Church Board Highlights

Pastor Nathan started with a devotional about listening to God when the future is unclear. Pastor Tracy joined for the meeting and Wendell Gehman (finance chair) joined for the beginning.

Laura reviewed the discussion from the last meeting about disbursing $5,000 from the General Fund to Eastern Mennonite Missions as a Global Missions agency, since the budgeted $10,000 was not disbursed in 2025. Finance Committee's recommendation is to not disburse the funds. While the General Fund balance increased last year, there were significant line items (Conference and Global Missions) that were not spent. Given the possibility of shortfall this year, the Finance Committee would like to keep a larger balance in the General Fund. After further discussion, the board decided to accept the recommendation of Finance Committee and not disburse the funds in the Global Missions line item of the budget from 2025.

There was discussion about the topic and format of Leadership Retreat for this fall. Pastor Nathan will be the main presenter, with the possibility of other outside input. The Vision Discernment Team will be invited to participate with the goal of preparing for the congregational visioning time in 2027.

Pastor Nathan updated the board on the transition to LMC noting that he has been credentialed as Lead Pastor of Swamp and as Interim Bishop of the newly forming district. Swamp submitted an application to LMC and we expect a reply by April 17. Pastor Tracy's credentialing interview is scheduled for April 22. Mike Clemmer is the Bishop for Swamp, since Nathan cannot be the Bishop for his own church. It was noted that it is looking more promising that there may be a bishop district in our area.

The board reviewed and approved a letter to Mosaic Mennonite Conference to inform them of the conclusion of our affiliation discernment process and application to LMC.

The discussion about emergency preparedness was revisited. Laura distributed statistical information for the board to review. After a thorough discussion, during which differing opinions were expressed regarding the need for a clear and concise policy on prevention and emergency response, the board approved a motion to form a committee to outline essential information related to prevention and emergency response.

The board discussed plans for a time of congregational visioning in 2027. The goal is to engage the congregation in clarifying a common identity that includes and inspires rooted family systems and newcomers alike. Nathan presented five examples of other congregational visioning documents. The board discussed possible outcomes of our visioning process as well as people who could serve on a Vision Discernment Team.

Jim Landis ended the meeting in prayer.

How much...to give? (cont.)

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How do you view your property? How do you think about your stuff? How do you view your wealth, the things you have worked hard for? Are these things to be protected at all costs? To be locked away from intruders and thieves?

Jesus said earlier in Matthew, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Here Jesus practices what he preached. But this was just the beginning. Jesus went on to sacrifice all that he had and all that he was. He went to the cross because he loved you more than his own body, more than his own life.

What are you willing to sacrifice to love others? When loving others requires resources – your time, your possessions, your home, your car, your money – are you willing to surrender? Or do you close your fists, clinging tightly to the treasures of this earth?

GROWTH MATTERS
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How much are you willing to give? by Pastor Nathan

When have you been inconvenienced recently? How did you respond?

Jesus and his disciples were often inconvenienced. The people they were ministering to were overwhelming. Other teachers were competitive and confrontational. Even the weather refused to cooperate on more than one occasion.

One story stood out to me recently. Within a few days of each other, it came up in our family devotions in Mark and my personal devotions in Matthew.

It is early in Jesus' ministry. He healed many in Capernaum, his homebase throughout his ministry. Many people start coming to hear him teach and to be healed. Rather than staying in one place, he decides to travel.

Strategically, his core group of disciples are fishermen. So, they take their boats to the other side of the sea of Galilee, where Jesus casts a legion of demons out of a man, sending a herd of pigs cascading into the water.

When they get back, a ton of people are waiting for them. They crowd into the house to hear Jesus preach. But others had come because they wanted to be healed. The crowd is so thick you can't find your way through.

A group of men huddle outside, coming up with a plan. Rather than forcing their way through the crowd, they climb up to the roof. It's a flat roof, made out of straw and mud. Knee walls rise around the edge. A room stands in the corner. But the men haven't come up here to rest, they have come to work.

Between them, they carry their paralyzed friend on a mat. They look around, assessing where Jesus is below them, and they start to dig. It's not their roof, and they didn't come prepared with tools. But they start tearing it apart with their bare hands. Piece by piece, clump by clump, until they break through.

As the hole widens, pieces fall on the heads below them. The crowd pushes back. The men lower their friend down through the hole right at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus looks up, I imagine with a smile on his face, and sees their faith. Turning to the man, he says, "Your sins are forgiven."

Now, let's pause here. What have we just witnessed?

Typically, retellings of this story focus on the great faith of the friends. It is their faith that Jesus acknowledges, not the faith of the paralyzed man.

Others focus on the forgiveness of sins. The teachers of the law in the story aren't too happy about this. Here is a place that Jesus tells us plainly that he is God in human form.

But my attention is drawn elsewhere. Upwards. To the roof. These men have destroyed property. They made a headache for someone. They created an inconvenience. Jesus seems to not even care about what this means for the homeowner. Or does he?

In my personal devotions, I was reading this story from Matthew 9:1-8. The NIV starts by saying, "Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town."

I was caught off guard. I didn't think Jesus did any miracles in Nazareth, what I associate with "his own town". So, I turned to Mark, knowing we had just read this story at dinner. There it says plainly, "A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home."

Jesus was not in some random person's house. Jesus had come home.

There are two main theories about where Jesus stayed in Capernaum. The most common is that he stayed in Peter's house. Another is that Jesus owned his own home in Capernaum. In either case, this was the place where Jesus lived. I imagine that Jesus, a capable carpenter, would be responsible for repairing the hole these men created.

But he didn't stop them. When he first heard the scratching and digging above his head, he let it continue. When the light broke through from above, he did not scold them. When they lowered their friend through the roof, he admired their faith and boldness. Jesus valued these men more than he valued his own property.

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Ministry Highlights by Pastor Tracy

I can't help but smile when I reflect on the last couple months here at Swamp. I am encouraged by the ways we have provided opportunities for connection and service.

- I love seeing the Swamp Family Board filled with sports schedules, flyers for plays, newsletters, event details, etc. It has provided a way for us to stay informed about what our families are up to, and the chance to support each other through the informal but important ministry of presence.
- Once again we have had a great group of folks involved in the Baptism/Membership Class. The conversations have been rich, the students and sponsors have been committed, and we are excited to have it culminate on Covenant Sunday when we have the awesome privilege of welcoming new members and celebrating baptisms together. Yay God!
- In a church like ours that has existed for so many years, it is easy for new folks to feel like everyone else has been around forever and knows each other well, and the new person is left wondering if they will ever fit. To help address this, we hosted a Newbie Lunch for those who started attending Swamp within the last 10-12 years. It was encouraging to see people connecting and getting to know each other.
- Over the years there has been confusion and lack of clarity regarding the role of Mission Outreach as it relates to external ministry partnerships, liaisons, and assessing, aligning, and supporting mission-minded ministries and opportunities. In an attempt to bring clarity to this significant aspect of our church life, we gathered the ministry liaisons and mission outreach committee to discuss some upcoming changes and receive feedback. We are eager to share more about these changes in the coming months!
- The Spring Social this year was a huge hit. We were blessed by "The Hilarious Magic of Sam Sandler", he did an amazing job engaging with the crowd and sharing his powerful story of what God has done in his life. Several of us were up on stage with him at one point or another during the show. See the pictures!
- Speaking of powerful stories of what God has done, it was so meaningful to experience Easter weekend together. We had the Passover Seder on Good Friday where David Krauss led us through a symbolic retelling of the Exodus story and how it points to Jesus. Then we welcomed West Swamp on Easter morning for a musical retelling of the Easter story during the Sunrise Service. And our Easter worship service is always a special time.
- Spring Cleaning Day gave us an opportunity to connect and serve together in order to clean, organize, and be good stewards of our facilities. And this year we were blessed to have several families from the homeschool group join us.
- We have many gifted teachers at Swamp, and Jim King is one of them. I was excited when he mentioned that he might want to do some teaching. Jim has been teaching a five-week Sunday School elective on "Praying Like Paul".
- For the past several years we have been discerning, experimenting, and wondering whether we would continue to offer VBS, or if we should shift our focus. We got a team together to talk about ideas of what we could do this summer that might be an opportunity for folks and families to connect in a fun, formative, and intergenerational context. As a result, Summer ViBeS is coming to Swamp! It will be held June through August on the 2nd and 4th Sundays from 6-8pm. There will be fun for all including food, kids' stuff, live music, pickleball, lawn games, and more.

2026 Summer Youth Schedule

All events are here at Swamp unless noted
Wed., May 6 - Regular Night
Wed., May 13 - Regular Night
Fri-Sat, May 15-16 - Lock-In
Sun., June 14 - Graduate Sunday
Wed., June 17 - Pool Party @ Bill & Katie Longacre's
Thurs.-Sun., June 18-21 - Sr. Youth to LMC Convention
Wed., June 24 - Regular Night
Wed., July 1 - Hangout Night
Wed., July 8 - Regular Night
July 10-12 - Jr. Youth Retreat @ Hemlock Springs
Wed., July 15 - Progressive Dinner
Wed., July 22 - Regular Night
Wed., July 29 - Hangout Night
Wed., August 5 - Slip 'n' Slide Kickball
Wed., August 12 - Regular Night
Wed., August 19 - Pool Party/Fall Kickoff @ Ken & Cindy Longacre's

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:
There will be no Wednesday Night Youth Group from May 20 - June 10
Regular/Hangout Wednesday Night times are 6:30-8:15 pm
Youth Breakfast will resume in the Fall

For more information, please contact a Youth Sponsor.

Spring Social

The Spring Social was held on Saturday, March 28 here at Swamp. This year's event featured "The Hilarious Magic of Sam Sandler" along with some volunteers from the audience.

Trustee Update

The two Air-Conditioner replacements for the Fellowship Hall and Lobby units will begin on May 11. They will initially be doing outside work and other work that will not interfere with use of the Fellowship Hall until May 18, so that we will have use of the Fellowship Hall for a couple events on the weekend of May15-17. Work should be completed within two weeks after that.

We have ordered replacement window inserts for Fellowship Hall Windows. The frames of the windows have rotted, which we discovered when we tried to open one of the windows and the frame literally fell apart. Russ Haas will be replacing them after they come in.

As always, if you see anything that needs Trustee attention, please let any Trustee know. They are Ken Longacre, Brian Rush, Terry Landis, and Will Sadler.