

MCC Meat Canner

In years past, our local MCC Canning Operation produced thousands of cans of protein-packed meat for families devastated by drought, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, extreme poverty, war, or other emergencies here and abroad.



This year from April 1-3, MCC is asking for assistance with the purchase, preparing, and packing of

24,000 pounds of meat to relieve the needs of the hungry! The MCC Mobile Canner will operate at the MCC Material Resource Center at 737 Hagey Center Drive, Unit C, Souderton, PA 18964 from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM each day.

Over 100 individuals are needed each day to operate the canner. Workers are needed to fill, wash, and label cans; prepare boxes for shipment; load the truck; and help with general site clean-up. Helpers

are asked to work a 2, 4, or a 6 hour shift. If you are resolved to put your love into action to help the needy through the simple act of sharing your time, please call the MRC at 267-203-8074.



Your tax-deductible contributions may be made payable to the "MCC Canner Project" and mailed to the MCC Material Resource Center at the above address. Go to mcc-harleysville.org, click "Get Involved," then "Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canner" for more information about how, as an extension of Christ, we can use our hands to meet the needs of others.

This 'n' That by Arlene Yothers

Thanks to ALL who provided food for the meal that was held on Sunday, February 10, when we hosted local historian, Dean Mohr. If you were unable to attend and would like to learn more of Dean's talk, please contact me, as it was recorded. The next event to be hosted by the Historical Committee will be a meal and Hymn Sing on April 7. If you have a favorite song that you want us to sing let me know. More details about this upcoming meal and program will be announced in the bulletin.

If you would like to learn more about the Care and Share Thrift Shoppes located in Souderton, there are orientation dates planned throughout the year. Come to one and see how you can be of service right here in this community. It's a very informative time lead by Suzanne Kratz, Volunteer Manager. For more information, call: 215-723-0315, ext. 113.

The Rocker-thon was held at Souderton Mennonite Homes on February 22. If you were not contacted about giving a donation for the auxiliary, you will have another chance to give this year. In May, we will be asking for donations for the general SMH Auxiliary Fund Drive.

You will be hearing more about the Worm Project Walk/Run coming to this area in April. Last year there were almost 90 walkers and runners. We hope to have more of you come out to join us this year. Bring a friend with you and learn about what is happening with the worm pills around the globe. Get warmed up and ready for the big day!



Medical Kits

If there is a need for a first aid kit, there are several kits throughout the facility.

The library, behind the door, on one of the book shelves is where the **main first aid kit** can be found. This kit has a large variety of supplies that may be needed at any given time. Various sizes of bandages, wraps, tape, ace wrap, cleansers, antibiotic ointment, tourniquet, scissors, tweezers, needle, Tylenol, gloves, sugar etc.

The following kits have many necessary items, just not as detailed.

The shelf in office foyer, above lost and found box

The kitchen, presently on top of freezer

Dry sink in the fellowship hall, plastic rectangular box in bottom

Each Sunday School classroom in CE area, plastic rectangular box on the cabinet shelf. These have 1 pair of gloves, cleansing wipes, and band aids. If any of these items are used and need replacing, extra supplies can be found at end of hallway on supply cabinet. Teachers please replace any items used.

Remember



March 10th!

GROWTH MATTERS SWAMP MENNONITE CHURCH
 Volume 10 Number 2 March/April 2019



From Pastor Nathan

Covenant. It's an old word. A word from a simpler time, perhaps, when relationships were more valuable than resources, family was prioritized over personal ambitions, and a person's word was their only currency. Covenant is a word of handshakes and trust. We live in a society that has almost completely left behind covenant in favor of contracts.

Contracts aren't bad. They provide clarity and a point of reference. In a complex culture where we might maintain 200 regular connections with an additional 500 friends or followers on social media, who we may or may not even know anymore, sometimes we forget what we said. In a complex world where we stumble upon new information and different perspectives on a daily basis, we tend to prefer less commitment, more options, shorter time frames on our promises, just in case we change our mind in another day, month, or year. When we forge an agreement, we want it to be clear on what grounds we can break that agreement, and rarely do we enter into a relationship without a clear exit plan.

In the midst of this The Church insists that, while contracts may have their place, we must never lose sight of covenant.

What is lost when we completely abandon covenant in favor of contracts? What is lost when we completely abandon trust in favor of clarity, when we abandon loyalty in favor of exit plans?

In her book, *Living Into Community*, Christine D. Pohl suggests that community, a sense of closeness and belonging, is only possible when gratitude, promises, truthfulness, and hospitality are present. But these are all words of covenant, not contract. In relation to gratitude she says:

"Gratitude seems awkward in our culture. Contemporary understandings of self-fulfillment are often closely tied to individual achievement. They are not usually associated with community or grace, and for a long time, we have imagined that we are most fully human or successful when we are self-sufficient. Gratitude is an uncomfortable reminder that we need other people and that our lives are dependent on their gifts and generosity.

Gratitude fits a covenantal understanding of relationships; thankfulness is often the fruit of fidelity and a response to the love we have experienced. But much of contemporary life is structured around contractual arrangements in which each party knows what to expect and to what it is entitled. Gratitude is not our first response in situations where a person or company has delivered its side of the arrangement after we have paid our money or done our part. Satisfaction on both sides – not gratitude – is the goal of contracts. But if grace and gratitude are a way of life for followers of Jesus, how should we respond in contractual settings or in our everyday business interactions?"

On the cross Jesus sealed a new covenant with us through his blood. An open-ended covenant. A simple relationship with trust-based parameters – faith on our part, faithfulness on His. A relationship with no time-frame, no exit plan, no termination clauses.

In light of this, we follow his lead and, through baptism, make a covenant with the church. Through marriage we make a covenant with our spouse. Through infant dedication we make a covenant with our children. Through ordination we make a covenant with our leaders.

We shake a hand. We make promises. We trust each other. Knowing that, at times, our trust will be broken.

Knowing that, at times, we will stop agreeing. Knowing that, at times, we will need to put up with one another. Knowing that, always, love is a choice, a decision, and an action. An action that oftentimes leads to suffering. But an action that is absolutely necessary for the community and belonging that we all long for.



From Pastor Tami

50 WAYS TO PRAY Do you have a desire to experience prayer in new ways? If so, join us during the Lent Season in reading through *50 Ways to Pray* by Teresa A. Blythe. Use it as a daily devotional and try a new practice of prayer each day or focus on one practice per week. Either way, you will be challenged to grow deeper in your prayer life. Books will be available throughout Lent. Please sign up at the table in the foyer if you'd like a copy. Suggested donation is \$12, but feel free to give whatever you are able. We encourage everyone to participate!

If you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Tami.

Ministry Team Highlights

Create vision to plan, lead, and evaluate events. Determine what the vision is and how to best make it work. The ability to use our vision to “imagine if...”, and what we want each ministry to be or become.

A meeting was held to clarify the vision of the Wednesday Evening Activities Club program which resulted in a letter being drafted and given to the parents. The result is a more organized program.

Look into the ability to grow our focus on prayer and being able to pray together and develop a strategy for implementing this within our ministries. Encourage more people to become involved in outreach opportunities like the adopt-a-highway program. The ability to better understand who God is and who we are. Develop the concept of having a Prayer Buddy by picking someone’s name from a bowl and praying for them for a period of time.

The Church Board is recommending the replacement of the sign in front of the church due to weathering and deteriorating conditions. Upon discussion, the Ministry Team agreed that a digital sign was not recommended, but suggested considering a place for the names of the pastors and ser-

vice times. In addition, it was felt that the signs at Old Bethlehem Pike and Allentown Road should be changed.

Consider long-range calendar planning to simplify the calendar and reduce the risk of overlapping events. New events include a Winter Social on March 16; a Meal & Hymn Sing on April 7, and Spring Widow/Widower Event on April 13.

There are eleven members of the faith exploration class. Due to the size of the class for the new member event scheduled for Sunday, June 9, it was decided to give the Sunday School hour to the Worship Planning Team to use to expand their planning of events for this service. Pastor Tami was asked to come back to the next Ministry Team meeting with an outline of activities.

A meeting was held with the Smith’s, during their recent visit to get an update on their mission. Upon further discussion, it was announced that we would consider ending our support at the end of this year. After considering feedback from the congregation, Ministry Team is moving forward with the process of terminating financial support of the Smith’s. Individuals are encouraged to continue supporting the Smith’s on their own, if that is important to them.

A copy of the Bulletin /One Call /

AED Equipment



An automatic external heart defibrillator, (AED) unit has been purchased.

It has been placed in the hallway where the mailboxes are. You will see the sign indicating the location. A green light should be on at all times indicating charge. We ask everyone to familiarize themselves with the location in case it is ever needed. Time saves lives! A free

First Aid, CPR and AED course will be offered on Tuesday, March 26 for those who first complete an online course. Reimbursement for the online course will be made once certificate of completion of course is shown and with completion of demonstration class. A sign-up sheet is on bulletin board. If you have any questions, please speak to one of the trustees.

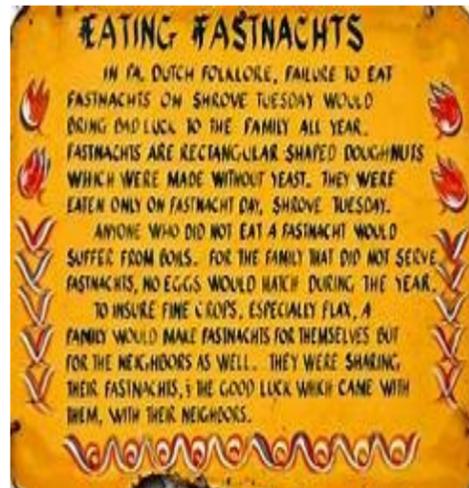


Website Procedures was distributed to show proper procedures for handling the making of announcements. All ministers were reminded that they need to approve all expenses before submitting an expense voucher for the receipt reimbursement process.

Worship Planning Team suggested having the Nursery available and staffed for special services i.e. Good Friday, Thanksgiving Eve, Christmas Eve, etc., as there are an increased number of small children in attendance. We had stopped staffing the nursery for special services several years ago when there were less young children.

Request received for filling of Easter Eggs for the upcoming Quakertown Egg Hunt by either Sunday School or Youth Group. Johanna and Jayne will work together to coordinate.

Our small groups were discussed, in light of different ways people experience belonging. What pulls everything together? Comparisons were made between church belonging and when we belong in non-religious settings. Many expressed experiences of belonging or exclusion both within and outside the church.



Church Board Update

The first acts of the new year included: all signing the Communication Covenant; the minutes from the Member Meeting were approved. Laura Rush was appointed as Corporate Secretary. Barry Gehman, Linda Jaindl, and Bob Delp were appointed to the MEP Team. The following were mentioned for consideration to serve as FMC delegates: Joe Hackman, Vanessa Troyer, Verne and Joyce Geissinger, and Cliff Mease.

There was discussion on the best ways to track progress on our 2019 focus statement – **Pray → Listen → Follow**. Suggestions were made for teaching and preaching on the topic as well as *Build Your Kingdom Here* as a song that puts words to this concept. Members were challenged on how we move toward this focus more deliberately.

A proposal from the Finance Committee to revise the Endowment

Policy and the Fund Guidelines was reviewed. A motion passed requiring Swamp Mennonite Church Board approval for any changes to Endowment Fund Guidelines. In addition, the motion included changes in how funds are accessed from the Swamp Fund and Endowment Fund to maintain more continuity in available funds into the future.

Bill expressed his support for the work of our ministers on Ministry Team. Some expressed concerns that all ministry areas should have a plan for bringing new persons into leadership and service roles and allowing current leaders to take a break. Ultimately each specific process should not be discussed at the board level, they are for our ministers to determine, but Pastor Nathan was encouraged to discuss this at Ministry Team, perhaps as a focus topic.

Wendell reported that the Columbarium Committee has selected

a design option and is working on a location. A final cost still needs to be determined. It will take 6 months from the placement of the order to the actual delivery of the Columbarium.

Bill asked what topics it would be helpful for the Church Board to address in the coming years. Topics included: the replacement of the sign in front of the church due to deteriorating conditions – Nathan will ask Ministry Team for recommendations; our local community involvement - How does our local community impact who we are and what we do as a congregation; reassessing the Christian Schools we support and our ongoing alignment in faith, life, and theology; and how we relate to fellow church members who may disagree on biblical interpretation, Christian living, and what constitutes sin.

Trustees Update

We had shared in the member meeting in December that the side parking lot will soon need to be repaved. The Trustee's have decided to begin that process this year. Sometime in March/April, we will be beginning the process of installing curbing around the flower beds and the perimeter of the side parking lot. The intention is to install the curbing this year, and finish the paving next year in order to spread the cost over two fiscal years.

We removed 9 movable wall panels in the fellowship hall, which we do not use, to address the issue of blocked access to the upstairs boiler room. This has always been an issue when panels are all stored in the closet, but it really came to light when we had a fire alarm from the smoke detector in the upstairs boiler room, and the fire company didn't have access. A big 'thank you' goes to Horace and Brandon Longacre for their help in removing those panels.

We are planning to replace the boiler in the basement of the Sunday School wing this year. We are investigating whether we will be putting in an oil burner or a propane burner. Penn Valley Propane offers very attractive pricing to churches, and it may make sense to convert to propane. We will be exploring both options.

We have purchased and installed an AED (automatic external defibrillator) in the hallway outside of the Nursery. We are offering a First Aid/CPR/AED training course free of charge to anyone who attends Swamp on March 26th. There is a sign-up sheet on the Bulletin board outside of the Nursery. Everyone who wants to take the hands on training course on March 26 must complete an online course before the class on March 26th. The link to that online course is on the sign-up sheet. Please see Linda Martin or Ken Longacre if you have any questions.

At the suggestion of the Ministry Team, we are in the process of replacing the two 'directional' signs on Bethlehem Pike and Allentown road. We will also be repairing or replacing the sign above the stone wall in front of the church which is rotted inside.

As always, if you see something that needs trustee attention, please either fill out a blue slip that is located on Carl's desk and put it in one of the Trustees mailboxes, or let one of the Trustees know. (Ken Longacre, Terry Landis, Will Sadler, Linda Martin)



March 20th