

West Swamp News

Volume 13, Issue 1

December 2023/January 2024

Ripple

Inside this issue:

Pastor's Corner	2
Commission News	2-4
Caleb's Cocoa Café	5
Calendar	6

FYI

- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service is 7 pm on Dec. 24.
- Need an alternative gift? Check out MCC's Christmas Giving catalog at <https://mcc.org/christmas#!>
- Save the Date: The Annual Business Meeting is January 28.

On Nov. 12 six West Swampers prepared and served a meal for the Ripple congregation in Allentown. Led by Karen Parzych and Jan Wieand, guests enjoyed a dinner of pasta and meat sauce, apple sauce and rolls, with cookies for desert.

Ripple has exciting news

The congregation of Emmanuel United Church of Christ has generously donated their property at 1547 W. Chew Street to Ripple Community Inc.

“When we decided to close the church last fall, our biggest hope was that we would be able to find someone who could continue to use this building and care for it as we had. When we were introduced to Ripple Community Inc., we knew we had found something special.” —Kathy Heckman, Emmanuel UCC Consistory President.

RCI's plans for this building include 12 units of deeply affordable, permanent housing, and a community center where RCI—along with their partners—will provide connection and care.

These 12 apartments will provide permanent housing for 22-30 residents, including families with children who previously struggled with homelessness or housing instability. Deeply affordable rent means families will pay as little as \$540/month for safe, healthy hous-

ing, compared to the current market rate of \$1966 for a two-bedroom apartment.

The city of Allentown has allocated \$1 million from COVID grant funds for renovation of the building. Ripple pastor Danilo Sanchez says preparation for construction has begun. Renovations will probably cost another \$3 or 4 million, but having a significant grant in hand from Allentown will hopefully help in applying for state or federal funds.



Nancy Jacobs, Karen Parzych and Lynne Rush get things ready for the meal at Ripple.

Pastor's Corner: An Advent challenge

Advent is almost here, the season of the Christian year that we devote to anticipating the coming of Jesus, when we remember his first arrival and look forward to his second coming.

As Anabaptist Christians, this is an important season for us to live counter-culturally, to let our choices and priorities be shaped by who Jesus is and who he wants us to be, rather than the pressure of the world around us, trying to incorporate us into the Christmas Machine. So how can we opt out of the materialism and greed that has captured our culture and opt into a more meaningful engagement with Jesus?

In 2006, a small group of pastors and churches developed the Advent Conspiracy, a way of celebrating Christmas that pushes back against harmful trends in our culture and opens up the way for a deeper expression of our trust in Jesus. The Advent Conspiracy has four prompts, encouragements to us to live dif-

ferently.

First, we can **worship fully**. Advent is all about worshiping Jesus. Make it a priority to be in worship every Sunday during Advent. Renew the habit of personal worship time each day. Focus each day on Jesus, the coming King.

Second, I want to challenge you to **spend less**. Most of the people you are thinking of giving presents to don't need anything. So instead of spending hours roaming stores or filling up online shopping carts, take time to just be, to hold with contentment and gratitude what God has already blessed you with.

Third, **give more**. When you do give a gift, let it be something you have made, or a shared experience or activity with someone you love and care about. A year from now, folks will likely not remember what you bought them, but they will remember that you took time to slow down and be with them during the of-

ten hectic holiday season.

Last, **love all**. Take some or all of the money that you would usually spend on gifts for family and friends, and make a donation to Mennonite Central Committee's clean water projects, or to Heifer International. Three and a half million people die each year due to the lack of clean water and sanitation. That's a completely preventable tragedy. A few less gifts under your tree this year could mean clean water for a village in the developing world or livestock to raise for a family.

There are few words from Jesus outside the gospels, but Paul quotes some in Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I challenge you to live counter-culturally this season, to join the Advent Conspiracy.

Peace,

~ *Pastor Michael*

Worship: So Christmas Day is on a Sunday this year!

This year Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, so we are going to do a few things differently in worship that day to make things fun. We will have a relaxed, informal ser-

vice with lots of Christmas caroling, including requests of your favorites..

Everyone is encouraged to wear a fun, colorful Christmas sweater. We will have a contest for

who has the loudest Christmas sweater, with a prize awarded. Don't worry: The prize will NOT be a regifted fruitcake.

I'm excited that we'll get to be together on Christmas Day this year, to celebrate the incredible

DISCO: "Headlines" from Discipling Commission

December 3rd at 9:30 is the next Prayer Breakfast and you are encouraged bring along a family member, friend, or neighbor!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to November's carry-in breakfast.

An electronic interest survey will be distributed via email in the month of December. Your participation is appreciated in order for DISCO to gather insight regarding Sunday School hour. Paper versions will be available

in the fellowship hall.

Nursery Duty sign up sheet for 2024 is posted on the bulletin board in the infant nursery. Eligible volunteers can sign up at their convenience.

~ *Katie Mood*

Community: A cookie tradition

It's time for the annual Christmas Carnival in Quakertown, sponsored by the Quakertown Ministerium, HUBBUB, and the Upper Bucks Unit of the Salvation Army. This event is a toy and food distribution that happens Saturday, Dec. 9 at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Quakertown.

As has been our tradition, we will be putting together boxes of Christmas Cookies for families in need in our community. If you are able to bake any extra cookies this holiday season, please bring them to our church kitchen **by Friday, Dec. 8**, labeled "Christmas Carnival." Cookies may be placed in the freezer if dropped off earlier.

We will be packing them up Friday evening between 6:30 and 7:00 pm, and we include an invitation to our Christmas Eve worship service. Thank you very much!

~ *Nancy Jacobs*

Celebrating autumn at Senior Luncheon



The Senior Luncheon crew served a delicious meal of Chicken Cordon Bleu Casserole with sides and cake for dessert. For all those 60 and over, you don't want to miss out on this once a month event!

Worship: From Advent to Epiphany

Advent is here once again. Time to change the sanctuary decorations from Thanksgiving to Christmas. If you enjoy decorating, stay after church on Sunday, Nov. 26 and lend a hand.

Each week we will look at questions, discerning through scriptures, to wander and wonder, through the exploration of "How will we know?"

Symbolism of the season moves us from shadows and darkness to light. Come see the sanctuary as it grows from darkness to light throughout the season.

Our faith invites us to sit together, discern the times, watch and wait. Even when we have questions and doubts, God is still with us, God is still working. Search for clues of the work God is doing in our midst.

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held at 7 pm. We'll have traditional carol singing, special music and candle lighting, plus hear from some characters from the Christmas story. Invite family and friends. We hope to see you there.

Waiting, wondering, pondering...

~ *Joan Hallman*

Stewardship: Did you know?

Remember, in the old days, when the primary cause of climate change was considered to be deforestation? The Mennonite Church does.

An organization called Mennonite Men, an affiliate organization of Mennonite Church USA, has an ongoing project for the 2020 decade to plant 1,000,000 trees worldwide. Being a donor to this cause, I get periodic emails around the progress being made. As of the latest grant for plantings in South America, the number of trees planted will exceed 300,000. If this sounds like something you could get behind look them up mennonitemen.org.

For those of you of age to be taking minimum distributions from your IRA's, did you know that you can direct distributions from your IRA directly to West Swamp Mennonite, or any other qualified charity, and it is not counted as taxable income? Of

course, you cannot double dip and also use the contribution as an itemized deduction. However, since the large increase in the standard deduction starting in 2017 that eliminated the need for most senior citizens to itemize deductions, this is a very tax wise way to make charitable con-

tributions. The limit for this giving opportunity is a very generous \$100,000 per year.

If this sounds like something you would consider, and have you questions, ask your tax preparer or me.

~ *Randy Rush*



Students plant avocado trees in Guatemala with funds provided by Mennonite Men through the JoinTrees campaign to plant a million trees by 2030.



DRINK COCOA AND DO

Fundraiser to Benefit the

Quakertown Code Blue Homeless Shelter

Everything \$1.00

Hot Cocoa (free toppings) and Baked Goods

Date: Sunday, Dec. 17, 2023

Time: Stop by between 2:00 p.m. & 4:30 p.m.

**Location: Front Yard of 207 North Ambler Street,
Quakertown (Look for the Yellow Tent)**



My name is Caleb; I'm 13 years old and a 7th grader. When I was 7 my family took a trip to Baltimore, MD. There I saw many people who were homeless. This made me very sad, and I wanted to help them. On the ride home, my parents told me that there were people in Quakertown who were homeless, and that there was a shelter in town for those who are homeless to sleep in at night. I knew I wanted to help raise money for the shelter! After some brainstorming, I came up with an idea to sell hot cocoa in the winter, and my family said they would help me. We started the stand in December of 2018 and thanks to God, the community, my family and friends – we have raised approximately \$13,000 total for the shelter! I hope that you will be able to stop over and have some hot cocoa, eat a sweet snack, chat with friends and enjoy the live music.

LIVE MUSIC

Hope to see YOU there!



**west swamp
mennonite church**

2501 Allentown Road
Quakertown, PA 18951

Phone: 215-536-7468

FAX: 215-536-7709

E-mail: westswamp1@verizon.net

Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Calendar of Events

December

3, 9:30 am—Prayer Breakfast
6, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
6, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
8, 6:30 pm—Cookie Box Packing
9—Christmas Carnival
12, 7 pm—Mission Commission
13, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
13, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
17, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
19, 7 pm—Ministry Team
20, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
20, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
21, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
24, 7 pm—Christmas Eve Service
25—Christmas Day
25, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
15, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch

January

1—Church offices closed
2, 7 pm—Community Com.
7, 9:30 am—Prayer Breakfast
9, 8 am—Knotting resumes
9, 7 pm—Mission Com.
10, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
10, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
16, 7 pm—Ministry Team
18, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
21, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
23, 7 pm—DISCO
24, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
24, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
28—Annual Meeting

Regular Activity

No Knotting in December, resuming Jan. 9
Tuesdays, 8 am—Knotting & Quilting



December

12/4 Dennis Wieand
12/7 Debbie Bauman
12/9 Penny Rice
12/10 Ophelia Parzych
12/11 Jasper Riley
12/15 Louise Butcher

12/16 Sue Gwilliam
Brent Rice
Seth Rice
12/17 Madison Mood
Evan Wieand
12/19 Bill Grube
12/20 Ossie Myers
12/24 Elliana Kirkpatrick
12/26 Glenn High
12/27 Bob Leber
Elaine Propst
12/29 Charles Spiess
12/31 Kevin Huff

January

1/3 Cameron Parzych
1/4 Grace Opdyke
1/5 Jamie Smith
1/11 Tom Mood
1/29 Katelyn Opdyke
1/30 Rod Rush