

West Swamp News

Volume 14, Issue 5

Aug/Sept 2025

Ministry Team formulates evaluation results

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FYI

- Prayer Breakfasts will start up again in September. Join us Sept. 7 at 9:30 to try out some new recipes.
- Code Blue needs 10 new twin size blankets (no quilts), dark colors preferred, prints or patterns are fine. If you can donate one, please be in touch with Louise.

In the beginning of 2025, the Ministry Team worked with Pastor Michael to rewrite his job description to provide clarity and prioritization of responsibilities. Upon completion, the Ministry Team recognized the need to provide Pastor Michael with an evaluation in order to give him feedback directly related to the new job description.

Additionally, quite some time has passed since Michael received an evaluation at West Swamp and his term is up for renewal at the next annual business meeting.

In order to give Pastor Michael adequate time to reflect and act upon feedback, the Ministry Team completed an evaluation with Pastor Michael and our conference minister, Jeff Wright, in the end of May. One component of the evaluation was the congregational survey

responses.

The remainder of evaluation included each deacon's feedback, following the same format as the congregational survey, in an open discussion format. Overall, Pastor Michael's sermon preaching continued to be recognized as a strength and his visitation evidenced as an area for improvement.

In regards to the congregational survey component, the Ministry Team appreciated the 17 responses received. These responses did not include Ministry Team members. We were especially grateful for the responses with additional comments.

As a reminder, the questions were based on Pastor Michael's recently revised job description. The results are as follows:

- 70 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *almost always* accurately

models and pursues the missions of the church. 30 percent indicated *most of the time*.

- 53 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *almost always* engages with the Ministry Team and Commissions and participates in meetings to provide guidance. 35 percent indicated no evidence for response.
- 88 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *almost always* preached from the Word of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments in an engaging way. 12 percent indicated *most of the time*.
- 59 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *almost always* reliably makes himself available for preaching and planning of special services in accordance

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Pastor's Corner: Fruit season

Summer is a season where there is lots and lots of fresh fruit available. Watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, peaches, cherries, apples. Sometimes it's hard to tell my refrigerator from the produce aisle.



Photo from the Windy Springs Facebook page

Lately I've been trying an experiment. There is a spice mixture called *tajin* which consists of ground up mild chiles, crystalized lime and sea salt. It's not super spicy. The loudest note is actually from the lime. The last couple of weeks I've been sprinkling *tajin* on the fruit before I eat it. I can still taste the fruit, but the spice mixture brings out the flavor of each kind of fruit.

My recent experience with *tajin* makes me think of two

passages of Scripture. The first is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, a central passage for Anabaptists/Mennonites like us. In Matthew 5:13, right at the beginning of the Sermon, Jesus says this: "You are the salt of the

earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."

Hmmm. First, who is Jesus talking to when he says "you are the salt of the earth?" He is addressing his disciples, people who have made a com-

mitment to follow him. They're just like you and me, ordinary people. They weren't people of great wealth or social significance. They were people who were being squeezed financially by the Roman taxation system and squeezed spiritually by the Pharisees' demands for ritual purity. But Jesus tells them that *they* are the salt of the earth.

What does salt do? In the world of Jesus, salt had a number of

important purposes. It gave flavor to food, but it was also used as a preservative to prevent food from spoiling and allow it to be eaten at a later time. In a time before refrigeration, salt was critical. It was also used as a fertilizer, putting essential minerals into the soil that helped crops grow. You and I as followers of Jesus can help preserve our world, when we love our neighbors with the love of Jesus, and we can make justice and peace grow in our community.

My experience with *tajin* and fruit also makes me think of Paul's words in Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23: "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." The Holy Spirit, who lives in each of us as followers of Jesus, is cultivating fruit in our lives. You should be growing in these character attributes that are rooted in who Jesus is.

It's a good time to reflect on the condition of your heart and life? How is the fruit of the Spirit being increasingly manifested in your life? Are you growing in love and joy and the other evidences of the Spirit's life in you? Peace,

~ Pastor Michael

Act like children of the light. For the fruit of the light is all that is good, right and true. —*Ephesians 5:8b-9*

Pastor evaluation results

(Continued from page 1)

- with the church calendar and special events. 24 percent indicated no evidence for response. 18 percent indicated *most of the time*.
- 71 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *almost always* demonstrates personal and professional discipleship in ways that lead you and other members of the church to practicing the ways of Jesus. 24 percent indicated *most of the time*.
 - 47 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *most of the time* provides pastoral care to members of the congregation, prioritizing those experiencing crises or those that are

unable to attend church. 35 percent indicated *almost always*. 12 percent indicated *some of the time*.

- 41 percent of responses indicated that Pastor Michael *almost always* regularly and effectively communicated with the congregation, individually or as a group, outside of Sunday worship. 41 percent indicated *most of the time*. 12 percent indicated no evidence for response.

In regards to the open discussion component, each deacon shared their feedback using the same statements as the congregational survey, but different measures of response. The Ministry Team used *exceeds expectations, meets expectations, and improvement needed* to evaluate.

For almost every statement, the deacons broke down the responsibility or task described and delineated areas of strength and areas to improve. The discussion expounded upon the congregational insight gathered, and yielded effective communication. As previously mentioned, the main areas of focus were on Pastor Michael's strength in sermon preaching and improvement needed in visitation.

The Ministry Team encourages West Swamp members to reach out to a deacon with any questions or comments regarding Pastor Michael's evaluation process.

~ **Katie Mood**
Ministry Team

Stewardship: Keeping up with maintenance

The last couple months have included some significant rain events as you all know. Unfortunately, the streetside basement sump pump failed during one of them and we got some significant flooding. Fortunately there was not significant damage. I have replaced the pump and installed additional leak detection in that area.

If you ever hear alarms coming from either basement, please let me know at (215) 272-5790 because they could be indicating a leak, battery backup, or elevator alarm issue as a result of power outages, significant rain events,

or (hopefully not) flooding. Only 3 leak detectors have a strong enough wifi signal to send out an alert to my phone, so member alerts would be appreciated.

Other than that event, most other maintenance has been regular and expected, including the elevator inspection that was passed. Please keep in mind that I will eventually be cleaning out unused items from the pavilion garage. So please remove personal belongings in the near future if you have any stored that are not used by the church. I will also be disposing of the broken fellowship hall chairs because they are

a liability, and it has been determined that repairs cost more than purchasing new.

One improvement was the addition of new benches outside that you will see under the carport and out by the playground. Don and Nancy Jacobs took the time to source and pick them up. They are already being used by visitors to our church. In addition, the damage to the one carport column was patched and painted recently between the bouts of bad weather.

~ **Alex Parzych**

Mission: June events and August challenge

We had two events in June: We hosted the Men-O-Lan staff picnic on June 6. Everyone enjoyed the good food and fellowship. Thanks to everyone who helped.

On June 7 we had a table at the Trumbauersville Community Day. Although it started with heavy rain which may have de-

tered some people, all went well. We did a craft and handed out cookies and bottled water with information about West Swamp. Next year we might do a carnival game in place of craft. Any suggestions are welcomed.

We will be collecting MCC School kits once again in August. You

can find the list of items in the bulletin. Donate whole kits or individual items. Take advantage of the Back-to-School sales!

MCC hopes to collect 25,000 school kits in 2025. Will you rise to the challenge?

~ *Chris Allem*

How a school kit helps Frewyni in Ethiopia

Frewyni Abrahaley Teklay is 14, lives in Ethiopia and has big dreams for her future. "I want to be a pilot and help lift my community out of these difficult times," she says.

When it comes to achieving dreams, school is so important. But years of fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region made it harder for families to get their kids to school or buy things like notebooks and pencils. Frewyni missed about three years of school because of the conflict.

Now, the fighting has calmed down. Frewyni is very happy to be getting caught up at Rama Secondary School. "I felt stuck at

home, but I was afraid to leave because of the soldiers. Now that school has resumed, I'm happy to see my friends again." At the same time, things haven't exactly gone back to how they were before. Local teachers say that because so many kids got hurt or lost loved ones, students are more stressed out and can be less motivated to learn.

Gifts of school supplies can be a great way to lift kids' spirits and to help them achieve their

Frewyni Abrahaley Teklay, 14, who is going into seventh grade, receives an MCC school kit distributed by Meserete Kristos Church Development Commission (MCC/Arete)

dreams. "They will assist me in my studies, and they help my family by reducing their expenses," Frewyni says.

~ *MCC Resources*



Code Blue: Volunteers needed

It may be hard to think about the Code Blue program during the heat and humidity of summer, but we are already preparing for the next Code Blue season.

On the next page of this newsletter

you will find a Code Blue volunteer registration form for the 2025/2026 season beginning Nov. 15. If you are able to volunteer—even occasionally—or have questions relative to volunteering, please call or ask me. You can fill

in this form and return it to me or Jan Wieand, or mail it as stated on the form to Mary Kate Nealis.

Thanks for your consideration!

~ *Louise Butcher*

AHUB/Code Blue Homeless Shelter Program: Volunteer Registration Form 2024-2025

Returning Volunteers: Unless your personal information has changed, you only need to fill in your name.

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Nickname	Preferred Title
Street Address	City/Town	State	Zip Code	Church/Community Affiliation
Home Phone	Cell Phone	E-Mail Address	Employer	Work Phone#
Emergency Contact Name	Contact relationship	Emergency Contact Phone #	Where did you hear about Code Blue?	

Volunteer Schedule Information

Returning volunteers must fill in this information. (see job descriptions on other side of sheet)

Please indicate which duties and what days you can perform them. Use X for any duty you will do, and XX for the duty you prefer:

Shelter Admissions	8:15 pm - 11:00 pm	Night:	M___	T___	W___	Th___	F___	Sa___	Su___
Over Night Supervision Shift #1	8:15 pm - 2:00 am	Night:	M___	T___	W___	Th___	F___	Sa___	Su___
Over Night Supervision Shift #2	2:00 am - 7:00 am	Morning:	M___	T___	W___	Th___	F___	Sa___	Su___
Morning Aide	6:45 am - 8:30 am	Morning:	M___	T___	W___	Th___	F___	Sa___	Su___
Meal Preparation	Nov. 15 to April 15 _____ (one meal/month)								

**** All volunteers must attend a two hour training session at the shelter in October prior to serving in the Code Blue Program.**

Comments/Questions:

Please send this form to: MaryKate Nealis, 1012 Juniper St, Quakertown, PA 18951 or scan and email to mknealis@gmail.com.

Advocates for the Homeless of Upper Bucks (AHUB) Code Blue Homeless Shelter Program 2024-2025

AHUB is a non-profit organization which serves the needs of the homeless of the Quakertown, Pennridge, and Palisades areas. One program under AHUB is a volunteer staffed community ministry called **Code Blue** which provides a warm bed and hot meal to the homeless of Upper Bucks County on cold winter nights from November 15 to April 15 when the temperature is 26 degrees or lower. The homeless shelter is located at the Masonic Lodge in downtown Quakertown. Approximately 80 volunteers are needed from area churches and the community to effectively run this program. Please consider volunteering for one of the positions described below, complete the volunteer registration on the front page of this document, and return it to Mary Kate Nealis.

Volunteer Position	Job Description	Duty Hours
Shelter Admissions	Welcome, interview, orient, and complete intake forms for the homeless guests. Specific training required.	8:15-11:00 pm
Shift #1 Supervision	Prepare dorms for homeless guests, serve the evening meal, supervise guests overnight for shift #1.	8:15 pm-2:00 am
Shift #2 Supervision	Supervise homeless guests for shift #2, serve breakfast and prep guests for departing shelter.	2:00-7:00 am
Morning Aide	Do a thorough cleaning of the shelter. Directions, masks & gloves, cleaning chemicals/equip. supplied.	6:45 -8:30 am
Meal preparation	Provide a hot evening meal (casserole, pasta, soup, etc.) for 8-10 people and deliver to the shelter between 8:00 - 8:15 pm. on the designated night. You will be contacted when a meal is needed., approximately 1 time per month.	

If you would like to volunteer in this vital ministry to those in need in our community, please fill in the other side of this sheet and return it to: MaryKate Nealis, 1012 Juniper Street, Quakertown, PA. 18951; or e-mail it to mknealis@gmail.com.

For more info on volunteering, call MaryKate at 215-620-3490. After we receive this form from you, we will contact you with more information.

DISCO: Bible Project class wraps up Genesis

Shwoo! Our first deep dive into the Bible took just over four years to read through the whole story—Genesis through Revelation. We thought we'd really learned a lot. So it is amazing how much more we've learned during our second deep dive.

The Bible Project Sunday School Class has just finished fifteen months on the book of Genesis. What a journey we've been on! I asked the class to share some of the things they've learned and these are their responses:

Alex Parzych says, "My biggest takeaway is that the repetition and deepening of the understanding of subjects is not just through the bible, but through the individual books. The Eden model has been highly repeated and pervasive throughout the stories contained in Genesis."

Karen Parzych, Karalynne Parzych and Jan Wieand talked together before sending this response: "As we were reading Genesis, we were able to see that there is a melody throughout the Bible. The entire book relates cycles of creation, de-creation and re-creation; human failures which cause separation from God, and God's giving humanity the chance for reconciliation and a return to Eden.

"We are learning how to recognize the hyperlinks throughout the Bible showing how it is one continuous story.

"It was interesting to realize that the snake in the Adam and Eve story is visible throughout the book of Genesis. We all have the potential to be snakes (evil) and also to transform to do good based on the decisions that we

make. Some examples of this in Genesis are Jacob, Judah, and Tamar."

After a lifetime of Bible reading and Bible study, I don't think I've ever learned so much about one book as I have this time through Genesis—and I'm sure there is more to learn. The Bible is meditation literature (Psalm 1:2). The more you meditate, the more you see. And if you want to know *my* big takeaways, please ask!

On Sept. 14 the Bible Project class will begin a deep dive into Exodus. If you are up for gaining new insights into this book, and are up for our 8:45 start time, please join us in person or via Zoom. We'd love you to join our journey!

~ *Lynne Rush*

Worship: Summer happenings

It's that time of year again—our Sunday worship at Camp Men-O-Lan. Please join us Aug. 10 for this special day spent with Solidarity and Harmony Church of Philadelphia. Pastor Michael has been letting us know some of the difficulties member of their congregation face. The easiest way to show support and solidarity is by just being present. Let's bring a good West Swamp presence to Men-O-Lan to show our support!

After the service stay for lunch and afternoon activities. S&H will supply most of the food.

Please bring a dessert if you can (remembering to bring it in a cooler if refrigeration is needed—fridge space is limited). After lunch, take a walk, go boating, spend time at the pool, enjoy the outdoors, and get to know our Philadelphia brothers and sisters.

Aug. 31 we will worship in the pavilion. Hopefully the weather will cooperate. For some extra fellowship after the service, bring a bagged lunch, and a little extra to share with others (optional).

In September, worship will return to the sanctuary as the weather (hopefully) cools down a bit.

Back to school month is also back to special music practices. Choir and Chimin' In will start on Sept. 10. Want to try something new this year? We can always use more tone chime players. We look forward to enhancing the worship service through music.

~ *Joan Hallman*



2501 Allentown Road
Quakertown, PA 18951

Phone: 215-536-7468

FAX: 215-536-7709

E-mail: westswamp1@verizon.net

Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Summer Picnic Fun



August

8/2 Bonnie Kiesel
Gary Parzych
8/4 Ben Rush
8/7 Jeff Rice
8/9 Marsha High
Carl Raub
8/15 Anita Husvar
8/16 Christine Allem
8/20 Karen Parzych
8/22 Katie Mood
8/29 Lynne Rush

September

9/2 Loretta Keiser
9/9 Margaret Marth
9/15 Marlene Stauffer
9/16 Dana Searfass
9/19 Doug Propst
Alyana Riley
9/26 Emily Rush
9/27 Joan Hallman
9/28 John Gwilliam