

## Church Board Highlights

Good and significant discussion included Quincy addressing the restructuring of Ministry Team, with the idea of Tracy taking on the primary ministerial oversight role and gradually phasing out the other ministry positions that are currently filled. It was noted that one impact this restructuring would have is that more decisions in the future might need the attention of the Church Board that were previously handled by Ministry Team. No decisions were made at this meeting. However, it was decided that the current members of the Ministry Team would

meet together with the Church Board on September 21 at 7:00 pm to discuss further. It was also noted that a bylaw change regarding the removal of the Minister of Community Life from the Leadership discernment team might become necessary at the annual member meeting in December.

The Board reviewed part 5 of "Discipleship that Fits" and talked about the idol of perfectionism and the approach of asking ourselves "is it good enough?". Brandon expressed interest in serving another term as Church Board Member-at-large. Quincy suggested a bylaw change for listing the total number of Church

Board Member-at-large positions from 4 to 3-5 positions providing more flexibility for individuals wishing to serve. It will be discussed further at the next meeting. Quincy also initiated new discussion about looking into the possibility of a church name change in the future. It was mentioned to bring up the discussion at the Leadership Retreat in the fall. Ken Longacre, Jr. has agreed to serve as a Mosaic Conference Delegate. He will be replacing Quincy. Finally, Quincy urged all board members to stay informed of decisions made at the conference level.

## Wednesday Evening Activities

There is something for everyone on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday evenings monthly through the school year! We gather for a fellowship meal at 6:00 pm. Elementary age children meet for boys and girls

clubs from 6:30-7:30 pm. Middle and high school youth meet for youth group every Wednesday at 6:30 pm. Adults can choose to help clean up from the meal, play games and talk together, or gather for prayer. Please join us.



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**Article deadline for the  
 November/December  
 Growth Matters is  
 Tuesday, October 24th**  
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## Knock on Wood by Pastor Tracy Commons

Many people have asked me over the last few months, "how's it going?", and I knew (whether they said it outright or not) that what they were really asking was how things were going with Pastor Nathan on sabbatical. I can't think of a time when my encouraging response to this question didn't include the humorous and superstitious phrase- "knock on wood", followed by me desperately trying to find some actual wood to knock on as we chuckled. When I started thinking about writing this article I wondered, what is the origin of that phrase?

Here are a couple explanations I found on the internet, which of course means they must be true! One site said that this superstition "may date back to ancient pagan times, when people believed spirits lived in trees, and touching or knocking on the tree would protect them from bad luck... knocking on the wood was also seen as a thank-you gesture to the gods for bringing blessings and good luck." It is believed that this superstition dates back to at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, but its true origin is unknown.

As interesting as it is to think about the effectiveness of that silly superstition as a way of seeking protection or expressing gratitude, as the summer and Pastor Nathan's sabbatical come to a close I'd rather reflect on the grace of God that has been so evident in this season. We've experienced God's grace together in the ways that our prayers and preparation for this summer have been effective in tapping the shoulders of some of you to step up and serve in various ways, as well as many of you who took initiative in filling gaps and providing guidance in this season. We've encountered God together in the diverse ways that our guest speakers have brought their whole selves and their message from God faithfully, which I know has impacted many of you because you have mentioned it to me. We've experienced God's gracious protection over us in that we haven't had any major curveballs thrown at us as a church, or many major crises to navigate. And I've experienced God's strength in being able to fulfill my role and the added areas of oversight, while also having freedom to embrace times of rest, time away, and time with

family. I'm so grateful that God has led us through a healthy season, and one where we've seen Him at work in many ways through things like the Holy Land Tour, the Youth Local Service Project, VBS, our continued Leadership Structure Review, and many more formal and informal glimpses of God's love and blessing. I'm also very much looking forward to welcoming Pastor Nathan back!

I'm glad we don't have to rely on or cling to empty superstitions for protection, blessing, or gratitude. God's grace is sufficient no matter if we end up in a season that is challenging or a season that goes smoothly. But I might "knock on wood" as we print this article...just in case.

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**Our Outdoor Service & Picnic**  
**Sunday, September 10**  
 Slip & Slide Kickball  
 Bounce House  
 Cakewalk & lots of fun!



## Ministry Team Highlights

In July, Pastor Tracy opened the meeting with prayer, followed by a reading of Psalm 139:1-7. The reflections from this reading centered on the profound understanding that God knows us intimately and guides our paths. Ministers found solace in the thought that God's wisdom transcends time and our human worries.

The ministers had much to celebrate and appreciate. Shari's wonderful planning of worship services this summer, Ty's dedication to our youth, the coordination of fellowship meals, and the impactful One Body initiative all garnered praise. However, challenges were not overlooked. Scheduling piano tuning, adjustments in the nursery schedule, and the encouragement for active involvement in various roles and initiatives like the school kit program, membership covenant follow-up, and the playground camera project all engaged the team's focus.

As Ministry Team gathered in August, Pastor Tracy guided the meeting with a reading from Galatians 5:22-25, exploring the "Fruit of the Spirit." Members enthusiastically shared instances where these spiritual attributes were manifest: VBS engagement, Child Protection Clearances compliance, children's event planning, praise team collaboration, and even in their daily workplaces. The conversation then shifted to where individuals were being called to deepen their connection with the Spirit, leading to introspective discussions on prayer, patience, and spreading God's goodness.

Both triumphs and tribulations continue to shape our collective journey. The prospect of

re-forming a men's quartet, contemplating the return of passing the offering plate alongside special music, personal milestones, and the importance of forgiveness all contributed to the rich exchange of reflections and ideas.

Shannon provided an update on the renewal of clearances for those serving with children. A proactive step was decided upon: a friendly reminder to all interested in children's activities, urging them to update their clearance information. Pastor Tracy then reviewed Covenant renewals and membership statuses. Steps were agreed upon to ensure each member's connection and involvement.

On a forward-looking note, fall programming dates were confirmed: Sunday School Kickoff on September 10 with the traditional Rally Pancake Breakfast, Clubs starting on September 20, and a September-long collection for the School Kit program. Upcoming Ministry Team meetings were set for September 21 (in conjunction with Church Board), October 18, November 15, and December 20.



## Directory Updating

Are you moving? Getting a new phone number or e-mail address? Be sure to let your church secretary know so that we can update your information for future editions of the Church Directory and place an update in the Sunday Bulletin.

## Recorded Service

Sermons are posted on our website each week, but if you would like an audio CD, please let the audio/visual persons in the sound booth know either before or immediately after the service so they can prepare a CD for you to take home. If you would like to view or listen to the whole service, you can go to the Live Stream on our YouTube channel any time after the service.

## Reimbursement Forms

To assist in budgeting and long-term planning, be sure to fill out a yellow reimbursement form in the church office for any ministry expenses. Place your completed form, with an attached receipt, in the mailbox of the person on Ministry Team that your ministry reports to, as someone on Ministry Team must approve each form.



## Trustees Update

Many of you may have noticed that the crack in the cement porch in front of the office entrance has grown significantly worse this summer. We have tried to patch the crack a couple times in the last couple years, but it continues to get worse. We have consulted with Gary Hillegas about the situation, and evidently the porch is settling and most likely it will

just get worse. Gary is working on a price to cut the front section off of the porch and shore up the foundation and repour the porch. We are not sure yet how far we need to go to resolve the problem and do not yet have an estimate, but most likely we will not be able to do this project until next year because we do not have enough money in the Trustee Fund to do it

this year. The other option would be to apply for a grant from the Endowment Fund if we need to do it this year to prevent further damage. We will keep the congregation informed as we get more information. Please let a Trustee know if you see anything that needs attention. (Ken Longacre, Terry Landis, Brian Rush, Will Sadler)

## A Quick "Thank You" by Ty Williams

I just wanted to take a moment to share my gratitude to you for welcoming me into your fold. After having met with Pastor Nathan a year ago to discuss the possibility of joining you, the big question I had in my mind was WHY? I mean, there we were, 2 guys from 2 different worlds, having a conversation about partnering to do something that I don't think either one of us had a clue as to whether it would work out. These differences in addition to having preached a not so good sermon (I'm smiling as I write this) a few months prior, made me less confident that it could work. But then I realized the fact that we serve a big God with a big mind that supersedes every thought that I could have. And so, the question in my mind shifted from why to why not. The feelings of fear and anxiety turned to those of curiosity and excitement about what the outcome would be. And here I am almost 9 months later, thrilled to have been able to do life with you!

Words can't express how thankful and blessed I am to be a part of a church family that loves the way you do. John 13:35 says, "by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have

love for one another (NASB)." You have lived out this text in how you have welcomed and embraced me. From the beginning, I've experienced nothing but warmth and openness. You've shared not only your church, but your homes and children with me. That is something that I am truly grateful for.

Youth sponsors, your compassion and dedication to the youth at Swamp has inspired me! You've provided a safe, nurturing space for them and I'm glad to serve alongside of you.

Thank you again Swamp for welcoming me. I look forward to continuing the work!!!!



## Bulletin Communication

The Sunday Bulletin is for the purpose of communicating the ministry of Swamp Mennonite Church. It is not for personal use or promoting a personal ministry. All bulletin announcement requests must be approved by a member of Ministry Team (or from a committee that reports to Ministry Team). They must be submitted to the church secretary by noon on the Wednesday before the following Sunday's Bulletin. They are then forwarded to Pastor Tracy for final approval. The praises and prayer section is overseen by the Congregational Care Team and may contain a personal thank-you when appropriate.

## Moms Group

Moms, would you like to hang out with other moms? There is a group that gets together semi-regularly. If interested find out more from Katie Gehman or Dana Good.

