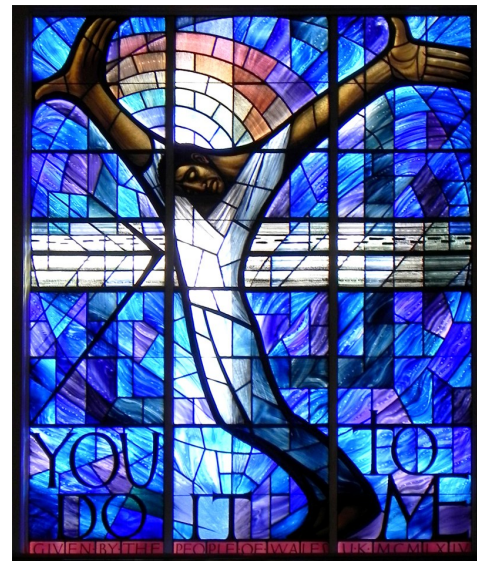
tor of *The Western Mail*, who enthusiastically took up the idea. The next day he launched a campaign with the headline: Alabama: Chance for Wales to Show the Way. Donors were asked to give just half a crown (about \$2-3 in today's money), so that the gift would be from the people of Wales.

The appeal gripped the imagination of the Welsh people, and money flooded in from churches, chapels and schoolchildren. The £500 target was reached within days; the fund closed at £900.

A telegram was sent to the Rev. John Cross: "The people of Wales offer to recreate and erect a stained-glass window to replace the one shattered in the bombing of your church. They do this as a gesture of comfort and support."

A reply accepting the offer was received, stating that "Wales was the only country to offer such direct and material assistance."

When Petts discovered that the window that had been destroyed was of a white Jesus, he conceived of a highly original design featuring a black Christ in a crucified position against an abstract cross shape. The body slants to the right in a pose that some have suggested hints at bodies bent from the blast of the water cannons that were used against demonstrators in the Civil Rights marches earlier in 1963. The huge hands which are both larger than Christ's head are a most powerful element in the design. Petts own explanation was that the right hand presses against the frame, pushing out hatred and injustice, while the open left hand reaches out with the offer of forgiveness.



The Wales Window for Alabama, stained-glass window, 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL.

While the image of the crucified Christ is a graphic one, the brilliance of the dominant blue and purple coloring conveys a sense of peace and hope. The rainbow above Christ's head reminds us of God's promises and is a symbol too of racial reconciliation.

Petts used the text "You did it to me," taken from Matthew 25:40, perhaps to convey a double meaning, saying "You did it to me" to both the white racists who murdered the girls, and to the people of Wales for their act of compassion and reconciliation.

The window was completed in 1964 and then installed and dedicated in 1965. It soon became an iconic image in connection with the Civil Rights Movement. It is still today a timely reminder in a time of continuing racial tension of the power of the "art of reconciliation" to bring healing.

~ Lynne Rush



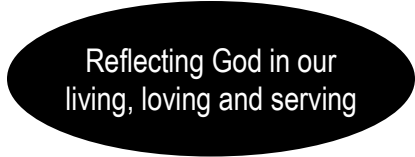
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Calendar of Events

April

- 1, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 1, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 2, 6:30 pm—Maundy Thursday
- 5, 7 am—Easter Dawn
- 5, 10:30 am—Easter Service
- 7, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 12, 3 pm—Ripple Meal
- 14, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 15, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 15, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 16, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 19, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 21, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 29, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 29, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice

May

- 5, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 12, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 13, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 13, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 17, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 19, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 21, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 24—Graveside Memorial Service
- 27, 6:30 pm—Music Practices & End of Season Party

Regular Activity

Tuesdays, 8 am—Knotting & Quilting



April

- 4/4 Bev Mellan
Kimberlee Opdyke
- 4/7 Bryson Searfass
- 4/13 Karen Butenuth
Cara Riley
- 4/15 Carl Kiesel
Kyleigh Opdyke
Edna Rosenberger

May

- 5/5 Griffin Bear
Gretchen Isaak
Tim Scheetz
- 5/11 Jane Burkett
- 5/15 Lee Hallman
- 5/20 Judy High
- 5/22 Matt Mood
- 5/23 Tim Butenuth
- 5/26 May Keiser
- 5/29 Don Jacobs
- 5/30 Charlene Smoll