

West Swamp News

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Sewing up some comfort

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FYI

- Plan a weekend Valentine date and come to the Ash Wednesday Service on Feb. 14!
- Don't forget to turn your clocks ahead on Mar. 10. Spring ahead!

Remember when the knotting stacks were so full of comforter tops that we had to start Why Knot! Week to deal with the overflow?

Today the Knotters have the opposite problem—they are low on comforter tops! With MCC's Great Winter Warmup Challenge in February, now is NOT the time to be running out of comforters to knot.

Most of the problem stems from the loss of many saints in the last 10 years who were relentless sewers, like Mildred Rice, Joyce Rosenberger and Dorothy Detwiler. There is plenty of fabric, but not as many people cutting and piecing.

To address this situation, we invite anyone interested to come to a SEWING PARTY on Thursday, Feb. 1. The fun officially starts at 4 pm, but can start earlier for those who don't want to drive home in

the dark. The work will continue 'til 8 pm.

Lots of different tasks are available: ironing fabric, ironing patches and rows, cutting squares, laying out patterns, stacking squares, and of course, sewing squares. In other words, there's something for everyone.

We've got all the equipment (but a second

ironing board and iron might come in handy).

Can we get a Why Knot! Week-worthy turnout for this 4-hour event? Contact Lynne Rush if you have any questions (or need persuading).

And of course, there will be snacks, and maybe even supper.



Help fill up the stacks at the Feb. 1 Sewing Party, and get the knotters set for the Great Winter Warmup Challenge!

Pastor's Corner: Why the resurrection matters

As I write this, the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday is still two and a half weeks away, and Easter is two months away. But it feels important to talk, in the depth of our winter, about the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus.

A lot of times in American Christianity, we focus on Jesus' death on the cross and treat the resurrection as an afterthought. Yes, Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). But that same passage also says: "he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures" (15:4). And Paul goes on in that same passage to say that if Jesus has not been raised, our faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so critically important? Well, in the history of the church, hundreds of books, thousands of pages, and countless sermons have been devoted to answering that question. But in this short column, I want to just break down a couple of reasons why the resur-

rection of Jesus is a huge deal, for you as a follower of Jesus, and for us as a church, a community of Jesus-followers.

Jesus' death came about because his preaching of good news to the poor, healing the sick and casting out demons represented a threat to the religious and political establishment of his day. Someone who turned over the money changers' tables and disrupted the commerce happening in the Temple courts couldn't be allowed to live. His death represents the absolute pinnacle of the power of evil in the world.

But in the resurrection of Jesus, God is vindicating Jesus' obedience. In his resurrection, Jesus is triumphant over all the powers of evil, death, sin and violence (Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 1:20, 1 John 3:8). Because he is alive forevermore, we can participate in his life, and his Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives (Romans 6:4, Romans 8:11).

It is also the resurrection of Jesus that makes it possible for us

to live fruitful lives for God (Romans 7:4). This means that as followers of Jesus, we join Jesus' battle against evil in all of its forms in our world.

As a church, we are living into our new mission statement:

"Discovering together how to follow Jesus and make our community and world a better place."

Making our community and world a better place means that not only should we love our neighbors and love and do good to our enemies, but we should also, as Jesus did, fight against poverty, sexism, systemic racism, violence and militarism and other forms of oppression that are woven into the fabric of our American culture.

Jesus is calling us, as individuals and as a church, to live and build his Kingdom in his resurrection power.

Peace,

~ Pastor Michael

Community: Sign up for Senior Luncheons!

This month we'll celebrate Valentine's Day at the Senior Luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 15. Everyone 60 and older is invited to share lunch, fellowship and fun. Lunch starts at noon, and you are invited to bring a friend. Let's all wear something red to show love is in the air!

The theme for March will be St. Patrick's Day, and we'll be welcoming the first day of spring. The date is Thursday, March 21. Invite your favorite leprechaun to join us for lunch and a magically good time!

Sign-up sheets are on the bulletin board in the Fellowship

Room, for each month's luncheon. If you forget, or aren't able to sign up, you may call or e-mail the church and let us know you'll be attending. Hope to see you there!

~ Nancy Jacobs

DISCO: We can always learn more!

Did you know that mushrooms are a source of vitamin D? They can also boost your immune system and contribute to lower blood pressure. Did you know that processed meats have been classified as a Group 1 carcinogen? Other items in this group include smoking tobacco and asbestos. Yikes!

I just learned these food facts this week and it really has me re-thinking the phrase “you are what you eat.” Even though the last 10 years of my life has been in agriculture, I’m intrigued and want to keep learning.

Do we have this same curiosity and eagerness about discovering together how to live like Jesus? Even though we know the Bible stories, memory verses, and

truths held in the scripture, are we intrigued and want to keep learning? As Pastor Michael mentioned in his sermon this past Sunday, we can always learn more!

In an effort to provide discipleship opportunities that are reflective of the congregation's wants and needs, DISCO sent out a survey for Sunday School hour. We will take a look at the results and feedback in our January meeting. If you did not get to complete the survey or have other feedback for DISCO, please get in touch with Katie Mood or Pastor Michael.

On another note, DISCO drafted a new vision statement and goals for 2024. Our vision is to see every follower of Jesus grow more

and more like him through discipleship and learning opportunities. Our goals for 2024 are to plan and offer a monthly Prayer Breakfast, gather insight and develop reflective opportunities for Sunday School hour, and clean/organize certain spaces like the basement classrooms and craft materials. We hope these revisions align with our church's new mission statement and provide meaningful discipleship to you.

DISCO is looking for a volunteer to schedule Nursery Duty. This person would be responsible for contacting eligible volunteers and updating the schedule accordingly. Please contact Katie Mood if you are interested.

~ **Katie Mood**

Worship: What's in the works

Angela Moyer Walter will be our guest preacher on Feb. 4, while Pastor Michael and Sue are away.

Then Pastor Michael will finish his sermon series on our mission statement: “Discovering together how to follow Jesus and make our community and world a better place.”

Feb. 14 is not only Valentine's Day, but also Ash Wednesday.

Please join us for a short service, as we receive ashes, and prepare our hearts for the Lenten season. Our Lenten season will focus on “Jesus among us.”

Be ready to celebrate Palm Sunday on Mar. 24 with palm branches and Hosannas!

March 28 is Maundy Thursday. We will have our traditional soup supper, commemorating the Last Supper, followed by a ser-

vice which includes communion.

This year's Easter Dawn service is at Swamp Mennonite Church at 7 am. Then join us for our Easter service at 10:30, as we celebrate our risen Lord. Hallelujah!

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

~ **Joan Hallman**

Mission: Relief kits and coin collecting

The Mission Commission invites you to support MCC's vital ministries by gathering items for **relief kits**. In times of crisis, relief kits provide valuable supplies to families whose lives have been disrupted by conflict or disaster and send a tangible message that their needs are not forgotten.

Last year MCC shipped 32,285 relief kits to Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Malawi, Syria, Ukraine and Zambia.

Donate whole kits or individual items. Here's what goes in one kit:

- 4 large bars bath soap (in wrapper)
- Shampoo: 1 or 2 bottles totaling more than 20 oz (in resealable plastic bag)
- 4 large bars laundry soap (like Fels Naptha, Sunlight or Zote)
- 4 adult-sized toothbrushes (in manufacturer's packaging)
- 4 new bath towels (medium weight, dark or bright colors preferred; about 28 in x 50 in)
- 2 wide-toothed combs, 6-8 in
- 1 nail clipper (good quality)
- Adhesive bandages (min. 40)
- Sanitary pads (**THIN**, 1 or 2 packages, min. 28 pads total)

Please limit your generosity to the items listed. Due to strict regulations in some countries on the expiration date of toothpaste, MCC no longer asks for toothpaste to be donated with the kit. Instead they provide toothpaste

with the kits when they ship them. This is the Mission Commission February project.

And of course, with the start of Lent on Feb. 18, it's time for **My Coins Count!** We hope you've been saving up your coins throughout the year and are ready to bring them in. We'll collect coins each Sunday in Lent during the offering time.

This year's My Coins Count proceeds go toward MCC's water projects—projects like wells drilled in the Kikwit area of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

For years the only viable water option for many in the region was the Kanzombi spring, a round trip that could take anywhere from one hour on a good

day, to three or four when fights erupted. All this for contaminated water that made people sick. When 15,000 internally displaced people fled from violence to Kikwit in 2017, the problem became even worse.

The Communauté des Eglises de Frères Mennonites au Congo (CEFMC; Community of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Congo), which is based in Kikwit, saw their need.

With MCC's support, CEFMC drilled a well in Kanzombi in October 2021, a second one in another part of Kikwit in 2022 and another in a third location this past summer.

~ *Glenn High*



Schoolchildren and other community members gather beneath a nearly 800-gallon tank of safe, clean water provided through the work of MCC and CEFMC. *Justin Makangara/MCC/Fairpicture*



January Senior Luncheon

The football theme for the meal probably got chosen before the Eagles got knocked out of the play-offs, but everyone still had wonderful time "at the field" (thanks to Nancy Jacobs' centerpieces).

While Jan Wieand and her granddaughter Michaela (above) get dessert ready, Tim & Karen Butenuth (above left) and Lee Propst and Paul Heimbach (left) work on a football quiz put together by Don Jacobs.

Don't miss out on the fun each month!

Pre-Spring cleaning

We'd like to get an early start on some cleaning projects in the church.

Concentration will be cleaning the benches and pads in the sanctuary, and straightening up the basement Sunday school

rooms. If you are good at throwing things away, come join us.

Watch the bulletin for dates.

Hope you can help out. Thanks!

~ *Ministry Team*



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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Calendar of Events

February

1, 4 pm—Comforter Sewing Party
4, 9:30 am—Prayer Breakfast
6, 7 pm—Community Com.
7, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
7, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
13, 7 pm—Mission Commission
14, 7 pm—Ash Wednesday Service
15, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
18—First Sunday of Lent
18, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
20, 7 pm—Ministry Team
21, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
21, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
27, 5 pm—C&S Volunteer Evening
27, 7 pm—DISCO
28, 6:30 pm—Worship Com.

March

3, 9:30 am—Prayer Breakfast
5, 7 pm—Community Com.
6, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
12, 7 pm—Mission Com.
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—Palm Sunday
26, 7 pm—DISCO
28, 6:30 pm—Maundy Thursday
Meal & Service
31, 7 am—Easter Dawn at Swamp
31, 10:30 am—Easter Service

Regular Activity

Tuesdays, 8 am—Knotting & Quilting



Birthdays

February

2/4 Karalynne Parzych
2/6 Nancy Propst
2/10 Paige Mood
2/12 Sue Keller
2/15 Ernie Reich
2/21 Kinsley Searfass
2/22 Michaela Wieand

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
3/27 Bruce Bauman
3/29 Pat Bevan