

Church Board

Pastor Nathan gave an update from Ministry Team on the Leadership Flow Chart as well as an update on an upcoming 30-year lease between Quakertown Borough and Free Fall.

Plans were put in place for the Fall leadership retreat, including the possibility of doing an updated Natural Church Development Survey.

The updates to the Church Board Policy Manual were reviewed and approved and the Communication Covenant was signed.

The Youth Task Force will develop a survey for parents and youth to complete and will provide an update report for upcoming Church Board Meetings

Options for a columbarium are being researched. A special committee would be formed to

further research the idea. It was decided to have this committee review current cemetery policies and fees.

Pastoral Care Team had raised the question of whether the spiritual shepherding of the congregation is being administered effectively since moving away from the Elder model. In response to the question of whether it is helpful or necessary for one or several congregational leaders to check in with members to initiate spiritual conversations, board members indicated that it is an important part of our community that was felt to be currently lacking.

In a future meeting the following questions from the Lead Pastor report will be discussed: What are our goals for our members? In what ways are we

giving individual spiritual care? Who is responsible for this care?

It was noted that the Worship Planning Team has observed that the participation in the foot washing process has been declining. The following suggestions were made, including talking about it more; demonstrate it; have sharing time on a Sunday morning; get feedback from small groups; have discussions during Sunday School time.



Ministry Team

The Ministry Team has been continuing its' monthly devotional from the book, "Faithful Presence" by David Fitch.

The Wednesday Evening Clubs Program, which recently finished for the year, was reviewed. It was noted that while a lot of things were done, the overall program seemed to go too fast.

The recent Lenten/Easter Season went well, with many comments being received about the wall in the front of the sanctuary.



Pastor Nathan commented about teaching the Baptism / New Member class in advance of Covenant and New Member Sunday coming up on May 20. Copies of testimonies received thus far were also distributed.

Special guest, Nate Sims of Cru Ministries was invited to speak about their organization's mission and programs at various college and university campuses.

Team members completed the review and update process for the 2018 Leadership Flow Chart, which is posted in the office and foyer.

Ministers were asked to look at the website in advance of the June meeting to decide how to proceed on the changes that will be made later this year.

Covenant and New Member Sunday is May 20



Why Gather?

by Pastor Tami

What are your Sunday mornings like? For many, Sunday mornings are a time to catch up on some much-needed sleep and relaxation. For others, it is anything but a day of rest, as they need to rush off to another day of work. For most however, Sundays are often some combination of the two. Why am I asking? Well, it all began one morning as I sat in church.

In the book of Exodus, we see Israel being called to be a people who live lives that are light and blessing to the surrounding nations and ultimately the world. Their lifestyle and relationship with God would be different than any other religion. This image has challenged me to ponder my own life. Does my life reflect the relationship that God was calling the Israelites into? That's when it hit me. Our Sunday morning gatherings are a reenactment or a remembrance of God's covenant with us through Christ.

In the Passover Event in Exodus 12: 1-28 we are reminded that as followers of Christ we are steeped in tradition and ritual. These two things hold us together as a body of believers. Our traditions and rituals are reminders that we are a "chosen people", called to walk a different path than the rest of the world. God was not only reminding the Israelites that He was the father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but that for generations to come the nation of Israel and all who would follow Him would testify to who God is.

This is why we gather together on a Sunday morning: For remembrance and testimony. There is significance in our retelling of the past, recognizing how it fits into our present, and being reminded of what God will do in the future. Our past shapes our present to point to that which is to come. Although each tradition or denomination may emphasize one ritual over another, the truth remains that each time we worship, our time together helps strength our relationships with God and each other. Our place in God's story is tied to Israel's liberation, for it truly is our own.

Looking closer at these verses, I also see Israel unified through a series of events. Besides being bound together through the action of ritual, they were also united through the sacrifice and the blood of the lamb. In Israel's world, blood equaled life. The lamb's sacrifice took the community's place and Israel received a new birth. By covering their homes and their families they trusted that God's wrath would pass by them and bring them from death to life. However, Israel had to make a conscious choice. This was the first plague that forced Israel to live out their covenant with God. They chose to stay behind the blood and the doors and trust that God would honor his promise to spare their lives. Just as God chose Israel, they too had to choose relationship with God. The Israelite's actions showed that this relationship with their God was a two-way street.

This is the same relationship God calls us into and just like the

Israelites, we also must make a conscious choice. Every time we gather together for worship we look forward to a gathering where we will celebrate the final victory of the risen Lamb. Our covenant with God is sung about, preached about and testified about every Sunday morning.

I leave you with this thought: The next time you are sitting in church, exhausted from life or wondering why you are there in the first place, look around and see if you can pick out things that may be reenactments of the Passover experience. Are the songs we sing or the words being spoken actually echoes from the past? Are you able to see a bigger picture of who God is and what He has done for you? Can you find your story intertwined with the Israelites?

As you reflect on how God has touched you personally, then take a moment to think about others. Shouldn't Christ's life, death and resurrection make a difference in how we see those around us? If we are all God's children, then our lives should reflect that in how we treat those around us, regardless of who they are or what they do. How might you reach out to someone this week and touch him or her right where they are? I know the answers to these questions are not easy, but I challenge you to ask God to give you His eyes. May each day allow us new opportunities to continue Israel's journey through our own.



Ripple Community Inc. Launches Housing Initiative

Since Ripple Church opened its doors to the city of Allentown in 2011, it's seen a steady influx of neighbors seeking God's transformation and community. This diverse gathering of people comes from a variety of racial, economic and educational backgrounds, and many who have been traditionally marginalized now find community and connection in the sanctuary, on the front steps, and in the fellowship hall of Ripple Church.

In order to take the gifts of Ripple Church out into the broader community, Ripple Community, Inc. was established in 2015. Their Community Building Center opened its doors to provide not just a community center, but a place of support and connection for socially and economically marginalized residents of Allentown – those living with mental illness, multiple disabilities, addiction, or histories of incarceration, or for those marginalized due to income, housing or abuse issues. Today, the CBC is a safe haven for more than 190 of Allentown's most vulnerable residents.

Being an inner-city ministry comes with a unique set of challenges. "It's really hard to build relationships and develop leaders in the church when people are constantly moving in and out of the city," says Angela Moyer, co-Pastor at Ripple. "Additionally, as we have asked and listened to folks about what God's peace, life, freedom, and healing looks like in their lives, time and time again people have talked about the stress and hardship of unstable housing." Ripple and RCI often describe their friends as being "precariously housed". Affordable, safe, stable housing in the Lehigh Valley, as well as in communities across the

country, has become increasingly unattainable. A study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition reported that in order to afford the average two-bedroom apartment in the Lehigh Valley (\$1,038 per month), a minimum wage worker would need to work 110 hours per week. "We work with people who are paying \$800 or more a month for apartments with doors that don't lock, or windows that don't close, or plumbing that doesn't work," explains RCI Executive Director Sherri Brokopp Binder. "For many of our most vulnerable neighbors, the only alternative to a substandard apartment is homelessness. They are caught in an unending cycle between homelessness and temporary housing solutions that don't work or don't last."

In order to address this growing need, RCI is following their call to launch the RCI Village. Based on a model in Washington, DC called Jubilee Housing, this initiative will be the first permanent, supportive housing program in Allentown. RCI Village will take an innovative approach to addressing the need by not only providing quality, affordable housing, but also by connecting residents to established social support networks, community building opportunities, and other resources. "It isn't just about housing," says Sherri. "It's about home and community. It's about stability and belonging. Those are the basic building blocks of a good life."

RCI recently reached an agreement to obtain a former funeral home property, which will provide 13 rental units in four connected rowhomes, as well as space for the Community Building Center. This acquisition will allow

RCI Village to move ahead with the program later this spring, but in the meantime, funds are being raised to cover minor renovations, launch the program, and operate for the first year. The estimated expense during this phase of the project is \$100,000, and RCI welcomes any and all contributions to support this exciting endeavor.



The former Stephens Funeral Home, located near 13th & Linden Streets in Allentown, will become affordable, well-maintained rental units.

Says Pastor Angela, "Ripple has been praying about affordable housing options for several YEARS, and God has answered our prayers! Ripple folks always encourage one another by saying, 'you can't rush God because God is always right on time.' We trust that God is right on time with this opportunity for quality, permanent, and affordable housing. Praise the Lord for what is in store for Allentown!"

Visit RippleCommunityInc.org to learn more about the RCI Village or to make an on-line contribution. If you have questions or need more information, please contact them at 484-240-1231 or you can visit ripplecommunityinc@outlook.com today.

This 'N' That

By Arlene Yothers

The Care & Share Shoppes are always looking for interested persons to volunteer in the furniture, books, clothing, variety and outlet. Suzanne Kratz would be the contact person to give you more information. Also, on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, I'm personally looking for persons to help at the clothing shop--our church is responsible to have helpers there in the store. Can YOU help out?

The SMH Auxiliary will be starting the Benevolent Fund Drive soon. There will be a brochure

coming to your church mailbox, please read it, pray about how much you can give and return it to me or to the Home. God bless you through your giving. Just a reminder that the chicken barbeque will take place on Saturday, August 25. Do you have something to donate for the silent auction? Can you help by baking? OR, just come and enjoy the day.

The Worm Project had their first 5 K Run/Walk yesterday. It was a fun way to get the word out about the organization and raise money at the same time. If you

want to get their newsletter by e-mail, let me know and I'll pass your contact info to the one in charge of it. The Worm Project is helping many children around the world be parasite-free so the food they eat helps to nourish their bodies.

The Mennonite Heritage Center will be holding their Whack and Roll (croquet tournament) on Friday and Saturday, June 1 & 2. There are many smaller events happening with that organization too. If you would like to learn more, please see Arlene Yothers.

Trustee Update

We would like to inform the congregation of two projects that will be starting in the next several weeks. The first is the roof replacement project that we informed you of in the last Growth Matters issue. The process of replacing the roof over the Sunday School wing, and over the office area will begin when weather allows this spring (currently scheduled to start May 7th). When this project is completed, we will have new roofing on the entire Church building, shed and Pavilion, so we should not have to worry about roofing for some time.

The second project that we want to inform you of is the installation of a new central monitored Fire Alarm system. This was brought about by our Insurance company, who informed us several weeks ago that they would not renew our policy in July if we did not have a central monitored fire Alarm system or a sprinkler system installed in our building. We checked with our insurance broker about whether we could find another carrier that

would give us a quote, but we only received one other quote, for almost double of what we are currently paying, and they would also require an alarm system. Even though church's are not required by law to have a fire alarm system, the new thing that insurance companies are doing is rating fire response time in zip code areas, and evidently Quakertown does not have a good rating, hence the requirement from the insurance companies. So the bottom line is that even though we are not required by law, if we want to have insurance for our building, we need to install a fire alarm system.

We received three quotes to install a system, and made the decision to have Communication Systems Inc. (Jim & Bev Landis's company) install a system for us. This is obviously not a project that we had planned for, but we are thankful for the Endowment Fund, which has approved a grant to pay for this unexpected expense.

One other thing that will need attention again very soon is the

repair and maintenance of some of the sliding walls in the Fellowship Hall. As we repair the locking mechanisms and repair holes, we will probably continue the process of changing the colors on the older panels to the new color. We will address this as finances allow, probably later in 2018.

As always, if you see something that needs the Trustee's attention, please either fill out a 'blue slip' that is located on Carl's desk, or let one of the Trustee's know. (Ken Longacre, Terry Landis, Linda Martin, Will Sadler)

Trustee Committee

