

## This 'n' That by Arlene Yothers

Come out to the Care N' Share Thrift Shoppes to donate your outgrown clothing or any household goods or furniture that you don't need any more. Come to shop, remember, you get 50% off ALL purchases on your birthday, just bring proof of birthday. Come to volunteer, there are areas for all interests and time.

The Corner Store Gift Shop is now open to the public. All proceeds go to the Agape Fund there at the Souderton Homes. There will not be a Chicken Bar-B-Que in August. If you want to learn more about the Souderton Homes Auxiliary just come find me and we can chat.

The Worm Project Board hopes to have a Meal and learning session again this autumn. They thank you for your continued support. They work alongside other organizations that help children all around the world.

The Mennonite Heritage Center is working to collect data from conversations between youth and other persons in the congregation who have been part of this church family for a longer period of time. I hope to engage our youth with this project. I will be contacting other persons to be interviewed for this project. There will be a used book sale at the Heritage Center in July.

## You Are What You Eat (cont.)

*(continued from page 5)*  
means for expressing divine provision and care. To partake of a meal is to participate in a divine communication in which God the eternal Host says something like, "I love you, I want you to be well taken care of, I want to share with you the joys of my life." The Psalmist (104:10-15) puts it this way:

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;

They flow between the hills,  
giving drink to every wild animal

...

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,

And plants for people to use,  
To bring forth food from the earth,  
And wine to gladden the human heart,

Oil to make the face shine,  
And bread to strengthen the human heart.

"To grow food and eat in a way that is mindful of God is to collaborate with God's sharing life

with us as we share food with each other. Eaters can consume a wide variety of foods and not really savor any of it as God's love made nurture for us. To eat with theological appreciation presupposes an ability to 'read' food as the nutritious manifestation of God's love for the world. It is to be in the world in a posture of reverence for fellow creatures freshly engaged as the work of God's hands. This posture entails a process of spiritual formation in which we allow God the Gardener (Genesis 2:8) to conform us to his image as the one who looks after and provides for creatures. In the daily act of eating, people have the opportunity to appreciate and explore their creaturely condition as beings dependent on each other and upon God."

"For *whenever* you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." - 1 Corinthians 11:26

## Trustees

Reading Modernfold will be doing regular maintenance on all the doors on August 15 & 16. They will return the week of September 12 in the Fellowship Hall to work on re-covering all of the wall panels so that they match the new color. As a result, the Fellowship Hall will not be available for use during this time.

In addition, we are replacing the blind in the nursing room part of the nursery, which was damaged and broken; and the outside windowsills that need paint.

Please let one of the Trustees know if you see anything that needs attention.

## Pastor Nathan

*(continued from page 1)*  
It was based on these convictions that this first assembly of Anabaptist delegates decided: "Baptism shall be given to all those who have been taught repentance and the amendment of life and who believe truly that their sins are taken away through Christ, and to all those who desire to walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and be buried with Him in death, so that they might rise with Him; to all those who with such an understanding themselves desire and request it from us; hereby is excluded all infant baptism, the greatest and first abomination of the pope. For this you have the reasons and the testimony of the writings and the practice of the apostles. (Mt. 28, Mk. 16, Acts 2, 8, 16, 19) We wish simply yet resolutely and with assurance to hold to the same."



## GROWTH MATTERS

SWAMP MENNONITE CHURCH

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## What is an Anabaptist? by Pastor Nathan

Last month I started the first of a series of articles on what it means that we are an Anabaptist congregation. Menno Simons, an early organizer in the Anabaptist Reformation, was a Roman Catholic priest who converted to Anabaptism. He was reordained as an Anabaptist minister in 1537, exactly 10 years after the very first Anabaptist Confession was written. This is oftentimes called the Schleitheim Confession after the city in which delegates representing various churches gathered to hammer out their common beliefs in a confusing and divided time. Throughout the coming months I will be writing a series of articles on each of the points the Schleitheim Confession.

The Schleitheim assembly of delegates was an attempt to find points of unity amongst the various strands of Anabaptism that were springing up throughout the countryside in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The introduction of the confession explains that as some Christians were returning to Scripture and forming churches free from the authority of the pope and Protestant councils, they were "turning away from the faith, in an attempt to practice and observe the freedom of the Spirit and of Christ. They have fallen short of the truth and (to their own condemnation) are given over to the lasciviousness and license of the flesh [unrestrained pursuit of physical pleasure, especially of a sexual nature]. They are of the opinion that faith and love may do and permit everything and that

nothing can harm nor condemn them, since they are believers." In light of this, those who believed that faith in Christ and participation in the kingdom of God requires those who follow Jesus to "crucify their flesh with all its lusts and desires" gathered in order to lay out those aspects of the faith that they believed mattered but were being neglected by other Anabaptists.

Their first statement was on baptism. The baptism of adults was a clearly distinguishing feature in the Anabaptist movement (the name itself meaning "rebaptizers") and the stated reason for most of the persecution from both Catholics and Protestants. Some of the reason that those outside the church focused on the practice of rebaptism was that it was a clear rejection of the authority of both the Church and the State, and it was the equivalent of revolutionaries starting a new and distinct society and community. However, another reason that this practice of adult baptism was focused on by those outside the church was that it was important to those inside the Anabaptist movement as well. As they gathered to decide what it was they could agree upon as Anabaptist communities spread across much of mainland Europe, the item they placed first was that baptism should be reserved for believers only, meaning that someone who chose baptism needed to be of an age where they could understand their sin and choose to place their faith in Jesus for redemption.

Throughout the next 500 years a

name that churches who have descended from these early Anabaptists have consistently claimed for themselves is "Believers Churches". In fact, I have multiple commentaries in my office that are made as a collaboration of Mennonite and Brethren denominations that are called "The Believers Church Bible Commentary". But the focus on baptism goes beyond simple belief. A key theological claim for these early reformers was that there ought to be no coercion in matters of religion. Baptism was to be freely chosen by someone who had placed their faith in Jesus, not because of family or government pressure or requirements. As they looked at the New Testament, and specifically at the teachings and life of Jesus, they believed that for faith to be true it needed to come from the work of the Spirit in the heart of an individual without any coercion from outside forces. But baptism represented more than faith in the work of Christ for individual salvation, baptism was seen as a sign of repentance and a true change in life as well as entrance into a church that was pursuing the kingdom of God on earth.

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## Ministry Team Highlights

### Focus

Each meeting we discuss a focus question based on a responsibility in Minister job descriptions. In the past two meetings our questions for discussion were: *“What are your plans to facilitate review of ministry areas, implementing plan -> execute -> review process?”* and *“In what ways are you encouraging accountability with ministry leaders?”* We discussed Scripture, our past experiences, and our plans for the future in these areas as ministers and as a team.

### Review and Response from the past month

*What has been good or encouraging in your life, our congregation, or your ministry?*

Encouraged by the dedicated service of members in Sunday School and clubs; Ministry Team led youth group for a night and sent youth leaders to dinner to express appreciation for all they do; appreciation for Easter services and looking forward to outdoor services; culture of gratitude for those serving; personal notes of seeing God at work.

*What has been challenging or difficult in your life, our congregation, or your ministry?*

The current Youth Sunday School situation (MT helped think through it to fill teaching slots through June, and an email was sent out to parents), it was hard to find help for the Easter Sunrise breakfast, clarification on the purchasing policy, losing a worship leader, using up budget before end of the year, VBS, fundraising challenges, some youth challenges, conference concerns, house hunting, learning curves.

### Items for Consideration. What can we do together?

Long range planning items included Graduate Sunday and Outdoor Service on June 12, the last day of Primary Sunday School on June 26, Outdoor Service and Picnic on September 11, and the first day of Sunday School on September 18.

Ministers reviewed the new member testimonies and approved all of those seeking baptism and/or membership. The location for baptism was finalized- the “traditional” location along Weiland Road (Dan Schantz’s previous property).

Pastor Tracy spoke of the Covenant Communities Initiative, and that he was working on a preliminary draft, he also reviewed the survey results. Postcards were distributed as a tangible way of providing basic information. It is hoped to launch the 9-month program by late July with curriculum starting in September.

Dove’s Nest is assisting with the Child Protection Policy. It was decided to have a Ministry Team group training session on July 14. These individuals would then care for the children during the larger training time for the congregation, which is planned for August 21.



An update on the Israel trip for June of 2023 was given. There was discussion about whether children would be able to travel. It was decided to have tour host Derek Cooper be guest speaker at the Outdoor Service on September 11 with a time of question and answer. An insert was placed in the bulletin with a more detailed description to follow the following week.

Pastor Tracy initiated a brief conversation about CrossGen, and ministers are wondering if it might be too much to try to another new thing with other new items like Covenant Communities, Israel trip, etc. planned to happen in 2023. Ministers were asked to think about including articles in Growth Matters sooner rather than later.



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## You Are What You Eat (and who you eat with...)

We are asking that you eat together when gathering as Covenant Communities. As I write this, I am planning the first of three sermons in a series titled “It’s Party Time!” looking at the practice of eating together found throughout Scripture. In light of this, I am including this excerpt from the book “Food and Faith: A theology of Eating” by Norman Wirzba. May it encourage you to engage vulnerably and honestly as a church in conversation, in eating, and in life.

“Several years ago, on a warm fall evening at Anathoth Community Garden in Cedar Grove, North Carolina, I enjoyed a memorable meal. Roughly 100 people had gathered for a community feast. Though some of the meal was prepared by cooks from Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, the rest was potluck, and so included some of the freshest and best-tasting greens, tortillas, salsa, and chicken I have ever had. As our backdrop, we enjoyed a double rainbow on a massive thundercloud to the east, while the sun slowly made its way down the horizon behind us. Children were running around blowing and catching bubbles. Others danced to the sound of a live bluegrass band. The taste of delectable food, the sounds of laughter and singing, the aroma of fresh flowers and harvest, the hugs of friends and neighbors, and the sensation of a cooling fall night all came together in what I considered a foretaste of heaven.

“Why should I or anyone else think that this meal mattered? Is the invocation of heaven too extreme? After all, the evening has passed, and I no longer feel the physical sensations. No matter

how much or how finely I eat, I, along with all the other animal and plant bodies, will still die, and so return to the soil out of which we came and upon which we daily feed. But what if that night is indeed a glimpse, however imperfect, of what life ultimately is meant to be?

“Though it is possible to describe food and eating in countless ways, from a Christian point of view what food is and why eating matters are best understood in terms of God’s own Trinitarian life of gift and sacrifice, hospitality and communion, care and celebration. Trinitarian theology asserts that all reality is communion – the giving and receiving of gifts – because it has its source and sustenance in the eternal Triune love. This means that nothing in creation exists by itself, in terms of itself, or for itself. Creatures are marked from beginning to end by the need to receive the gifts of nurture. Inspired by Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have the opportunity to turn our homes into places of hospitality and ourselves into nurture for others. At its best, eating is a sharing and welcoming movement that makes room for others. Insofar as people learn to live in hospitable ways with each other and within their places, they participate in the eternal, hospitable ways of God that daily create, sustain, and fulfill life.

“According to this theological view, we don’t really understand food until we perceive, receive, and taste it in terms of its origin and end in God as the one who provides for, communes with, and ultimately reconciles creation. Food is God’s love made

nutritious and delicious, given for the good of each other. The mundane act of eating is a daily invitation to move responsibly and gratefully within this life. It summons us to commune with the divine Life that is made manifest in every bite.

“This claim will be difficult to swallow for people who are convinced that food consists of little more than a bundle of nutrients that we simply need to get in the right quantities, variety, and proportion. According to this view, food is primarily a fuel we need to keep our machine-like bodies running at an optimal level. Though some food may taste better than other food, there is little about it that should give us cause for wonder or reverence. Though people in the past may have stopped to say grace before eating a meal, today’s educated eater is taught that food is simply a manufactured product that we control.

“This is an impoverished description of food. While it is certainly true that we can speak of bread as a collection of material elements (water, salt, yeast, flour), reducing food to this level is like opening a letter and judging it to be nothing more than a page covered with random markings. Rather than reading the marks “I LOVE YOU!” to communicate a life-altering pronouncement inviting a response, all one sees are characters on a page worthy of little more than a passing notice.

“Similarly, we can look at a meal and see only a random assortment of nutrients, oblivious to the grace of God made manifest in it. We can forget that food is one of God’s basic and abiding

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