

West Swamp News

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March/April 2021

A strong foundation stands

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FYI

- Readers are needed for Mar. 21 & 28. Sign up now!

On Tuesday, Mar. 9, at about 4:30 pm a truck ran into our church building, causing damage to the exterior wall, the fellowship hall and the men's main bathroom.

We are thankful for so many things: that no one was in the church at the time; that the driver sustained only minor injuries; that our church building is so solidly built.

We are thankful for our neighbors who contacted Matt Mood when the accident occurred; for the first responders

who came to make sure everything was safely taken care of; for Matt & Tom Mood, Jeff Rice, Randy Rush (and anyone I've missed) who worked and continue to work on all the big and little details of such an accident—clean-up, repair, insurance issues, etc.



A tanker truck collides with the church.
Photo by Mark Kemmerer

As we work at repairing our facility, let's keep in mind Pastor Michael's message to us all: It's good to be reminded at moments



Left: A view of the exterior damage caused by the collision. Right: Pastor Michael meets with first responders. *Photos by Sue Conrad Howes* *(Continued on page 4)*

Pastor's Corner: Melting snow reveals green grass

A few weeks ago, a lot of snow fell at our house. By no means an all-time record, but it just kept coming down, hour after hour, all day long. When it stopped snowing, white powder covered all of our yard in a heavy blanket. And the blanket *stayed*. For days and days and days. And then this week something happened. After I had gotten used to the white blanket being there, covering everything, it began to recede. Patches of green began to appear. The blanket of white thinned out. The green patches got larger and larger. And by today, almost all of the snow has melted, revealing my green lawn.

I didn't grow up with snow, and it holds kind of a fascination for

me. And I've been thinking about this snowfall in light of what kind of year it's been. It's been an awful year of being in lockdown, learning to wear masks and maintain social distance, learning to worship outdoors and online, watching as the news tells us day by day how many lives have been lost to the virus. I think of the season we've been through like the snow. It just keeps coming, and it blankets everything. It's impossible to ignore.

But all the time the snow was on the ground, the green grass was there underneath. And the snow actually nurtured the grass as it melted, infusing it with water that will nourish it for weeks and weeks, if not longer. I'm re-

mindful of something that James, Jesus' younger brother, wrote: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4)

This year has been unspeakably hard. We have been tested by disease, death, fear and hardship. But I am convinced that under the blanket of the pandemic, God has been growing our faith and trust in Jesus. It's green underneath.

~ Pastor Michael

New book study starting soon

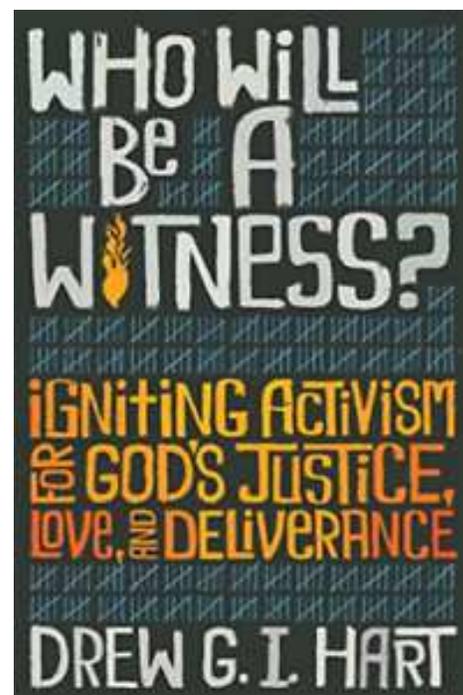
After the good discussion and learning from the book study last year of Drew Hart's *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the way the Church views racism*, many of those participants have been waiting to dive into Hart's next book. The wait is almost over.

Pastor Michael is preparing to lead a new group discussion on Hart's latest book, *Who Will Be a Witness: Igniting Activism for God's Justice, Love and Deliverance*.

Who Will Be a Witness offers a vision for communities of faith to organize for deliverance and jus-

tice in their neighborhoods, states and nation as an essential part of living out the call of Jesus. Hart provides incisive insights into Scripture and history, along with illuminating personal stories, to help us identify how the witness of the church has become mangled by Christendom, white supremacy, and religious nationalism. The book explores practical ways to work in our communities to contribute to racial equity.

If you would like to participate in this study, please text or email Pastor Michael by Mar. 17. A book will be provided.



Comfort Level Survey

We all long to be back in community with each other and worship together in person. We realize though that not everyone is at the same comfort level on this issue. To help the Ministry Team make decisions about when and how to resume meeting in person, please respond to this quick survey. You can mail or email your response, but please do it in a timely fashion. Responses will be kept confidential. (And of course, state and local mandates will be followed and adjusted as guidelines change.)

1. What forms of worship services are you comfortable attending? (Check all that apply)
 At home/on-line services Outdoor Sanctuary
 2. How likely are you to participate in outdoor worship services?
 Not likely Somewhat likely Very likely
 3. How likely are you to participate in indoor worship services (with social distancing and masks)?
 Not likely Somewhat likely Very likely
 4. What benchmarks/conditions need to be reached for you to be comfortable with worshipping in the sanctuary?
 A COVID positivity rate below _____
 A new case count below _____
 A percentage of vaccinated congregants above _____
 I am ready to worship in the sanctuary now
 5. What precautions do you feel should be observed when we meet in the sanctuary?
 Appropriately spaced seating
 Masks worn at all times
 Masks worn until seated
 Masks worn while singing
 Group size limited to _____
 Other _____
 6. How likely are you to get a COVID vaccine?
 Have already received the vaccine
 Have received first dose of vaccine and plan on getting the second
 Very likely, once I am eligible
 Still deciding
 Not likely
-

“The church is not a building—the church is a people!”

(Continued from page 1)

like this that, as much as our church building is a valuable resource, passed on to us by prior generations of faithful stewards, *we* are the church, ourselves.

Right: The impact sent the tables sliding clear across the fellowship hall!

Photo by Sue Conrad Howes



Left: A view of the interior damage caused by the collision. Photo by Mark Kemmerer



Counting on you to be a creative coin collector

Here’s Glenn High’s coin collection container, reminding us that each coin is a gift that keeps on giving through MCC’s water projects. What’s yours look like?

We will continue to collect coins through the end of April, and you can begin to drop off coins on Easter.

Worried about a national coin shortage? It’s OK to put bills in!



Holy Week Worship

Here's what we have in the works for Palm Sunday through Easter.

Mar. 27: In a joint effort between Community Commission and Worship Commission, we are going to try our best to deliver cookies and palm branches to as many West Swampers as possible. It will be a no-contact drop off like last year.

Mar. 28: On-line Palm Sunday Service (hopefully, the last video service!)

Apr. 1: Zoom Tenebrae Service. Tenebrae is Latin for "darkness." This service includes scripture and responses, and features the extinguishing of candles that symbolizes the extinguishing of the Light of the World at the crucifixion. (Thankfully, we are not left in the dark for long! We know Easter's coming.)

We are looking for some readers with good internet connections to take part in this service. Please contact the pastor or church secretary if you are interested in

helping.

Apr. 4, 7 am: An informal Easter Dawn service. Bring a lawn chair and blanket, and gather around a bonfire down below the pavilion. Might want to wear boots too!

Apr. 4, 10:30: Again, bring lawn chairs and blankets, and gather around the pavilion as we rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord! We'll use the radio transmitter for those who wish to remain in their cars.

Souper Bowl Drive-Thru Meal



Packing salads, scooping soup and ready for the drive-thru. Thanks, Marlene Stauffer, Lori Farrell, Jan Wieand, Katie Mood & Nancy Jacobs!



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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Souper Bowl Delivers



Rod Rush heads up to Evelyn High's apartment to deliver a box of deliciousness.



Birthdays

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

April

- 4/4 Bev Mellan
Kimberlee Opdyke
- 4/13 Karen Butenuth
Cara Riley
- 4/15 Carl Kiesel
Kyleigh Opdyke
Edna Rosenberger
- 4/25 Emma Richards