

# West Swamp News

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## Summer's here, and ministry continues

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### FYI

- Are you a Bluffton grad? Come to the **Bluffton Alumni Gathering** on June 12, 6-8 pm, organized by Jim Amstutz.
- Reminder: We will not be observing Father's Day in church, but you are wholeheartedly encouraged to honor your fathers that day (and always).

It's hard to believe that Summer is almost upon us! It's that time of year when students enjoy their summer break and we celebrate those who have graduated and are preparing for the next step. It's also the time of year when family reunions, pool parties and picnics get added to the calendar. In addition, families are busy planning for vacation getaways to visit annual familiar destinations or the desire and anticipation of visiting a new location for the very first time. If you are trying to decide to look for some good reading material while away this summer, consider packing your Bible.

Here at West Swamp, we are entering summer with a new sermon series by Pastor Michael and will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall during the warmer months. While some of our regular activities may have stopped for

the summer season, we will be having our Family Night Picnic in the pavilion, the annual Camp Men-O-Lan staff picnic in June and planning for our combined worship with Solidarity & Harmony at Men-O-Lan in August.

I am extremely grateful for everyone's hard work and diligence to make everything function smoothly here at West Swamp. Your Ministry Team has been busy taking care of the business of the church. There are a few things that are currently under consideration. Pastor Michael has recently completed contacting the members listed in our Church Directory that have not been attending and we are looking at how to proceed and how to invite them to come back.

In order to spread the word, we are researching the possibility of advertising our worship services using different media options as a way

to attract more people for our worship services and/or special events and activities. Pastor Michael is researching a potential program called the Jubilee Project by making contact with organizations about how we can help make a difference in lives of those in need close to home.

We are in the process of taking steps to improve our audio and video requirements. Our current sound system was installed back in 2012. It has been serving us very well, however there have been a few recent issues that have required attention. The company who installed our equipment has recommended that we schedule a regular system RTA maintenance service to ensure that the amplifiers and speakers are working as they were designed to. This would help to identify any other po-

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## Pastor's Corner: Sharing the love of Jesus with our neighbors in tangible ways

Why is there a West Swamp Mennonite Church? Why do we exist? Our mission statement is an answer to that question. "Discovering together how to follow Jesus and make our community and world a better place."

We are on a journey in community with one another to live as apprentices of Jesus in our everyday lives. We do this not for our own benefit primarily, but to share the love we have found in Jesus with our neighbors locally and globally.

In my last newsletter article, I talked about three possible ways we could live into our mission: by hosting a Spanish-language church plant in our meeting-house, by helping relieve medical debt, and by providing food for students in the Quakertown Community School District who are food insecure.

We are still collaborating with our Mosaic Mennonite Conference to locate a church planter.

After exploring with a representative from St. Luke's, there was not a practical pathway to relieve medical debt for our neighbors here in Quakertown. However, if you know a neighbor who is struggling with medical debt, we have an active Sharing Fund to help.

After conversation with the social workers from QCSD, I was surprised and troubled to learn that there is so much poverty in Quakertown that the entire district qualifies for free lunch. All

schoolchildren in PA receive free breakfast. Let that sink in: our community is so impoverished that every child in the district receives free lunch. This realization should spur us to action. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 25 verse 40 that when we feed our vulnerable neighbors, we are feeding him.

Although there are no cafeteria accounts to pay off, there is an organization with which we can partner to feed hungry schoolchildren and their families here in Quakertown. The Bean Bag Food Program ([www.beanbagfoodprogram.org](http://www.beanbagfoodprogram.org)) began as a ministry of Zion Mennonite Church in Souderton, a sister congregation in Mosaic Conference. They are now a non-profit organization in their own right, and they have been serving Quakertown Community School District for some time. Families receive a delivery of food to their homes once a week during the school year.

There are multiple ways we can partner with Bean Bag to feed

our neighbors, including packing bags, helping to distribute food and possibly serving as a distribution site. We can also partner financially with Bean Bag. The Ministry Team and I will be exploring how we can collaborate with Bean Bag going forward, but I invite you to get excited about this opportunity to love our neighbors.

Let me share one more initiative we are working on to care for our neighbors in Jesus' name. As you are well aware, many people are finding it increasingly hard to afford life's basics like rent, food and gas. The less you have to work with financially, the better manager you need to be. We are exploring with Everence offering a multi-week seminar to our Quakertown community that would cover the basics of budgeting, financial planning and debt reduction strategies. Please pray for this initiative and be thinking of neighbors you could invite to take advantage of this resource.

Be thinking and praying about how you can collaborate with other members of West Swamp to make our community and world a better place.

Peace,

~ Pastor  
Michael



## Community: Family night fun



Mark your calendars for Wednesday evening, June 17, at 6 pm when we will have our annual Family Night Hot Dog Roast! We will meet outdoors in the church pavilion. Hot dogs, baked beans, ice cream and cold drinks will be provided. There will be outdoor games and good fellowship. Please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board, and if you are able bring a side dish or dessert to share. Bring a friend!

We enjoyed our last Senior Luncheon on May 21,

with a record number of attendees. We'll resume the luncheons again in the fall. Everyone is welcome to join us at the Family Night Hot Dog Roast on June 17 at 6 pm. A big thank you to all of the cooks and kitchen helpers who made these afternoons so much fun!

~ Nancy Jacobs



**A full house for the final Senior Luncheon before the summer break; the group enjoyed an indoor picnic, a quiz about food, and of course, lots of fun and fellowship.**

## From the Ministry Team moderator

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tential issues that might need to be addressed. At the same time, they will look at software and firmware updates that may be available to keep our equipment working effective and efficiently.

We are now in need of replacing our current laptop over the summer. While it has served us well,

the daily use plus wear and tear along with its age are beginning to take its toll.

With everyone's schedules, your Ministry Team is planning to take our annual mid-summer break in July. However, in August, we will commence with fall planning and resumption of regular activities and return to the sanctuary for worship.

I wish everyone a safe, happy and blessed Summer!

~ Carl Raub



## Mission: Summer is right around the corner

During Lent we collected for My Coins Count for MCC's educational programs. Thanks to everyone's participation, we were able to collect \$521.60. This was up from last year.

Overall the PA Relief Sale counted 186,336 coins over the two day event. (4,723 were from us!) The total at the end of the sale was \$46,673.49. With an additional funds received after the sale and including matching funds, the My Coins Count 2026 total is \$122,103.64.

Mission will have a table set up at the Trumbauersville Community Day event, June 6. This year we are playing a Plinko game for the children. There will be prizes for them to choose from. It should be fun for all. We are looking for volunteers to help with this event. We need people from 2:45-5 pm and from 5-7 pm and for set up and clean up. Look for the sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall. Event held rain or shine.

On June 19 we are hosting the Men-O-Lan picnic for the staff. It is encouraging to see how devoted the young people are to God and how much they want to pass on the Good News, so that campers can leave camp a stronger Christian and keep that spiritual fire burning long after they leave camp. We will put up a sign-up sheet for food items needed for this event.

~ *Chris Allem*

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## Stewardship: New possibilities

As the weather has been improving we have been handling outdoor maintenance such as checking playground mulch, mulching around the church and in the cemetery, trimming the weeds in the driveway, picking up tree litter, weeding the flower beds, etc... Regular maintenance has in the building has been uneventful thankfully. I have not had the chance yet to fully clear out old and unused items from the pavilion shed yet.

I would like to announce that we finally made a jump out of the Uninvest cemetery accounts that were giving us trouble for years with signer updates to a QNB account that is much more easy to update and keep track of signers within. This will better se



cure funds and use of them for cemetery maintenance for years to come.

Additionally, we have an interested homeschool co-op that will be taking advantage of our pavilion, playground, and basement areas once a week on Wednesdays starting in June as a rental customer. I'm looking forward to seeing more youth in the church as a greater use of our facilities during the week, on top of income for the church. My own family may end up participating in kindergarten programs as well.

~ *Alex Parzych*

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## Courage to enter the song

During the month of May five West Swampers took part in a book study that challenged and inspired us. We did not read the whole book together; much of it is given a theological basis and practical tools for grassroots movement organizing. Participants were encouraged to read those sections on their own.

What we did together were the four Bible studies provided. The studies featured reading scripture and some essays, questions for discussion and an action (that we often modified).

One thing the five of us definitely agree on is what a complicated matter this is. Problems between Israel and Palestine did not start with the Hamas attack in October 2023. It began in 1948 when at the green light of many Western countries, Jews invaded Palestine to make the Jewish nation of Israel. That's almost 80 years ago!

"Coming into the study, I felt very clueless because of ignorance from having my head in the sand," says Rod Rush. "I still feel clueless, but now also feel guilt for having my head in the sand.

"The realistic me also feels helpless, realizing any action I take will just seem like spitting in the ocean because the problem is so immense."

Nancy Jacobs says, "The book clarified the history of the Israel-Palestine conflicts of the past 75 years, and helped me understand the devastating effects it has had on Palestinian families.

Christians in Palestine have incredible faith in God, and in Jesus' teachings of peace. Their ability to find hope in their

oppression, and to continue to work for peace, are an important message for us in these times."

One of our assignments was to read *The Kairos Document*, issued in 2009 by Palestinian Christians. Nancy highlighted this quote:

"Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it."

The essay that struck me the most was about modern Israel, ancient Israel and the Bible. When God made a covenant with ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai, it was conditional: "if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession." (Ex. 19:5) Is the modern state of Israel, that was formed as a secular democracy, keeping God's covenant? Are they still heirs to the promise? Are they acting as a priesthood to the nations?

If you are interested in reading up on this subject and doing your own study, I will put a copy of the book in the library.

~ Lynne Rush





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Reflecting God in our  
living, loving and serving



Calendar of Events

**June**

- 2, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 6, 3 pm—Trumbauersvill Com. Day
- 9, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 12, 6 pm—Bliuffton Alum Gathering
- Bunch14—Pastor Michael's birthday!
- 16, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 19, 6 pm—MOL Staff Picnic
- 21, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch

**July**

- 5, 10:30 am—Worship in Pavilion
- 7, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 14, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 19, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch

**Regular Activity**

Tuesdays, 8 am-Knotting & Quilting

**June**

- 6/3 Mike Opdyke
- 6/4 Linda Rice
- 6/6 April Huff
- Michael Opdyke
- Jeff Searfass
- 6/9 Leon Propst
- 6/12 Kaitlin Kennedy
- 6/14 Michael Howes
- 6/17 George Mellan
- Eileen Riley
- 6/22 Brook Stauffer
- 6/23 Marian Hinkle

- 6/27 Shawn Husvar
- Eli Mood

- 6/29 Cindy Raub

**July**

- 7/1 Jonathan Opdyke
- 7/2 Haley Stauffer
- 7/3 Richard Rosenberger
- 7/5 Pov Sar Loch
- 7/22 Kevin Riley
- 7/27 Mark Kemmerer
- 7/30 Sue Conrad Howes