

West Swamp News

Volume 11, Issue 2

February/ March 2022

Fifth Sunday Services

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FYI

- Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on Mar. 2. Join us at 7 pm for a simple Ash Wednesday service in the Fellowship Hall.
- Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, Mar. 13 at 2 am. Don't forget to turn your clocks ahead.

Worship Commission kicked off the first 5th Friday alternative worship service on Jan. 30 with the help of Emily Ralph Servant, Leadership Minister of Formation & Communication in Mosaic Mennonite Conference.

There are usually four months each year that have a fifth Sunday. We hope to use the next three—May, July and October—to get out into the community. (We

Conversation happens around tables and in "speed dating" mode at our first 5th Sunday alternative worship.

thought rightly that January would be too cold for that.) We envision these Sundays will involve service opportunities as we "worship with our hands and feet."

Some ideas we're thinking about are clean-up at a community park,

projects at Camp Men-O-Lan, and yard work for church and community members.

So how about you? Do you have ideas for a 5th Sunday service? Please pass them on to the Worship Commission.

~ Lynne Rush



Pastor's Corner: The journey inward and the journey outward

A lot of my time is spent communicating with people. Phone calls, text messages, e-mails, face-to-face conversations. And for me, preaching each week to the congregation I have come to know and love. But there's one vector of communication that for me transcends all of the others: prayer.

Prayer to me is a gift. When I pray by myself, I can pour out my heart to God, confident that God hears me. It's a great comfort to me that the creator of all things would be attentive to me, just as I am. Prayer has sustained me through the most difficult and painful experiences of my life. In Jeremiah 33:3, God says: "Call to me and I will answer you." That is a powerful promise.

There are times when I don't know quite how to pray, what to

say. When I can't find the words to express what is in my mind and heart, I take comfort in the fact that the Holy Spirit is praying for me. Romans 8:26 and 27 says: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

What an incredible comfort, to know that I don't have to "say it right" in order for God to know what is in my heart and mind.

One of the other ways I experience the gift of prayer is praying with other people. I can remember praying with friends as a college student, opening up our lives to God to direct us where

God wanted us to go. I remember praying with my children when they were growing up, helping them learn to trust Jesus. And Sue and I have prayed together at the hardest and at the most joyful times of our life together. And all the times I have prayed with people in the hospital or during other hard times.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul says simply: "Pray continually." I am grateful for the gift of prayer. Through it I have learned that God is loving, that God is powerful, that God is trustworthy. As the psalmist says: "Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:8). I encourage you not to give up, but to persist in prayer.

Peace,

~ Pastor Michael

Discipling Commission is excited to take some new steps in our walk with Jesus this year! We developed two goals that focus on providing opportunities for study and growth outside of Sunday morning worship and Sunday School.

One of our goals is to start small groups with the hope of facilitating connections within the congregation. The first group will meet at 7pm on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month to discuss the sermon. We will use discussion questions prepared by

Pastor Michael to guide our conversation and extend our understanding of the message topic. The second group will meet at 7pm on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month to engage in a book study. We are still working diligently to on our book choice and will announce it once we have decided. If you are interested in joining either of these small groups, please contact Katie Mood (267-733-2141 or k34auckland@gmail.com) or another member of DISCO. Remember, West Swamp has many 'small

groups' that you may already be a part of! For example, choir, quilting, or breakfast at Spor's all keep you connected and in fellowship with your church family.

Our second goal is to offer an informal and flexible meeting time on Sunday evening once a month. We envision Second Sunday! (second Sunday of every month) being a time for conversations, games, crafts, worship, testimony, and more. Addition-

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DISCO: Walking with Jesus in 2022

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ally, this evening meeting is an excellent opportunity to invite family members, friends, and neighbors to church.

Sunday school continues to meet in a hybrid format as they work through The Bible Project. Please contact Lynne if you would like join the group.

Katie enjoyed leading Children's Church during Advent season. The kids made crafts and learned about the journey leading up to the birth of baby Jesus. DISCO will continue to keep a

lesson and craft on hand in the pre-K room for any spontaneous needs.

Finally, thank you to everyone who contributed to the congregational collage in the fellowship hall during advent. Visualizing God's goodness, embrace, song, face, robe, and dance with all of you was a pleasure!

~ **Katie Mood**



DISCO: Second Sunday! - A third Sunday surprise

We wanted to get Second Sunday! started in February, but realized that Feb. 13 is Super Bowl Sunday. So this month DISCO will be hosting a bingo game night on Sunday, Feb. 20 at 6:30 pm.

Join us in the fellowship hall for a few fun games of bingo, a short devotional, and light refreshments. Invite a family member, friend, or neighbor and we will see you there!

~ **Katie Mood**



Community: Fellowship—Getting together

We are looking forward to the arrival of spring, and now that January is over, we're counting the days!

Community Commission is planning Fellowship Hours with themes of Valentine's Day, and the first day of spring in March.

We are looking forward to being able to have more frequent get-togethers!

If you would like to help provide snacks for a Fellowship Hour, please let someone on the Community Commission know! Or maybe you would like to host one

in honor of a special event such as a birthday or anniversary.

Community members this year are Nancy Jacobs, Deb Stevenback, Bev Mellan, Gretchen Isaak, Lori Farrell and Jan Wieand.

~ **Nancy Jacobs**

Stewardship: An Annual Business Meeting first

I was recently included in an email chain regarding preparations for the January 30 worship service and I was surprised by the amount of computer technology and logistical planning that went into it. It's sometimes hard to appreciate all that goes on behind the scenes especially when all goes well on the day of the event.

On January 23 we held our first ever hybrid annual business meeting, with the meeting streamed live on zoom, before about fifteen members in the sanctuary. Although it was not like everyone being there under one roof, it was the next best

thing. Those attending via zoom were projected in gallery format on the screen up front.

And so, the meeting was conducted in most respects as normal with oral reports and affirmative votes taken for the slate of Church Officers (still looking for a few more men/women "full of the Spirit") and the 2022 budget.

Of note was a discussion around the wearing of masks during Sunday services. A question was raised if consideration has been given to perhaps designating one side of the Sanctuary as mask optional. We were able to hear comments and opinions from a

good number of people which give us all some new perspectives as we worship through this evolving pandemic. For now, the Ministry Team will continue to monitor the COVID-19 transmission rates in the area and endeavor to guide our worship services with the health and safety of our most vulnerable in the forefront.

We are very appreciative of Lynne and those others behind the scenes who worked to make this year's hybrid format annual business meeting a success.

~ **Randy Rush**
Moderator Deacon
Stewardship Commission

Community: Signs of hope

We are all encouraged by the recent decline in COVID-19 transmission in our area, as we are all looking forward to an end to the global pandemic. Hopefully this trend will continue, and we pray for a time when we can all safely be together, "face-to-face." We are thankful for healthcare workers, first responders and all who are using their God-given gifts to help others.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for

the common good." – 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NIV

The Ministry Team is following CDC guidelines and local data from the PA Department of Health to help determine the best safety measures for our church family. We are hopeful that guidelines will be eased soon. We have faith that God will lead us through to the end of this unprecedented challenge, and that he will continue to work through us as we carry on with God's work here in our community.

In short, these are the current guidelines from the Department of Health while transmission of the virus is still high:

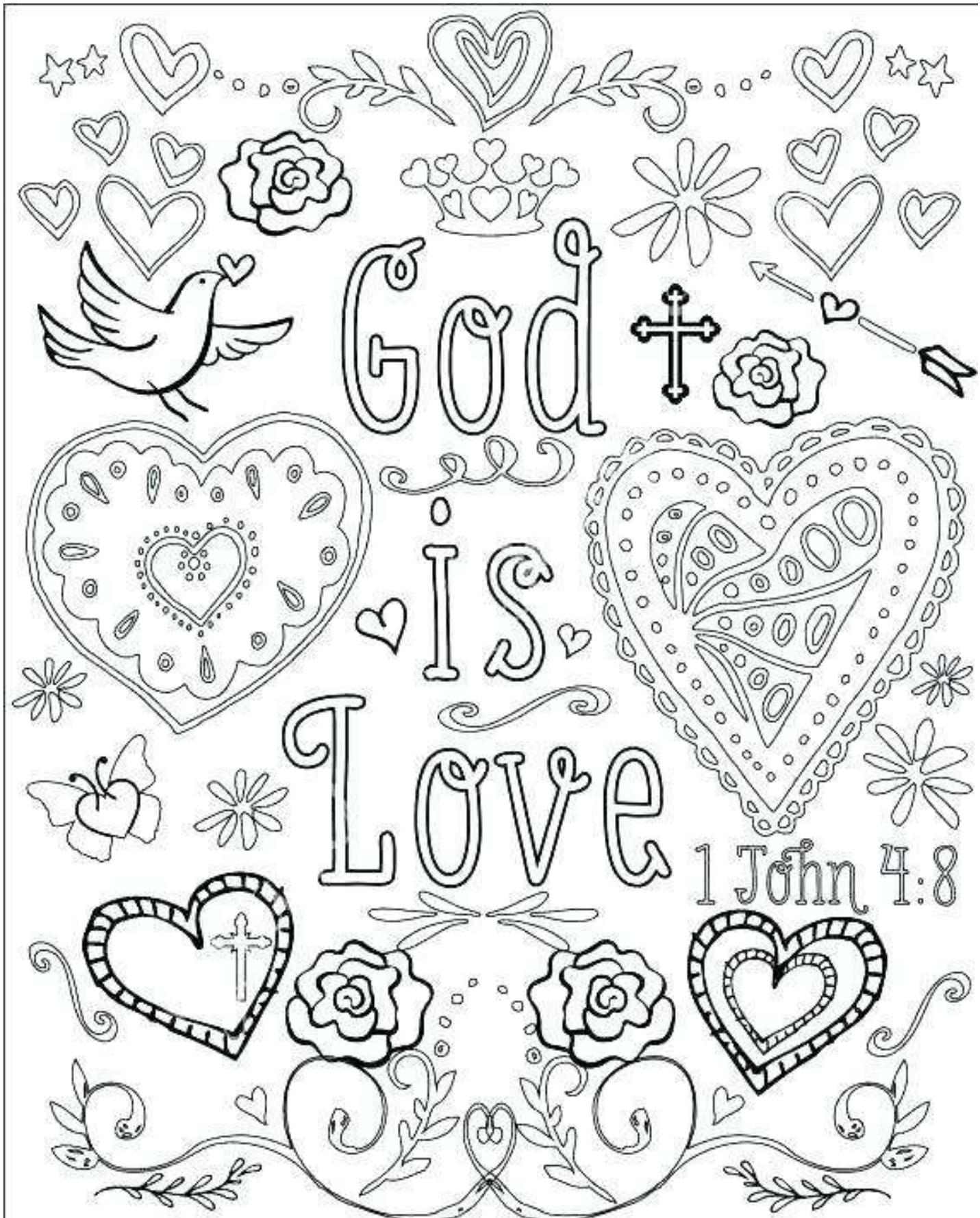
Stopping the Spread

We know layered prevention strategies can slow the spread of COVID-19 and help protect against serious illness, hospitalization, and death. To protect yourself and others, remember to:

- Get vaccinated.
- Get boosted.
- Wear masks in public indoor spaces, regardless of vaccination status.
- Consider taking a COVID-19 at-home-test prior to gathering with others.

Please encourage your friends and family to adopt these prevention and safety measures too.

~ **Nancy Jacobs**





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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Measuring God's Love

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16 (NIV)

Based on John 3:14-17 (NIV)



P T F V E L F M H H M F H B N
O T J E Z O S D C C T O Z I U
U I F I D V N N X O W M M O M
Y I G I Z E H N A R N S A V E
L N F L S D A H N K R D F I Q
T L D E S E R T Y V E O E B Y
H P I I B E L I E V E S V M J
R W D F G Q J C Z X U G K K N
O S O N T A M E P H D A Z P R
U N V R V E B T Y U O V J E W
G X L S L S D E Q U X E V R P
H L J Y E D R R G W E E D I L
G X L S N X S N R B O T H S Y
M O O D L Z G A H H T Z T H R
D M D G U M M L W J H G I P O

SON	ONLY	BELIEVES	MOSES	WHOEVER
PERISH	HIM	WORLD	DESERT	LIFTED
CONDEMN	SNAKE	LOVED	ETERNAL	LIFE
THROUGH	GAVE	SEND	GOD	SAVE



Birthdays

February

- 2/4 Karalynne Parzych
- 2/6 Nancy Propst
- 2/10 Paige Mood
- 2/11 Brandon Mininger
- 2/12 Sue Keller
- 2/15 Ernie Reich
- 2/21 Kinsley Searfass
- 2/22 Michaela Wieand
- 2/26 Jim Bevan

March

- 3/5 Judy Scheetz
- 3/9 Jason Stevenback
- 3/11 Rick Hinkle
- 3/12 Alicia Loch
- 3/14 Julia Huff
- 3/16 McKenzie Huff
- 3/17 Chris Farrell
- 3/22 Erin Farrell
- 3/27 Bruce Bauman
- Katie Stauffer
- 3/29 Pat Bevan
- 3/31 Lori Farrell