

## Just Swamp Teen Spotlight

Hi my name is Maretta Rush. I am the youngest daughter of Marc and Debbie Rush and yet somehow I am the tallest of my sisters... weird how that works. I have been going to Swamp Mennonite Church ever since I was little so it feels like a second home to me. I love the fact that everyone pretty much knows everyone and that people take time to ask about what is going on in my life and what I'm thinking about.



Something I have always loved to do is art. Whether it's sketching, painting, or sculpting, I am all in to do it! For me, painting is a stress reliever. It forces me to focus more on what the brush is doing than what I am worried or stressed about. I also really enjoy playing music, singing, and basketball. Even though I'm not great at it, I love playing piano and guitar it helps me get my mind off things that get to me. I love playing basketball because it always pushes me to become stronger and gives me more endurance.

Right now I am a senior in high school. When I graduate, I plan on taking a gap year and hopefully earn some money and maybe join a Christian organization and travel. To be honest I'm not quite sure what the Lord has entailed for me yet but I hope to find it along the way. Something I've always wanted to do was to be a travel journalist.

## Trustees Spotlight by Ken Longacre

We are in the process of replacing the desktop computer used by the church secretary, and Pastor Nathan's laptop, both of which have some issues. We are also looking into switching our IT support needs over to Micro Systems Plus, LLC, located in Perkasio. We have used a couple different small companies or individuals for IT support over the years, but never seemed to find a solution that was able to give us all the support that we need from time to time. Pastor Nathan communicated to me that he has had positive IT interaction with Micro Systems Plus at Faith Christian School, and in my follow up conversations with them, I found that they have worked with several other churches in our area, and other accounts as large as Grand View Hospital. I am hoping that they will be a good resource for all of our IT needs going forward. In addition to the two new computers that we need, I am hoping to improve our WIFI signal throughout the building, and increase the security of our networks, since we are using technology more and more for our services.

The installation and implementation of the live streaming equipment has gone pretty well. We have installed a second computer, camera, and some other equipment in the A/V room. It is getting pretty crowded with equipment in the A/V room, and at some point we may need to consider opening up more space to accommodate our needs. For now, we are making it work, but we are really at our maximum capacity, so any other additions or modifications would require some work to open up that area more.

We had to correct some violations and get a couple variances for the boiler in the basement of the Sunday School wing that we installed last year, but we have now gotten final approval from PA Department of Labor & Industry inspector, and we are in full compliance.

I am a little concerned about possible damage from all of the ice damming on some areas of our roof that we have experienced this winter. I am hoping that we have not sustained any water damage, but we will have to wait until everything thaws out to know for sure.

## Child Abuse Clearances

At Swamp, we are trying to keep in compliance with Pennsylvania Child Abuse laws concerning criminal background checks on all individuals volunteering in any form of childcare. Since we have a variety of children's activities, many attendees at Swamp are, at some time, actively involved in childcare. This requires us then, to ask everyone church wide, who is 16 years of age and older, to file and provide the church office with copies of the following documents: **(1) PA Child Abuse Clearance, (2) PA Criminal Background Check and (3) FBI Clearance.** This includes serving on rotating nursery duty, as well as participating in other forms of children's activities. Some of you may already have these clearances, and so we ask that a copy be provided to the church office, where everyone's forms will be locked on file. The sites to obtain these free clearances for volunteers are as follows (1) <https://epatch.state.pa.us>, and (2) <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>.

We would like full compliance by Easter April 4, 2021. There are serious consequences if we are found to not be in compliance with state law. Any questions or assistance needed in filing can be addressed to Laura Rush or Kathy Rosenberger. Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

**Swamp Mennonite Church**  
**2125 Rosedale Road**  
**Quakertown PA 18951**  
**Email: [info@justswamp.com](mailto:info@justswamp.com)**  
**[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)**  
**Phone: 215-536-7928**

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, Brian Rush)



## The Pastor's Corner by Nathan Good

Since I started driving at 17, anytime that I see someone walking who's obviously not out for exercise, I stop and ask them if they need a ride. It is a practice that I learned from my dad that was reinforced in my teen years when I oftentimes walked to get places and greatly appreciated those few people who would stop to offer assistance.

Picking people up along the side of the road leads to some interesting experiences. Once I picked up a man on Old Bethlehem Pike and drove him several miles to his destination north of Coopersburg. Chatting along the way I learned that he couldn't afford a car so he walked this route every day for work - 2 hours one way. One of the few times that I have had a woman accept the offer of a ride was in the late winter of last year. It was a cold day and she was obviously not dressed to be out in the cold. As I drove her to Patio Court, where she and her husband were staying, I learned that her husband had broken his leg so he was not able to work his construction job. Without income for around 2 months, they had no social safety net and had lost everything. He had applied for disability assistance from the government, but it takes more than 2 months for that to even kick in. We were able to help them temporarily with funds from our Mission Outreach account here at church to assist them in getting back on their feet. There was another man in his late forties that I picked up. He was in a difficult season of life in just about every way you can imagine, but when I mentioned that I was a pastor at Swamp his face lit up as he told me memories of attending Vacation Bible School here as a child and asked about different older members who had left quite an impression on him. I was able to pray with him before he got out of

my car at his destination.

Last Spring, I started walking the 3.5 miles from my house to my office every Wednesday. It took around an hour and was a good source of exercise and silent contemplation, but it was also a way of identifying with those that I have so often helped. It was a practice that reminded me of Jesus who left behind the riches of heaven in order to come live among us in all of our poverty of soul. It reminded me of when Jesus sent his disciples out on their mission, going town to town preaching without taking anything for the journey, not even an extra pair of clothes. It reminded me of a time in my teens when I heard about people in Africa walking 20-30 miles over the course of a whole day just to get to church, so I walked the 10 miles that it took me to get to church at that time to learn a little bit more about their experience. Throughout my life, choosing to put aside the privileges I have in order to experience life from the perspective of someone who has less than me has been humbling, reminding me of the excess I often live with and encouraging me to seek a life of justice in the pathway of Jesus.

But the reality is that when I got home from my walk on Wednesday evenings, I didn't have to worry about walking the next day too. When I had extra things to take to my office, I could walk Tuesday instead and just drive on Wednesday. When I started teaching Bible at Faith Christian Academy before going to the office, I could simply stop my walking and start driving again. The reality is that walking to the office on Wednesdays was in itself a privilege. I have a house. I have a car. If someone stopped to give me a ride, I wouldn't be in the same position as those I so often offer rides to.

But yet the practice of walking to the office once a week still left an

impression on me. It still offered important reminders. It was a spiritual discipline; the classic spiritual discipline of poverty. The whole idea of spiritual disciplines is putting ourselves in situations we wouldn't normally need to be in so that God can speak to us in different ways.

Next time you see someone with less than you, don't just ask "how can I help?" try to also ask "how can I put myself in their shoes?"

As we learn the discipline of poverty, we might just be surprised where God shows up.



**Begins Sunday,  
 March 14th.  
 Remember to turn  
 your clocks ahead  
 one hour the night  
 before.**



## Fear, Frustration, and a Cat by Pastor Tami

It had been a LONG night. The pager seemed to be going off every 10 minutes. Visits with patients were plenty and as I finished sitting with a family who was facing the passing of their loved one, the pager went off one more time. As I called the number to see what crisis I would be headed to next, the voice on the other end asked if I could come see a patient who was having trouble sleeping. I agreed to come up as soon as I could.

As I made my way through the halls, I realized how exhausted I was. It was 1am and I honestly didn't have much more energy to give. However, I wanted to honor the job and so I knocked on the door and quietly entered the room. There in the bed was a small, frail older woman. "Maggie's" eyes lit up as she realized who I was. Earlier that day, "Maggie" had fallen unexpectedly, and I assumed she was seeking comfort from being in an unfamiliar place. However, over the next 20 minutes, instead of hearing about her fears of the up-and-coming

surgery, "Maggie" shared stories about her cat. "Rescue" had rescued her. It quickly became evident that this ball of fur was not just her pet. "Maggie" was desperately worried about the cat's mental health. All she could think about was her cat being stressed when she didn't return home.

On the surface, this conversation might seem quite trivial. Earlier that night I had sat with a gunshot wound victim, gotten lost while trying to respond to an alert, and watched as a family processed the imminent death of a loved one. However, as I stood there and really listened to "Maggie", I realized that for her, this cat was all the family she had. Her distress and worry for the animal were just as real as the gunshot victim's fear, my frustration at getting lost and the family's distress on making a decision for their loved one. Emotion is emotion no matter what we are facing and each of these moments needed to be handled with patience, understanding, and care.

As I finished listening, "Maggie" asked if I would say a blessing over

her furry feline. In that moment of sweetness, for the first time all night, while bringing peace to another, I too was given space to breathe, to pause, and to sit in God's presence. With just a few precious words "Maggie" and I thanked God that He takes care of all creatures, both great and small.

This encounter at the hospital has stuck with me over the last few weeks. It has been a reminder that even in the middle of chaos, God's loving touch breaks through in the most unexpected ways. Although they may seem tiny and unrecognizable at first, if we are open, we may just catch the Spirit's still small voice whispering in our ear. As you think over the past couple of months, where have you experienced God's tender embrace? When have God's rays of sunshine broken through the clouds and spread warmth upon your face? When might you pause during your day to ponder how you've seen God in both big and small ways? *"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the very face of God shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God's presence embrace you and bring you peace."*

## Ministry Team Highlights

Pastor Nathan asked all ministers to take time at home to review the Leadership Structure. The procedures for listing announcements in the Bulletin and the One-Call system were reviewed and everyone was asked to review the website for any items that need to be revised. He spoke of a newly created Conference leadership development opportunity and how the program teams up experienced leaders with those less experienced. Meetings are held twice per month. A brochure was made available for further review.

This was followed by looking at Growing Leaders article with the following comments being made: micro-managing can be problematic, it is an art form to

empower others, ability of being clear on expectations, hard to set clear expectations, and collaboration is important. Ideas were discussed about how to empower and provide resources for members with ideas for activities during the summer.

Rachel noted that many would like to resume in-person Sunday School and Wednesday evening Club activities. She advised that Clubs teachers are available. Two Sunday School teachers were hesitant. It was decided for her to follow-up with Sunday School teachers, planning to resume if all classes are covered, on Sunday, February 21 at 9:00 AM. Clubs will resume Wednesday, March 3 at 7:00 PM.

Pastor Nathan addressed a reply received from Head Trustee Ken

Longacre; our insurance does not impose a minimum age for drivers that transport others to events as long as they are volunteer or staff of Swamp Mennonite Church. It was suggested to list names of drivers on release forms or emails for each event so there is paper trail identifying them as official volunteer. Discussed possibility of writing policy for church transportation of minors.

Discussed report from Worship Planning Team meeting. Kathy and Don Mease have volunteered to be the Decorating Committee. The new hymnals have arrived. Palms will be available for those that attend Palm Sunday worship in person. Envisioning some form of Good Friday service with Communion but no foot washing in-person, but would encourage both for

## Church Board Highlights

Several appointments were addressed at the first meeting of the year. Wendell Gehman was appointed as Corporate Secretary. Robert Delp, Barry Gehman, and Linda Jandl were appointed to the MEP Team.

Board Chair Robert Geissinger addressed the appointment of 2 non-clergy delegates for the Mosaic Conference. Quincy Longacre would serve as one of the delegates by virtue of his office. The annual conference meeting is the beginning of November.

Quincy reviewed last year's financial reports briefly by mentioning that we were able to give \$5,732.00 each to Spruce Lake and to MDS Central PA Farmers Assistance out of the excess remaining funds, as was approved at the members meeting in December.

Nathan recommended that the new board members review the Church Board Policy Manual to become familiar with it. In addition, he gave an overview of the Covenant of Communications, which was then signed by everyone.

Church Board meeting dates were selected for the remainder of 2021. They would be held on Thursdays as follows: March 25, May 20, July 22, September 16, and November 18. The annual Member Meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 7.

The question was raised about the possibility of appointing an interim Minister of Music and Worship during the upcoming transition. After discussion, the board approved a name change from the Minister of Music & Worship to the Minister of Worship, since this position covers more than music. They would look to appoint someone to complete Tami's term. It was then decided that an announcement would be made during an upcoming service, with a replacement possibly starting after Easter.

There was discussion about the possible need, through the search process, to address the section of the by-laws detailing "Lead Pastor" responsibilities, with the possibility of some responsibilities being handled as a "Pastoral Team". Discussion will continue further at a later date.

Amy Snedigar advised that the Search Committee has already met twice to begin planning the processes to be used during the impending search and transition. They are looking at job posting options, including advertising. In addition, they are preparing a profile for the intended position and a list of questions to ask the potential candidate(s). Questions were raised about travel and moving expenses. It was decided to ask Mike Clemmer whether there were any recommendations from Conference.

In other business, Wendell asked about Nathan preaching less, as was mentioned during last year's Lead Pastor Review. It was decided that Nathan should target preaching 3 Sundays each month, for a total of 36 Sundays each year. Nathan was encouraged to begin finding pulpit supply as soon as possible.



## Ministry Team Highlights

those at home. Worship Planning Team was looking for feedback on whether to plan a Easter Sunrise service as West Swamp will not be joining us. Ministry Team blessed Pastor Tami and Worship Planning to make this decision. If someone is available and willing to plan something for sunrise, Ministry Team would strongly encourage having it, but if no one is available or willing then it is ok if it does not happen.

Pastor Nathan asked who we will become as a result of each ministry area this year. Responses included being a place where the youth feel welcome and integrated within the congregation; being humble and using humility to put others first before ourselves; and people taking ownership of their faith and engaging

in smaller groups, even when they are not organized by church leadership.

Nathan asked everyone present to spend some time thinking about Summer Planning and bring their ideas to the next meeting. In addition, he requested some assistance with completing a portion of the Congregational Information Form to be used for potential candidates during the search process. Everyone offered to take certain sections and submit before the next Search Committee meeting. The Communication Covenant was signed by all present.

## Service Opportunity

Looking for a way to put your talents and gifts to work? If you have an interest in catering, or simply enjoy cooking, and/or serving people, or organization, there is an opportunity here at Swamp for you! The Swamp Kitchen Committee needs a volunteer to serve as chairperson. Anyone interested, please contact Community Life Minister, Kathy Rosenberger.

