

West Swamp News

Volume 15, Issue 2

February/March 2026

Reboot, recommit and rejoice

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FYI

- Valentine's Day has become very commercialized holiday. How can we focus more on God's love for the world than enriching Hallmark and Amazon?
- Join us on Feb. 18 for the **Ash Wednesday Service**, a time for reflection and repentance.

I would like to open by focusing on three words that begin with the letter R.

The first word is **reboot**. According to Webster, it is defined as to start something anew or to refresh something by making a new start or creating a new version. One example is to reboot or restart a computer. Another is to reboot or remake an old TV series. The first known use of the word reboot dates back to 1971.

The second word is **recommit**. It is defined as to entrust or consign again. An example of this would be to dedicate oneself to being able to do something again. The first known use of the word recommit was reported to be way back in 1606.

The third word **rejoice**. It is defined as to give joy, to gladden, or to feel joy or great delight. An example of this would be the angels celebrating to the world about Jesus' birth. The first known use of the word rejoice goes back even further into the 14th century.

Today, everything seems to be fast paced. Where is

everyone going in such a hurry? There is an endless barrage of distractions coming at us all day long. Events of conflict are occurring both here in our country and around the world. Today, our society needs to be reminded more often what Jesus was teaching to His disciples and those that traveled great distances to listen to what He was saying. But sadly, fewer people are attending church on a regular basis. It's not an isolated situation affecting a particular area. Our own attendance comes to mind. Is society too busy, too distracted or only good enough for some when times are difficult? I don't have the answer. But God is always there if we seek Him.

We have a rich history of teaching God's Word and the ministry of Jesus to the people in this area. Our mission ministry of helping others has included knotting comforters, relief kits, school kits, donating to

food pantries, volunteering at Code Blue, collecting coins, Ripple meals, etc. Activities and events include combined worship with Solidarity & Harmony, family hot dog roasts, hymn sings, Iron Pigs baseball games, kickoff picnics for camp staff, men's breakfast, outdoor pavilion worship, pancake breakfasts, secret sisters, senior lunches, Why Knot Week, and worship at senior care facilities. We have opened our doors to other groups providing them a place to hold their activities, events and worship: organizations like AA, Overeaters Anonymous, and Church of God.

I compare the church to being like a lighthouse. Lighthouses are constructed on solid earthly foundations. They emit a bright light that shines through the darkness to the ships at sea to guide them along the coast to safely reach their destination. A church is built on the strong foundation of

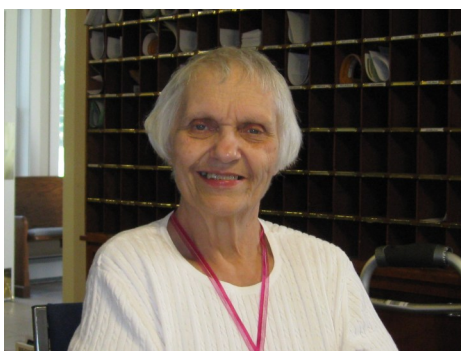


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Pastor's Corner: Thursday afternoons with Evelyn

In 1997, Mitch Albom published the memoir *Tuesdays With Morrie*, in which he narrated visits he had with his college sociology professor, Morrie Schwartz. Over a series of visits, Schwartz imparts wisdom to Albom about life and how it is best lived.

Although I have had a number of mentors through the years, I've



never had one like Morrie Schwartz. But I have had someone in my life that I spent time with every week. For the last more than six years, until her death this January, if I am in Quakertown, every Thursday afternoon about two o'clock, I went by to see Evelyn High.

We would talk, and I would pray with and for her. Evelyn always wanted to know how other members of the West Swamp congre-

gation were doing, and when Sue was battling leukemia, she always asked about her. She told me stories about her family, about her parents and her children. As she aged, there were some days when she seemed more connected to the past than to the present. She was always glad to see me.

One of my favorite memories of Evelyn is from during COVID, when we were figuring out how to do worship during lockdown. Matt and Katie Mood lent the church a flatbed truck, and Lynne and I would stand on the truck bed and sing and preach, and congregants would sit in their vehicles and listen via a radio transmitter we had rigged up. It was strange and felt tenuous, but it was a way for us to be together and worship Jesus.

And Evelyn was there, in her little white car, with Corinne beside her in the front seat. Sometimes Evelyn's car battery would die and someone would have to jump start her car so she and Corinne could get home.

Here's what Evelyn taught me, on Sunday mornings and Thursday afternoons: It's all about showing up, being present with one another, bound together by the love of Jesus.

As we walk together into God's future for West Swamp Mennonite Church, Evelyn won't be with us anymore as a tangible reminder of the need to show up and be present for one another, but we can remember her life and continue to learn from her. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us in chapter 13 verse 1: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters."

Peace,

~ *Pastor Michael*



Worshipping with Evelyn on a Fifth Sunday in 2022.

Reboot, recommit & rejoice

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Christ. The light of Christ shines as a beacon through the darkness to draw us nearer to Him. When gathered together, the space and people in it are transformed into the church. Just as the lightkeeper tends to the

lighthouse, we need to allow the light of Christ to shine through us to all around us and keep spreading His good message. In today's world, the church is needed as people need to be drawn to the light of God and His Son.

In closing, I pray that we can find a way to Reboot past activities and events and try them anew, to be able to Recommit ourselves and be more dedicated to other children of God around us, so that we can all Rejoice in the outcome together. Amen.

~ *Carl Raub*

Community: Gather your "pals" and celebrate



All those 60+ are invited to join us at the Senior Luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 19 as we celebrate Valentine's Day, or "PAL-entine's Day," with your pals!

You'll have fun and fellowship, along with a hot meal and activities. We always have some good fun!

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Room, for you and your pals. See you there!

~ Nancy Jacobs

Here's a glimpse of January's Senior Luncheon—welcoming the New Year.



Stewardship: Weathering winter well

Fortunately all systems and structures have weathered the recent snow events without issue, and power has remained on also. Maintenance work has been thinned out to typical recurring and weather related items.

A reminder: the AED unit was hung in the fellowship hall for centralized and easy access as well as good visibility. We are

fully in compliance for use of this unit due to recent training received by Jan Wieand, Nancy Jacobs, Michael Howes, and myself.

An update that Dave's Services will now be salting the parking lot. In the past we only salted the lot during major icing events, but we recently decided that for safety and liability it was best to

salt during most snow events that don't melt soon after. A thank you to the Mood family for clearing the snow from the parking lot continually free of charge!

I hope that everyone who likes the snow has thoroughly enjoyed it and that those who don't like it have been able to stay warm indoors.

~ Alex Parzych

Worship: Lent journey—Dwelling in dissonance

Ours is a world of urgency, a digital age of immediate gratification. We rush to resolution. We binge watch. We speed to shave minutes off the GPS's ETA. We retreat into silos of sameness and scapegoat those who disagree with us. We skip from Palm Sunday to Easter. Our temptation to seek relief from the dissonant uncertainties of life might be heightened this year.

This is, after all, a historical moment when many of us feel caught up in forces beyond our control, such as the culture wars, military conflict, political polarization, power grabs, forced deportations, funding cuts, climate crises, ecological devastation, nuclear proliferation, and economic hardship.

Most years, the season of Lent is meant to prepare us for Holy Week. This year the entire season of Lent is framed by the experience of Holy Week, inviting

us to linger in the intensity of the final week of Jesus' life, to "dwell in dissonance."

In music, a dissonant chord begs for resolution. Our ears instinctively *know* the note that will bring resolution and *want* the dissonance to resolve to something more harmonious.

Similarly, we might be tempted to rush through the discord within these texts, anticipating the already -and-not-yet resolution of Easter. Can we receive the gift of the dissonance: the sense of "both/and" in all this season's stories and in our world, the tension between how things are and

how one wants things to be? Can we accept ambiguity and lean into longing as we sense God at work (and sometimes not visibly at work) in these passages and in our world?

(Excerpted from the *Leader Magazine*)

Introductory Poem for this Lent Series

As we step into Lent,
we say "welcome to the dissonance.
We reserve a space for lament and grief,
to stay a while and do their work.
We release our nice little pictures
of perfect selves, perfect faith, perfect world,
and look for God in the heartache.
We listen for God in discordant melodies.
And follow Jesus to the cross,
though we don't understand
and it doesn't compute.
As we step into Lent,
we say "welcome" to the dissonance.
Trusting that God is here.
Now. In the mystery.
Before it is resolved.



Mission: Changing the world with our loose change

As part of our worship practices during Lent, the Mission Commission will be collecting coins for Mennonite Central Commit-

tee (MCC). The money raised in 2026 goes toward MCC's education programs around the world.

In India MCC supports a number of preschools that help make sure young children learn the things they'll need to be ready for grade school. (Left) Students participate in a lesson at the Bantala Early Childhood Care & Education Center, a preschool on the outskirts of Kolkata, supported by Development Action Society, (Right) Ritisha Bar writes on the blackboard, as instructed by her teacher, during a typical school day at the Kisha-

laya Preschool Education Center in the Ucchepota neighborhood of Kolkata. The school is also run by DAS.





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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Calendar of Events

February

- 3, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 10, 7 pm—Mission Commission
- 11, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 11, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 15, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 17, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 18, 7 pm—Ash Wednesday Service
- 19, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 22—First Sunday of Lent
- 25, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 25, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 12, 6:30 pm—Cookie Packing
- 14, 2 pm—Caleb's Cocoa Stand

March

- 3, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 4, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 7, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 10, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 11, 6:30 pm—Worship Com.
- 15, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 17, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 18, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 18, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 19, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 29—Palm Sunday

Regular Activity

Tuesdays, 8 am—Knotting & Quilting



Birthdays

February

- 2/4 Karalynne Parzych
- 2/6 Nancy Propst
- 2/10 Paige Mood
- 2/15 Ernie Reich
- 2/21 Kinsley Searfass
- 2/22 Michaela Wieand

March

- 3/5 Judy Scheetz
- 3/9 Jason Stevenback
- 3/11 Rick Hinkle
- 3/27 Bruce Bauman
- 3/29 Pat Bevan