

Ministry Team Highlights

In January, Pastor Tracy opened the meeting by having each person find a comfortable spot around the church to read Philippians 3:12-17 using Lectio Divina as a reading pattern. Everyone came back with observations and application to share. This was then connected to the focus question: *What are your plans for selecting, overseeing, encouraging, and equipping leaders?* It was a meaningful time of prayer and sharing. Main takeaways: We need to be the type of leader we want to see; live as we hope others will live; leading by example.

Under Review and Response, Kathy Werner requested that we keep the evening of March 1 open for a clubs activity involving parents. We kept the date in mind for scheduling purposes. Appreciation was expressed that she would think to keep Ministry Team in the loop on this. Also, the open Minister of Christian Education and Minister of Youth and Young Adults positions were discussed. At this time questions for either ministry area should go to Pastor Tracy. Pastor Tracy will communicate to the congregation through multiple formats. Will shared an idea for a One Body Initiative. The goal would be to get all churches in Quakertown together for worship.

Items for consideration included reviewing the directory with updates provided to the church secretary. It was decided to remove the word “coordinator” in spots where it is unnecessary as well as removing “Open” from ministries that have not had a clear leader for an extended period of time. The annual organizational chart was reviewed with updates provided to the church secretary. Caroling and

Loved Not Lost were added under Outreach while the Blood Drive was removed. Covenant Communities were added under Community Life. Wednesday Evening Coordinator was removed from Christian Education. VBS was moved from Christian Education to Youth and Young Adults. The Anabaptist Bible Project for the creation of a study Bible celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist Reformation was discussed. There was excitement and ideas for participating in this project. Ken Longacre, head of AV, alerted Ministry Team that Rob Good would no longer be posting sermons on the website. It was decided that Pastor Tracy would do that for now until we are able to find someone else to fill this role. Shannon Longacre will meet with Pastor Tracy and Pastor Nathan to discuss reviewing Covenant Communities and the Common Understandings of the covenant with the congregation.

In February, Pastor Nathan opened the meeting by discussing discernment regarding communicating to the congregation. Things should be communicated when it is relevant. It was noted that at times not communicating items can reduce the amount of confusion that can be felt by others. He then read Luke 12:1-3, 8-10 and reviewed the main Focus Question *“What are your plans for communicating needs, activities, and success of ministry?”* It was mentioned that typically things eventually get out to others by word of mouth.

Under Review and Response, Dan noted that Kathy Mease has stepped down as Decorating Coordinator. However, the palm leaves and lilies have already been ordered. He would be discussing

the position at his worship planning meeting coming up.

Items for Consideration included Pastor Nathan’s presentation of the Rocky Ridge proposal recently approved by Church Board. He asked about how it should be communicated to the congregation. It was decided to make an announcement to the congregation briefly summarizing the content of the written proposal. An article would also be placed in the next issue of Growth Matters. It was agreed to approve 2 different potential weeks for VBS to be held later this year. The weeks chosen were either July 31-August 4 or August 14-18 with times to be decided later. Focus then turned to the Primary Sunday School break in August. It was decided to see which week would be chosen for VBS and then decide on activities to be held in place of regular primary Sunday School classes between VBS and SS kickoff. Everyone was reminded that the fall kickoff is held the following Sunday after the outdoor service and picnic which are held the week after Labor Day in September. Pastor Tracy reviewed the “Procedure for Communicating with the Congregation” document with several modifications being made.



What is an Anabaptist? Part 6 by Nathan Good

What is an Anabaptist Christian? It is an interesting question that seems straight forward and difficult at the same time. I attended a meeting between Mosaic Conference pastors and César García. César is the General Secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC). MWC is a “communion of Anabaptist-related churches linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service, and witness.” As of 2022, 109 national churches and one international association are members of MWC. We are part of MWC through our Conference’s relationship with Mennonite Church USA. MWC has a broad mix of Anabaptist Christians, not just Mennonites. From Conservative Mennonite Conference to Mennonite Church Canada. From Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia (the largest Anabaptist denomination in the world) to GITJ, GKMI, and JKI in Indonesia (the oldest Anabaptist communities outside Europe and North America).

César was very clear that MWC does not have a pope. He is not the “chief leader”. However, he is the one ultimately responsible for the healthy functioning of MWC, the largest Anabaptist body in the world. So I asked César, “What is an Anabaptist Christian? In light of the Anabaptist emphasis on the purity of the church, who can join MWC? How does MWC determine who is an Anabaptist?” His answer was fascinating. An

Anabaptist is anyone who identifies with the historic Anabaptist Reformation. Any conference or denomination who tells this story as their story is able to join MWC.

This is fascinating because the early Anabaptists did not agree on a lot of things! While there was a lot of transfer of thought between them, the Anabaptist Reformation had at least 3 groups in the beginning that quickly became more. Even the Mennonite Church had divided into the Frisians, Flemish, and Dutch Mennonites during the life of Menno Simons. This didn’t even include the many Swiss Anabaptists who sympathized with the Dutch Mennonites. The founding members of Swamp were in this region. Being Anabaptists first, for at least a generation, they chose to associate with the Mennonite church after seeing the value of various leaders’ theology and organization.

In the midst of all of these groups with differing priorities, practices, and beliefs, how can you decide who an Anabaptist is? The early leaders in the movement struggled with this as well. Because of some of the core convictions of the movement, orthodox (right) belief needed to be protected and cultivated. Anabaptists believed in the need for personal conversion of thought and life. They also believed in the priesthood of all believers. Additionally, they held to the authority of Scripture alone. With these emphases on each individual knowing Jesus and being able to defend their faith from Scripture,

there was also a need for leaders and teachers in the church. Scripture clearly calls for this as well. The question was how to appoint these leaders and what their role would be. Throughout Anabaptist history this question has been answered in many ways. We find the earliest answer in the Schleitheim Confession written in modern day Schleitheim Switzerland in 1527.

“We have been united as follows concerning shepherds in the church of God. The shepherd in the church shall be a person according to the rule of Paul, fully and completely, who has a good report of those who are outside the faith. The office of such a person shall be to read and exhort and teach; warn, admonish, or ban in the congregation; and properly to preside among the sisters and brothers in prayer, and in the breaking of bread, and in all things to take care of the body of Christ, that it may be built up and developed, so that the name of God might be praised and honored through us, and the mouth of the mocker be stopped.

He shall be supported, wherein he has need, by the congregation which has chosen him, so that he who serves the gospel can also live therefrom, as the Lord has ordered. But should a shepherd do something worthy of reprimand, nothing shall be done with him without the voice of two or three witnesses. If they sin they shall be publicly reprimanded, so that others might fear.

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Church Board Highlights

Quincy Longacre brought the meeting to order and welcomed Katie Gehman. Laura Rush offered the devotional from 1 John 4:18 about leading in love. Quincy then welcomed guest Pastors Denise Fry and Dave Heckler to discuss a Recovering Hope Community proposal geared towards helping the homeless members of the Upper Bucks County area. They provided a synopsis of the project including the potential new use for the Rocky Ridge Mennonite Church property. The board authorized Pastor Nathan to discuss further on behalf of our church.

The minutes from the November Church Board meeting were approved. Barry Gehman, Linda Jaendl and Brandon Longacre were reappointed to continue serving on the MEP Committee. The Communication Covenant was signed by everyone present. Laura Rush will continue to

serve as a delegate to the Mosaic Conference. The board agreed on individuals for Quincy to ask about becoming the second delegate.

Meeting dates were established for the remainder of this year, including the annual Member Meeting on Thursday, December 7. Quincy and Pastor Nathan met with leaders from Mosaic Conference to present the letter to conference concerning MCUSA. The board discussed the vote and feedback from the member meeting regarding publishing this letter. It was decided that it is an “open letter”, meaning it is publicly available to all who request it. Pastor Nathan will also email it to all pastors in the conference. However, it will not be published beyond this. The board appointed Pastor Tracy as the interim minister of Christian Education and Youth and Young Adults. It was decided that Quincy will ask Pastor Tracy if he would be interested in attending

board meetings through the Leadership Review process.

In other items, Pastor Nathan spoke about a Temple University mental health study project about welcoming people with mental illnesses and their families into faith communities. The board authorized Pastor Nathan to have further discussion about the potential to participate in the study. The board decided to establish 2 meetings to discuss our Leadership Structure Review with past members of Church Board and Ministry Team. Dates are Sunday, February 26 after worship and Sunday, March 5 at 6:00 pm. Pastor Nathan will contact individuals about attending one of the meetings.

Finally, the board approved the Trustees request to complete a capping project on the building for \$15,000.00. Steve Weaver has agreed to complete the audit for 2022.



The Church That Sends... Forward by Tracy Commons

Below is an excerpt of a book entitled, “*Gaining by Losing*” by J. D. Greear that was sent to me by Pastor Nathan, who received it from another pastor (in case you haven’t noticed, pastors like to pass things on to each other, which is great!). Let’s have our eyes open, our ears attuned, and our hearts ready to receive this good word.

Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send

1.) Increasingly, in a post-Christian society, unbelievers will simply not make their way into Our churches, no matter

how ‘attractive’ we make them.

For years, the Western Church has enjoyed a common Christian language with the culture through which we could communicate the gospel. Not everyone went to church, of course, but the bedrock of the culture was Christian. Our primary focus has been calling “lapsed” or delinquent Christians back to the God of their fathers. But our world in the West is changing. The number of people checking “none” for religious affiliation on censuses increases at an astounding rate each year. “Nones,” as they are

called, do not casually make their way into churches – for any reason. We have to think of them as we would people of a completely different religion.

I lived in a Muslim country for several years, and I was friends with dozens of people who went to the mosque weekly. At no point did I consider going with them. I wouldn’t have gone for a special holiday. I wouldn’t have gone if I were facing hard times. I wouldn’t have gone if the imam were doing a really helpful series on relationships or if he told really funny stories that helped me see how Allah was

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But if the shepherd should be driven away or led to the Lord by the cross, at the same hour another shall be ordained to his place, so that the little folk and the little flock of God may not be destroyed, but be preserved by warning and be consoled.”

Much more can be said about the role of leaders and teachers in the church. In many ways we have adapted our leadership styles in the past 500 years. In other interesting ways, much remains the same. In fact, the overview of my role as Lead Pastor in my job description has interesting echoes all the way back to Schleithem.

“The Lead Pastor is the spiritual shepherd of Swamp Mennonite Church. The Lead Pastor’s primary responsibility, along with the congregational leaders, is equipping the laity for the work of the ministry. The pastor shall be faithful in interpreting the truth of Scripture and protecting the congregation from false teaching so they may grow in their understanding and application of the Word of God. The pastor shall assist the members (Ephesians 4:11-14; Acts 20:28), so the body may experience unity, maturity and fullness in the knowledge of Jesus

Christ.”

As we review our leadership structure this year, may we remember what is important. Our leaders are not the head of the church, Jesus is. Our leaders are not responsible for our growth in holiness, the Spirit is. Our leaders cannot sustain the church, the Father does. Our leaders are not authoritative, Scripture is. So why do we have leaders? The leaders in our church are chosen by the community to care for the community. Leaders point everyone towards Jesus to correct, warn, and encourage each believer so that we can be built up into the head, who is Christ Jesus.

Rocky Ridge Proposal

Pastor Nathan, along with several other local pastors, met with Mosaic Conference and Rocky Ridge leadership several years ago to discuss the future of Rocky Ridge Mennonite Church. This group continued to meet and pray over the past few years. In the end, Rocky Ridge chose to close this past summer and they are now discerning what to do with their property. There are too many stories to tell, but over the past few months we have seen the Spirit of God working in undeniable ways. Connections are being made and there is support for using the Rocky Ridge property for homeless ministry. There are also congregations in the area interested in using the property for a church plant or as worshipping space. At the request of Conference leadership and the Quakertown Ministerium (a group of 20 or so pastors from various churches), our Church Board has submitted a proposal to the Rocky Ridge team.

The proposal does not bind us to anything, but if it is accepted by those left at Rocky Ridge it could lead to the property being given to Swamp. It is important to us as a Church Board that the property not be a burden financially, or in any other way, to our congregation. Our role would simply be as landlord, allowing multiple ministries to all work out of the same building harmoniously. Our goal would be to see every square inch of the property used as a resource for the kingdom of heaven here in the greater Quakertown area. In order for us to assume responsibility for the property, first there would need to be multiple tenants already lined up who are capable and willing to fund the use and maintenance of the property. There may also be zoning requirements by Richland Township, where the property is located.

We do not know how Rocky Ridge will respond to our proposal. We also do not know if

any of this will come about. But we invite you to join us in praying. Please pray for wisdom for those left at Rocky Ridge and wisdom for our Church Board. Pray for Pastor Nathan as he works with local churches and nonprofits in considering the possibilities. Pray for our community, those in need physically and spiritually. And most importantly, pray for the kingdom of heaven to come here on earth as it is in heaven.

There really are not any more details to share at this point, but if you do have any questions feel free to ask Quincy Longacre, Laura Rush, or Pastor Nathan.

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