

West Swamp News

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August/September 2026

Moving forward

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FYI

- Senior Luncheons start back up on Sept. 17. All those 60+ are invited.
- **Farewell Luncheon** for Pastor Michael and Sue is **Aug. 23**.

It's hard to believe that we are in what has been called the dog days of Summer. It's that time of year when students are preparing to head off to college and parents of K through 12 students will soon start shopping for clothing and school supplies.

In addition, families are getting last minute vacations in before the academic season resumes and thoughts of football are on the horizon. It's a season of transition from summer fun to the resumption of books and homework.

Here at West Swamp, we have entered the season of Pastoral Transition, as Pastor Michael's tenure of being our Pastor is winding down. We are going through emotional swings of sadness for our impending loss of both Michael & Sue, and times of joy as we prepare to wish them

well in their next endeavors.

Since Michael announced his resignation, which takes effect at the end of August, your Ministry Team has been busy making preparations for the upcoming transition.

We met in July to discuss an interim pastor and organize the Pastor Search Committee. In determining the type of interim pastor we are looking for, your Ministry Team unanimously chose the option of establishing new goals and long-term transformation.

There was additional conversation on a number of topics with the position, including the number of hours per week. It was noted that there are a few individuals that have expressed interest in serving in this capacity. During the interim pastor's tenure, the Ministry Team would temporarily take up certain

pastoral duties. Nancy volunteered to contact Jeff Wright about our decision.

Attention turned towards organizing a Pastor Search Committee which will consist of five persons to be appointed by your Ministry Team. The PSC will have the option of meeting via Zoom to better work with members schedules. Jeff Wright offered to be available to provide assistance and answer their questions. The PSC would be asked to provide a monthly report to the Ministry Team advising of their progress.

We unanimously approved a list of candidates that we will be asking to prayerfully consider serving on the committee. In the next few weeks, your Ministry Team will formally announce the names of the five who will be serving on the PSC,

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Pastor's Corner: My final article

This will be my last article for the West Swamp newsletter. The temptation is to try to produce something eloquent, to go out with a literary bang. I am choosing instead to take the opportunity simply to remind you of some things you have heard me say before. I do this because I think they are deeply important. These realities lie at the core of our Anabaptist Mennonite faith, and living into them is essential for the flourishing of both you as followers of Jesus, and our congregation.

First, it's all about Jesus. In Jesus, his birth, his ministry and teaching, his death and resurrection, we see God most clearly. If you want to know who God is and what God is like, you need only look at Jesus. Jesus invites us to repent, because the Kingdom of God is here and now, and come and follow him. Hans Denck, the 16th century Anabaptist leader, put it this way: "No one may know Jesus unless they follow him in daily life." As Palmer Becker, in his book *Anabaptist Essentials*, puts it, "Jesus is the center of our faith." We are being formed by Jesus into people of love as we follow him day by day. The Holy Spirit expresses the life of Jesus through our lives.

Second, we're in this together. It is impossible to follow Jesus in isolation. Our culture has sold us a horrible lie. We are not meant to live as autonomous, rugged individuals. We model our lives on Jesus, not John Wayne. You were created for communion

with God and community with other people. It is in community that we discern God's voice. It is as a community that we worship God. It is as a community that we care for one another and our neighbors. It is as a community that we engage in God's mission in our world. And our participation in community around Jesus is larger than our congregation.

As we enter this season of pastoral transition, it will be essential to stay deeply connected with our Mosaic Mennonite Conference, with other congregations, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, in Quakertown, and with our ministry partners like Ripple Church in Allentown and Solidarity and Harmony Church in Philadelphia. As Becker phrases it, "Community is the center of our life."

Third, we have work to do. God is reconciling all of creation, in bondage to sin and decay, to God through Jesus. And as the firstfruits of God's reconciling work in Jesus, we are invited to join Jesus in his reconciling mission. What that looks like in our daily lives and in our life as a community is that we are responding to God's invitation to meet our neighbor's physical needs for food and clothing and shelter and friendship. We do this through acts of daily and weekly love, and through our congregation's partnership with the Bean Bag Food Program, the Quakertown Food Pantry, Code Blue, and Ripple Church.

We also do this when we build

relationships with friends and neighbors through genuine love and careful listening and invite them to experience the love of Jesus in our congregation's life of community. We often reflect on how relatively empty our meetinghouse is compared to former days. There are so many people in Quakertown thirsty for an experience of love through community, that, were we to connect with just a portion of them, we would have to expand our meetinghouse.

Partnering with Jesus in his reconciling work also means that we live with integrity in relationship with one another, showing love and offering and receiving forgiveness. As Becker phrases it, "Reconciliation is the center of our work."

It has been a source of abiding joy to me to do life and ministry with you these almost seven years. They have been challenging times to live through, and they continue to be so, with the rise of Christian Nationalism requiring us to—with great clarity, power and winsomeness—proclaim and live the nonviolent Way of Jesus our King.

In the words of Hebrews 13:17, you have made my work with you a joy and not a burden to me. Sue and I are grateful for all the ways you have shown love to us. I am confident that Jesus has greater things in store for West Swamp Mennonite Church than you have yet experienced.

Peace,

~ *Pastor Michael*

Worship Commission

Come worship with us in the beautiful outdoors at Camp Men-O-Lan on Aug. 9. Solidarity and Harmony Church of Philadelphia will be joining us, sharing their favorite foods with us. We will also have fresh corn on the cob, and watermelon. We ask those who can to please bring a dessert to share with everyone. It is a lively worship service, and a good time sharing with our brothers and sisters in Christ. The swimming pool will also be open. Bring your friends and neighbors for a day of worship, community and lots of fun!

Aug. 23 is Pastor Michael's last sermon here at West Swamp. Please attend this service, to say your goodbyes to Sue and Michael, as they make

their plans to move to Goshen, Indiana.

Our Mosaic Leadership Pastor Jeff Wright will preach on Sept 6. He is helping us in our search for an interim pastor, and will hopefully have one for us by September. There are several people interested.

To fill in till an interim is in place, we will line up guest speakers, and continue to worship and praise our God.

September is the start of school and new routines. The start of music practices is Wednesday, Sept. 16. If you have been a part of 'Chimin' In or the Choir, let Lynne know if you're up for another year. We're always looking for more folks who would like to try something new. Consider joining either

group—or both! Just let Lynne know if you are interested.

Mark Kemmerer, who has been videoing our service since we began doing that, will be moving to Iowa by the end of the year. That means we will be needing a new person to fulfill that roll. Or perhaps you would rather learn how to run the slides or the sound system, freeing up one of those people to be videographer. The sound system takes the most training, but the other two tasks are relatively easy. Contact someone on worship commission if you are interested. More people means a deeper roster, which means more people to take turns!

~ Joan Hallman

From the Ministry Team moderator

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once all positions have been filled.

In addition, to the transitional related tasks, your Ministry Team has also been busy taking care of the normal day-to-day business of the church.

While a few of the minor agenda items have been put on the back burner temporarily, we are actively becoming involved with The Jubilee Project Idea by connecting with the Bean Bag Food Program, which includes assisting food-insecure households with school children in the Quakertown Community School District. We have connected with

its director, Donna Halteman and visited their warehouse in Souderton. We are working to become a distribution site for their program here in the Quakertown area and are considering hosting a monthly food distribution and meal for Quakertown families.

Earlier this summer, we made improvements to our audio and video equipment. The company that installed our equipment performed an RTA maintenance service to ensure that our sound equipment is working as designed. In addition, our church laptop has been replaced. Now, fall planning is underway, along with the resumption of regular

activities and return to the sanctuary for worship in September.

As we continue to work through our transition process, your Ministry Team will keep you informed by providing updates. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please feel free to contact any member of your Ministry Team: Joan Hallman, Pastor Michael Howes, Nancy Jacobs, Alex Parzych, Karen Parzych, Carl Raub. I am also asking for your continued prayers for the Ministry Team and our church as we look continue to plan for our future.

Enjoy the rest of your summer.

~ Carl Raub

Mission: Serving others

This year in place of collecting School Kits we will be partnering with the Bean Bag Program collecting food and money to help feed the children in the Quakertown area. West Swamp will become a distribution center where families can come and pick up items collected. The first distribution will take place sometime in October. 10 volunteers are needed to help. This is one way that we can be of service to others. The following is a list of items that are needed.

Requested items for family grocery boxes:

- 1 box pasta
- 1 jar pasta sauce (plastic jars

- preferred, but glass jars OK)
- 1-2 lbs rice
- 1-2 lbs dry beans (usually black beans, but any type is fine)
- 1 family size bottle of juice (preferably 100% juice, not Hawaiian Punch or extra sugary juices)
- 1 jar applesauce
- 1 box of crackers
- 2 cans of tuna or chicken
- Other items are added as they become available.

Requested items for household bags:

- Paper towels
- Toilet paper
- Dish soap
- Hand soap

- Toilet bowl cleaner or any type of general household cleaners
- Miscellaneous items like sunscreen, magic erasers, dish scrubbies, etc.

Clients receive paper products every time, but cleaners and soaps are rotated.

~ *Chris Allem*



Stewardship: Miscellaneous maintenance

Storms have caused the maples near the graveyards to take some significant damage recently. I managed to clean up from the smaller storms, but I wanted to thank the Moods for their help in handling the largest damage from the intense winds that we had.

Miscellaneous items have been handled from pest control services, to elevator maintenance, to fire inspections, to support of the home school co-op that is using our facilities, to pumping of septic tanks, to fountain maintenance, to router replacement,

cleaning out the pavilion garage (great thanks to Don Jacobs and Bruce's help with that!), to playground and garden maintenance, etc... This is in addition to regular interval maintenance and checks that are performed bi-monthly.

Please notify me if the men's toilet runs for any reason. I am trying not to add more water to the system, but it seems like that issue is resolved.

A great thanks to Barry Auckland who we found out has been extremely neighborly and has

been maintaining the monument on Brick Tavern Road for all three churches (our last rotation was handled by Leon and Jim Snyder).

As always any help with garden maintenance and potted plant watering is greatly appreciated and requested as members have time.

~ *Alex Parzych*

Photo Gallery: Summer fun



Top: Joan Hallman takes her best shot to win a Hatfield meat prize offered by Don Jacobs. Tim & Karen Butenuth enjoy the picnic fare.

Middle: Pastor Michael shows off his spin toss. Cameron & Ophelia Parzych display a rescued Emperor Moth. Lynda Forsythe does face-painting at the West Swamp tent at Trumbauersville Community Day (the only photo NOT taken at the Church Picnic).

Bottom: Edna Rosenberger and Cindy Raub demonstrate their Corn Hole skills to an attentive crowd.



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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Calendar of Events

August

2, 10:30—Summer Sermon Series
wraps up
4, 7 pm—Community Com.
9, 10:30 am—Men-O-Lan Sunday
11, 7 pm—Mission Com.
18, 7 pm—Ministry Team
23, 12 pm—Farewell Luncheon for
Pastor Michael & Sue

September

1, 7 pm—Community Com.
6, 10:30 am—Jeff Wright
preaches
8, 7 pm—Mission Com.
15, 7 pm—Ministry Team
16, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In
16, 7:15 pm—Choir
17, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
20, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch

Regular Activity

Tuesdays, 8 am-Knotting & Quilting



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