

This 'n' That by Arlene Yothers

Come and learn what is happening with the Worm Project. There will be an event at the Franconia Community Park on Saturday, May 20 at 9:00 am. Walk with family and friends to support children living around the world who suffer from parasitic worms. No sign up needed. All ages welcome. Come and bring a donation for the Worm Project. Meet Board members and others that help with this organization. Also, meet Oakley, the therapy dog who visits local nursing homes, child care centers and other locations in the area. Look forward to seeing you there.

Come and watch, or participate in, the Whack & Roll croquet

tournament at the Mennonite Heritage Center on Saturday, June 3. It's an all day event beginning at 7:15 am until 5:00 pm. Also, there free and open to the public practice times on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm until May 28. There is a Whack & Roll: Survivor Croquet on Sunday, June 4 at 12:30 pm. This is for youth group teams of 6 to compete against each other. There is a \$30 fee and to compete. Contact Mark Hager at 267-374-8089 for more details. If you don't compete, you can come and watch.

Come to the Care and Share Shoppes to volunteer or shop. There are various shops to see for furniture, clothing, books and

puzzles, a variety shop and an outlet store with many items at low cost. If you want to volunteer, go to the Welcome Center for more information. The money that is made at the Care and Share Shoppes goes to the Mennonite Central Committee. This money is used to help people around the world.

Come and dine at the Apple Orchard Cafe at the Souderton Mennonite Home. Also, shop at the Corner Store. You may be surprised who you see!

Come and find me if you have any questions about any of these events. My cell phone number is 215-767-4557. If I don't answer, please leave a message.

Church Board Highlights

Board Chair Quincy Longacre brought the meeting to order and welcomed Mike Clemmer and Randy Heacock, both from Mosaic Conference. Katie Gehman offered the devotional about letting go, reading Isaiah 41:13 and shared the song, "You Already Know". This was followed by an opening prayer.

Congregational Care Team asked for clarification about who would carry out Pastor Nathan's role in the Aid Fund Policy during his sabbatical from June 8 through September 7. The Lead Pastor of our congregation is able to approve up to \$300 of anonymous counseling per member per year. The board approved Pastor Tracy to do this according to the Aid Fund Policy during Nathan's absence.

The board reviewed feedback received on our current leadership structure. One of the main concerns is the number of leadership positions and whether our structure is too large for the size of our church. They looked at three

possible options that would reshape the church structure. Each could reduce the number of individuals required to fill positions as well as reducing the number of meetings. It was recommended to have some clarity about which way to go by the September meeting in order to present to the congregation prior to the annual member meeting.

The Rocky Ridge proposal was received favorably. The Rocky Ridge Team asked Pastor Nathan to follow up with the other church that currently has a proposal on the table. It was noted that the board would have to go to the congregation if assuming responsibility for the Rocky Ridge property would require any financial commitment. The original proposal intentionally protected Swamp from financial liability. The board authorized Pastor Nathan to have discussions with Rocky Ridge that would involve Swamp taking financial liability for the property, with an

understanding if the premises were still vacant after 3 years the Swamp board would liquidate the property and donate the proceeds to a non-profit ministry of Rocky Ridge's choosing.

Mike Clemmer addressed Nathan's upcoming review and determining what type of process to use. It would occur some time after the conclusion of his sabbatical. This may be a focus of the Leadership Retreat on October 28. At Pastor Nathan's recommendation, the board agreed to invite 10-15 members of the congregation to complete a Sermon Feedback form to assist in reviewing the sermons during the months of April and May.

Finally, Pastor Nathan reviewed the ongoing reading of the book "Discipleship that Fits" and dynamics of groups between 20-70 people. Many U.S. congregations ignore this size range and do not have any ministries or opportunities that happen in this range.



What is an Anabaptist, Part 7 by Pastor Nathan

We are nearing the end of our series on the Schleithem Confession. It is the earliest Anabaptist Confession of Faith, written in 1527. A diverse group of Anabaptist leaders gathered to find and define the common understandings of the Anabaptist faith. They were able to agree on seven things. These have continued to define the Anabaptist movement throughout its history.

This month, we come to the longest of these points of agreement. It addresses nonviolence, nonresistance, and the relationship of Christians and the government. This point opens by affirming that God has ordained the government to use violence to punish the wicked and protect the good. However, these early Anabaptists agreed that Christians should not use violence for any reason. In addition to this, the church was not to be involved in deciding civil matters. Christians, they agreed, should not serve in government or the military. This stance came out of a desire to live in line with Jesus' teachings to love our enemies and to turn the other cheek. In fact, each of the things mentioned is directly tied to a teaching or action of Jesus. They end by saying, "In sum: as Christ our Head is minded, so also must be minded the members of the body of Christ through Him, so that there be no division in the body, through which it would be destroyed."

The idea of nonviolence and nonresistance is deeply rooted in Anabaptist history and beliefs. It has been a guiding force for

Mennonites throughout history. It has been both challenged and reinforced by various events and circumstances. During times of war or political unrest, some Mennonites felt compelled to compromise their beliefs and participate in violence or military service. However, many Mennonites remained committed to nonviolence, even when it meant facing persecution or martyrdom.

Today, the Mennonite Church has become more diverse in its beliefs and practices. As a peace church, there is a continuing emphasis on working towards peace and justice. However, Mennonites today recognize there are many different ways to do that. Some people have started to think about the ideas of war and peace in a more detailed way, considering different factors than before. Some have even chosen to join the military or law enforcement. Others have served in non-combat roles in the military or worked as peacemakers in conflict zones. Some choose to vote and support Christians in government. Others refuse to vote and question the faith of government leaders. Some choose to work within the system, advocating for change through politics and policy. Others choose to work outside of the system, directly working for justice even when it requires breaking the law.

Despite these changes, the sixth point of the Schleithem Confession remains an important reminder of the Anabaptist commitment to nonviolence. As Anabaptist Mennonites, we strive to follow the example of Jesus and to love and

serve our enemies. We seek to work towards peace and reconciliation in all aspects of our lives, whether it be in our personal relationships or in the wider world. For the past 300 years our Conference has ended every annual assembly with this commitment: "We are still willing to continue in the simple and nonresistant faith in Christ, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

In our church covenant we commit ourselves to "daily practice and grow in love, peace and humility expressed in forgiveness, non-retaliation, good works, and acceptance toward all persons." We believe that violence is not the answer. We are called to be peacemakers in our communities. As we reflect on the sixth point of the Schleithem Confession, may we be reminded of the importance of nonviolence in our faith and the ongoing call to work towards peace and justice in our world. Let us continue to live out the principles of nonviolence and nonresistance in our daily lives, seeking to be a witness to the world of the transformative power of love and peace.



Ministry Team Highlights

The focusing time of the March meeting was on working with God and others. Ministry has seasons and we all have a role to play. Ultimately, God is the one who brings a harvest. Reflections were based on 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. Ministers reviewed the Community Passions survey results and discussed *“How will we create forums to hear the passions and ideas of the congregation?”*

The focusing time for the April meeting invited ministers to consider when they first saw themselves as leaders. Reflecting on Psalm 78:1-7 they considered who formed them as a leader and how they are forming others to be leaders. There was additional reflection on the balance of support and equipping as well as reflections on the question *“What is your plan to check in with key leaders based on you planning calendar?”*

There was a lot of excitement about the Spring Social, the youth program, a smooth transition to Bill Longacre as Chair of Mission Outreach, bringing on two new worship leaders, and Deb Rush's willingness to continue scheduling the nursery for the time being. There is an ongoing need for help with decorating.

Easter planning was discussed, including the Sunrise Service with West Swamp. The Pinewood Derby is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10 at 6:30 pm. In the future this ministry will report to the Minister of Outreach. The cars were distributed on April 5 for participants to take home to paint/color and return on April 19 for Russ Haas to complete them. There will be ice cream this year instead of a meal. Remember to bring your favorite topping!

There will not be any baptisms or new members for Covenant Sunday this year. We will try to have a few testimonies instead. There will also be a pot luck fellowship meal following the worship service. Pastor Nathan updated the letter informing all members of the date and expectations for Covenant Sunday. Ministers also reviewed their procedures for membership document. A few changes were recommended. In addition, it was decided to conclude Sunday School at the end of June for the summer.

VBS dates were confirmed as Monday, July 31 through Friday, August 4. VBS will run from 9:00 am-12 noon each day. In a related matter, it was suggested to add a

Trustee Highlights

Tina Landis has asked to be relieved of her janitorial duties as of May 7, 2023. Deb Rush has agreed to take those responsibilities going forward. We thank Tina for her years of faithful service, and ask for blessings for Deb. We are scheduling a Spring Cleaning Day for May 27, and all are invited to help. We will start at 8:00 am. Come as you are able.

Russ Haus is working on capping all the windows, doors, soffits, etc. on the old part of the church, and will probably be finished by the time this article is published. It has a nice clean look and will reduce maintenance costs in the future.

We have put a lock on the basketball pole height adjustment mechanism. There are too many adjustments being made, and when

line to the children's medical permission form indicating who, other than parents, are authorized to pick the child up from Swamp events.

There was discussion around the possibility of doing something to connect with and care for community member using the playground. It was decided to consider placing a camera with a view of the playground so Swamp folks could offer refreshments or use of the restrooms when community members are here. Will Sadler agreed to follow up with the Trustees and submit an article for Growth Matters.

There will not be a Ministry Team meeting in June, due to the Israel Trip. Graduate Recognition Sunday will be held on June 11. Given the earlier date for VBS, there will not be bridge activities/programs planned between VBS and the Sunday School kickoff in September. There was more discussion about the potential for a 5K race in September, with a date to be decided.



the backboard is adjusted too low the adjustment mechanism can be compromised and will not work in either direction. We have had to replace it once already and would like to avoid further expense. If for some reason the height needs to be adjusted, please contact one of the trustee's for directions.

Please let a Trustee know if you see anything that needs attention.

Scribing Scripture by Pastor Tracy Commons

Have you ever hand-copied a book of the Bible? I have friends who do it as a spiritual practice, but I had never done it before, until now. This exercise was an assignment given in the Mosaic Institute class I have been taking. I chose to hand-copy Paul's letter to the Galatians, for a couple reasons. The length of the letter was just right, and it was relevant to my current season of ministry at Swamp. We had been preaching through Galatians, and recently I had chosen to read the whole letter aloud during one of my sermons. This provided an interesting contrast in hand-copying the letter, and I was grateful for the chance to have Galatians poured into me once again.

To be honest, there wasn't much that I enjoyed about this experience. I'm not naturally a writer, I don't tend to journal, and my handwriting is terrible. I'm also not very good at multitasking, so focusing on writing while also digesting and paying attention to the words was a challenge.

But despite these difficulties, the act of hand-copying Galatians allowed me to have another opportunity to be filled with God's Word, His Spirit, and His heart. This has been my prayer during this season. I was grateful for this exercise as it stretched me and provided a chance for me to explore a new spiritual practice.

Through this experience, I learned something about myself - I

just don't resonate with hand-copying Scripture as a spiritual practice, and that's okay. It's easy to compare ourselves to others who do this kind of spiritual practice and feel like we should be doing it as well. However, I was reminded that what is more meaningful is how God affirms things that we are learning. In this case, ironically, in Galatians 6, Paul talks specifically about not comparing ourselves to others... imagine that!

May we continue to seek God through His Word and allow it to fill us up, even in unexpected ways.



Hospitality Initiative by Shannon Longacre

It was a random Wednesday afternoon and I was dropping off food that was going to be used for our meal that evening. I saw two Moms with their kids enjoying our playground and pavilion area. I was struck with an immense gratitude that we have a space people feel comfortable using. I was also curious how we as a church can reach these families. I brought this to Ministry Team and we are excited to share a new initiative that we believe will help us show our love and care for families in our community who may come and use our church playground.

The proposal would be to install a camera that would allow us to monitor when families are using the playground. With this information, we would like to offer refreshments to parents who may not always have the time or resources to prepare snacks and

drinks for their children while they're out playing. We could also offer the simple use of the restroom when a member of the congregation is already using the facility.

We believe that this small gesture of kindness can make a significant impact. We hope it helps us build stronger relationships with the families in our community. Everyone's privacy is important to us, and we want to reassure you that the camera would only be used for the purpose of identifying when families are using the playground, so we can show them hospitality as appropriate.

We hope that you share our excitement about this initiative and that you will consider supporting and helping with it. We may need local volunteers who would be willing to help give refreshments and talk with families while they're

using the playground. If you want to help, please let Ministry Team know, and we will be happy to work with you.

This is an excellent opportunity for our church to reach out to our community and make new friends. We see this as an opportunity to witness to families who use our playground. We can show them our love and care in a practical way. We hope that this initiative will help us build stronger relationships with our neighbors and create a welcoming environment for everyone who comes to our church.

Thank you for your support and commitment to our church community. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and feedback about this initiative.

