

## Widows/Widowers Ministry

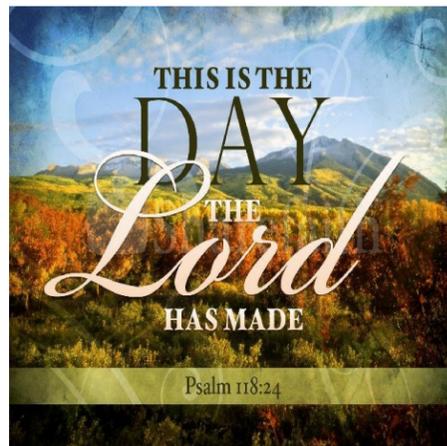
*John and Kathy Werner*

In November of 2010, I found myself saying goodbye to my husband of 37-1/2 years. The following year was very difficult. My life, as I once knew it, had changed drastically in every area and I struggled, unsure of where I belonged or what step to take next. As I looked around, I realized there were many widows and widowers like me and I began to pray and the Lord laid some ideas on my heart. I approached my Pastor about these ideas. (Pastor Stan Williams was at Lighthouse at the time.) He encouraged me to "run with this" for it was a much needed area of ministry. It all began with our first meeting in February of 2012. I invited those around me that I knew were widowed. Twelve people sat around my dining room table and we had a lot of fun, food and fellowship. So began this Ministry. John Werner lost his precious wife in 2007. We had known each other for years. He was among those in attendance at that first meeting. Today, there are over 90 people on our mailing list and we have watched God work to bring healing to so many lonely, hurting hearts.

While the Widow/Widower events are NOT a grief share, we strongly urge people to attend one. It is also NOT a "meet 'n' greet" service. We have 4 events each year beginning with our annual February "Not so Valentine Party", a spring event (last spring we went to the Caribbean with the Caribbean Steel Band), a summer picnic and a fall celebration of all our birthdays. Each event has a theme and on most occasions we have special guests, entertainment, musicians, artists, magicians, etc.

We plan interactive games, we laugh a lot, we eat well, and there is always a lite spiritual overtone and encouragement and all go home with some type of a little treat. These folks enjoy a few hours knowing they "are not alone". People come from all walks of life from Philadelphia to as far north as the Lehigh Valley. Each event is free. However, we do pass a donation bin to help pay for various costs. John and I provide the main dish and beverages and each person brings something to add to the buffet table. We do not suffer from lack of food!

In April of 2016, John and I were married and many were concerned we would not continue this ministry but we felt the Lord pushing us forward. God has certainly BLESSED us in so many ways!!! If you know of a widow or widower who might wish to join us, please let me know or give them my phone number (215) 808-6856. Our next event is a "Not So Valentine Party" on Saturday, February 16, here at Swamp Mennonite Church, from 10 am to 2 pm. A flyer will be posted on the bulletin board in just a few weeks! Please share this info with your widowed friend. We guarantee an interesting day.



## This 'n' That

*Arlene Yothers*

The Historical Committee would like to invite you to a potluck lunch after Sunday morning worship on February 10. After the meal, we will have Dean Mohr, a local historian give a talk about the split between the local Swamp congregations. He shared his knowledge at the 300th anniversary celebration at West Swamp in 2017. Do you have questions that you want to be addressed about that split? Please write them down and put them in my mailbox here at church. It will be a nice time of fellowship. Plan to attend!

The Souderton Homes Auxiliary will be having the Rocker-Thon Fund Raiser on Friday, February 22! It will be held from 9 am to 4 pm in the Summit Auditorium. It's a fun day to come to the Home, sit back, relax and help raise money for the auxiliary. You can ask your friends to sponsor you while you "rock" for an hour or more. There will be food and entertainment. If you can't "rock", please sponsor someone who can be there.

Think about spring, and the possibility of joining the group that will be walking or running to raise money for the Worm Project. The date and location will be announced later.

Finally, as you are doing your cleaning after the holidays, think about bringing your items that you don't use any more to the Care and Share Shoppes. If you want to find a used item that could fit in your home, come and shop at these fine thrift stores in Souderton. If you need more information, please see me for details.



## From Pastor Nathan's Desk

There are many pictures of the church throughout the Old and New Testament, but perhaps my favorite is when the church is called a "family". I grew up in a stable family where we were secure and knew that we were loved, but where others were always welcomed as well. We oftentimes had 3-5 non-biological "family" members at every large holiday meal. Dana went to my parents' house for dinner and a game night with friends every Tuesday night for a year while I was away at college before we ever even started dating.

A healthy family is a place where everyone is welcomed and accepted, but where there are certain privileges and responsibilities that come with being added into the family. There are also multiple ways to be added to a family: birth, marriage, or adoption.

In many ways, the church is the family of God. Everyone is welcome to participate in the life of the church and appreciate the love and warmth that it offers, but as you become more regular in your interactions at some point it is appropriate to take another step of commitment, to acknowledge the responsibilities and privileges of being part of the church.

We do this every year through our baptism and membership process. Everyone who is a follower of Jesus is part of the large, extended family of God that will experience the most joyful reunion after the resurrection, however, as Anabaptist

Mennonites we believe that it is also important for every believer to be part of a nuclear family while here on earth, called the local church.

We are born into the church, not by blood or ancestry, but through a personal commitment to follow Jesus marked by baptism. We are born again through the water and the Spirit into a new family of faith. This is why anyone that we baptize here at Swamp immediately becomes a member, and it is also why you cannot become a member unless you are baptized.

However, sometimes we move from one local church to another. In this case it is appropriate to transfer our membership, indicating that our commitment, responsibilities, and accountability are in a new nuclear family within the larger church.

If you have been regularly attending here at Swamp Mennonite Church but are not a member, I hope that you know that you are always welcome to attend and that, in many ways, you are already part of the family. I would also encourage you to consider formalizing that family relationship by participating in our 10-week membership class during Sunday School from February 3 – April 14. You can participate in this class even if you are not sure whether or not you want to become a member now. You will have a current member as your sponsor throughout the course of the class and at the end will have the opportunity to join our church, affirming our covenant of



membership, either through baptism or by transferring your membership from another congregation on June 9. If you have any questions about membership or what it might mean to join this local congregation, I would encourage you to ask someone who is currently a member, perhaps even consider asking them to be your sponsor.

Also, if you are currently a member of Swamp Mennonite Church and regularly interact with someone who attends but is not a member, I would encourage you to ask them to prayerfully consider taking this next step of commitment to this congregation.



**Communion &  
Foot Washing  
Smith Visit  
with meal  
Sunday  
January 20**

## Church Board Report

Lowell Gehman opened the meeting by thanking everyone for their faithful service over the past 2 years.

Ken Longacre noted that the financial health continues to be very positive as the congregation continues to be good stewards with their giving. Bill Longacre spoke of changes to the Endowment Policy Statement, Swamp Fund Guidelines, and Scholarship Fund Guidelines. The board adopted a motion to approve the two policy statement changes as presented, which include the rewording under Swamp Mennonite Church Endowment Committee and the

last sentence under Fund Designation.

The proposed 2019 Budget was reviewed and adopted for presentation to the congregation at the annual Member Meeting in December.

In other business, Wendell Gehman gave an update on the proposed Columbarium project by noting that the recent questionnaire has been completed and the results would be tallied to see if further action would be taken. If the results are positive, the committee would then need guidance on how to proceed next.

## Ministry Team Report

Nathan opened the meeting by distributing copies of the Cycle Starter Plans asking each of the ministers to pick an item from the list. During each meeting next year, we would “check in” for a progress update. A few actions were shared including the act of praying with a member and the concepts of prayer and bringing God into your world.

There was a discussion on behaviors of leadership to work on including being open to failing, want to do vs. need to do, to acknowledge the positivity and the ability to soak up negativity and the clarity in the role of leadership.

Laurie Gilmore, a special guest from East Swamp invited participation in planning, financing, and providing volunteers for several Quakertown Borough events throughout the year as a way of blessing our community and working together as churches to build relationships with our

unchurched neighbors.

It was suggested to include the use of Focus Topics as a part of future meetings with ministers picking and researching a topic between meeting dates. Topics for consideration included training, curriculum and healthy delegating.

Nathan distributed copies of the Organizational Chart and challenged everyone to connect with leaders in their ministry area within the next three months by thanking them for serving, to find out what is working, what areas need improvement, provide some teaching or coaching and to pray with and for these leaders. He also asked each minister to review the chart to see if any items should be moved under a more appropriate ministry area. Discussed reviewing committee structures in some ministry areas, creating more regular check-in times with ministry leaders,

The board drafted a focus statement for 2019, “Pray, Listen, Align”. It will be presented to the Ministry Team for review.

Pastor Nathan will be one of the two delegates at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City next year. It was suggested to ask Henry Longacre if he would wish to be the second delegate.

Finally, a list of meeting dates for next year, including the annual member meeting were presented: January 17, March 21, May 16, July 18, September 19, November 21, December 3.

obtaining new first aid kits, encouraging committees across ministry areas to plan events together to reduce overlapping events, small groups and possibility of distributing an evaluation to find out what people are looking for.

Several upcoming events were noted including: the January 20 Communion and Foot Washing along with the visit by the Smith’s with a meal, February 10 meal and history lecture with Dean Mohr and the annual Winter Social Event planned for March.

Finally, the leadership focus statement for 2019 was reviewed, as presented by Church Board. The following alternate suggestion was made, “Pray – Listen – Follow”. Nathan will take these back to members of the Church Board.



## Focus for 2019

### Pray → Listen → Follow

As we look forward to what God wants us to focus on in the future, Church Board invited 30 individuals to complete a survey through Natural Church Development, an organization that has helped over 70,000 churches on all 6 continents over 20 years identify what comes naturally to them and what comes less naturally. They scored the church according to 8 quality characteristics (*Empowering Leadership, Gift-based Ministry, Passionate Spirituality, Effective Structures, Inspiring Worship, Holistic Small Groups, Need-Oriented Evangelism, Loving Relationships*) as well as 24 themes.

Overall, this study was encouraging and showed that we are doing well as a congregation, but it identified that a weaker area is praying, especially in smaller groups or spontaneous settings. We are passionate about our

relationship with God as individuals, and we engage well in our worship services as a congregation, but we do not as easily share our faith stories with each other in smaller groups where we can receive personal prayer, engage in intimate relationships, and work towards reconciliation. As a result, we tend to spend ourselves on behalf of God and others rather than “breathing in” the life that God offers, and we tend to be welcoming and warm when people first come but harder to connect with on a deep level for those who stay.

Taking this into account, our leadership teams have decided that our focus for the coming year should be on prayer. Our goal is to listen well to God, to tune ourselves to his will, so that we know where he is calling us. At our leadership retreat we spent an hour doing a prayer walk around the building and we are continu-

ing to think of ways that we as leaders can focus more on prayer and building community within our congregation, especially in smaller group settings.

So, as we enter another year growing together in Christ, I would encourage you to consider: Who are you growing with? Who are you encouraging in their personal walk with God? Who might you ask to pray for you as you seek to listen for the Holy Spirit’s leading in your life?

May God meet with us as we pray, listen, and follow.



### 2019 Leadership Team

#### Church Board

Chair - Bill Longacre  
 Vice Chair - Robert Geissinger  
 Finance Committee Chair - Ken Longacre, Jr.  
 Members at Large - Wendell Gehman  
 Laura Rush  
 Will Sadler  
 Pastor - Nathan Good

#### Pastoral Care Team

Pastoral Care Team Chair - Pastor Nathan Good  
 Barry & Sharon Gehman  
 Robert Geissinger  
 Shirley Geissinger  
 Cindy Longacre

### Ministry Team

Ministry Team Chair - Pastor Nathan Good  
 Christian Education - Jayne Longacre  
 Community Life - Kathy Rosenberger  
 Outreach - Johanna Zeigler  
 Worship - Pastor Tami Good  
 Youth & Young Adults - Steve Weaver

