

West Swamp News

Volume 13, Issue 6

October/November 2024

Standing up for the vulnerable

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FYI

- **Zook's Chicken Pie Fundraiser:** Order a delicious comforting meal for yourself, a friend, or neighbor! Proceeds will go towards sensory play equipment for the playground area. Small 6 inch pies cost \$8 and Large 8 inch pies cost \$12. Place your order on the sheet in the fellowship hall by Oct. 16. Chicken pie pick up will be Sunday, Oct. 27 after the worship service. All pies will be frozen. Please contact Katie Mood with any questions or orders 267-733-2141.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to care for the weak, the powerless, the stranger, the vulnerable. So how do we respond when political candidates make baseless accusations that put a whole community at risk?

Springfield, Ohio, has been rocked by the lie spread about their Haitian community members. Their peace has been shattered by bomb threats to schools, hospitals, municipal meetings and more.

Hateful tropes against immigrants easily spread beyond one community. Pastor Michael checked in with Pastor Benjamin of Solidarity and Harmony to see if they have felt any repercussions. Thankfully, they have not, and Pastor Benjamin appreciated the call.

Sue Howes contacted a pastor friend of hers in Lima, OH (north of Dayton) to see if she had any

suggestions of how we at West Swamp could support the Springfield community. Pastor Paula recommends donating to the Springfield Haitian Community Help & Support Center or the Rocking Horse Community Health Center. (You can easily find these online, or contact the church office for the link.)

On Sept. 22 Rev. William Barber, from Repairers of the Breech, was in Springfield and drafted a letter for faith leaders asking Trump and Vance to reverse course on their rhetoric. It is worth sharing here:

Dear President Trump, Senator Vance, and other politicians who have borne false witness about Springfield, Ohio:

We write in the love and truth of God. Even though we disagree with you on policy and political positions, we still

have God's love for you as a member of the human family. You, the Haitians, all of us are God's creation; this is a biblical fact. But it is also a biblical fact Proverbs 6:16-19:

There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him:

haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.

We write as pastors and clergy of different traditions who have gathered in a unity prayer to issue a moral call and demand that you cease and desist from spreading lies about the Haitian community in Springfield.

From God's visit to Abraham as three visitors in Genesis, to Jesus' prom-

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Pastor's Corner: Roots of Justice

I grew up in south Louisiana, where about a third of the population is black. I attended integrated schools. When churches across the south had men stationed on their steps to turn away any black people who might try to worship there, my grandfather partnered with his pastor to declare the church I grew up in open to all persons. The Klan threatened the pastor's life and he ordered the deacons to open the windows and shutters in the sanctuary to give them a better shot at him. My dad's best friend was a black colleague, another sculptor. I went to a university where there was modest ethnic diversity, but I lived in a pretty white world.

That changed in July of 2008. I became the associate pastor at a large church just outside of Washington, DC. The church I served was about 90 percent people of color, folks from Africa, the Caribbean and black Americans. The Sunday I started, a man came to my office after worship with a tailor's measure and took my measurements, and soon I had my own set of handmade African robes. If I was going to be his pastor, I needed robes. The people in my congregation fed me their food and shared their culture with me. We loved one another and followed Jesus together.

Sue and I got married in 2011, and I moved to Lancaster city, a place of ethnic diversity. Our next door neighbors were black

and Latino. The difference between us was that we owned our home and could afford to maintain and improve it, while their house was split into poorly maintained apartments owned by an absentee and indifferent landlord. But the Anabaptist churches I pastored were almost completely white.

In October of 2019 I became your pastor. In May of 2020, George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis by a police officer and a new season of reckoning with racism in the United States began. Some folks from West Swamp got together and read two books, *Trouble I've Seen* and *Who Will Be A Witness?* by Dr. Drew Hart, discussing the books each week on Zoom. We wrestled together with what it meant to be white folks living in an almost all white town, yet aware of the racism imbedded in our culture.

At the beginning of September I attended a three day training at Philadelphia Praise Center presented by the organization Roots of Justice. Some of you may remember the Damascus Road Anti-racism training provided by MCC. Roots of Justice is the successor organization to Damascus Road.

I joined with a multi-ethnic group of folks from our Mosaic Mennonite Conference to wrestle with how to oppose systemic racism in America. I am still processing a lot of what I learned, but one of the things I have been thinking about is how much

comes to me in life, simply because of my race and gender. My life is easier in a thousand ways because I am a white guy. I'm not afraid of being stopped by police while driving. When my son was growing up, I didn't have to talk with him about what to do if he was stopped by police. When I bought my first home, I could borrow money from my parents for the down payment. When I see people like me depicted in books or television or movies, they're not always criminals or comedians. I live in an unearned culturally dominant position.

I'm still figuring out what to do with that, how to work to resist the systemic racism in the United States. I do know this: the love of Jesus is for everyone. Every human is made in God's own image and is a person of infinite worth and value. Treating people badly because of where they're from or the color of their skin is anti-Christian. As Peter came to understand in Acts 10, I know that "God does not show favoritism." Our destiny is to worship Jesus and live in community with "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9). I urge you to reflect on and wrestle with your own white privilege, and to ask God what you can do to resist racism.

Peace,

~ *Pastor Michael*

Ministry Team: Count your blessings

The scent of Autumn is in the air all around us: the smell of hot apple cider on the stove and fresh baked pumpkin pie from the oven, crisp dried fallen leaves and walking through a corn maze with the stalks rustling in the breeze. As we prepare to embrace the autumn season, we will be giving thanks.

I am reminded of the motion picture "Holiday Inn" where Bing Crosby is sitting at a table eating a Thanksgiving Dinner with all of the fixings, while listening to the song "I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For" playing in the

background. Next month, we will be sitting down doing the same thing.

As we enter this time of year, what are you thankful for? Have you counted your blessings lately? If we were to take some time to sit and think about it, there are probably many things that would come to mind: the gift of today (which we sometimes call "the present"), someone special in your life, having the ability to help others who are less fortunate than ourselves, your spiritual relationship with God, the

teachings of Jesus. The list could go on and on.

Even in this world, that can be full of strife and hardships, as children of God, we do have plenty to be thankful for and must never forget to count our blessings. So take a few minutes to think about it and remember to prayerfully give thanks to God, the creator and giver of all things, including the precious gift of life.

For God so loved the world, He gave us his one and only Son.

~ **Carl Raub**

DISCO: To everything there is a season

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 advises us of the patterns in life, both in nature and humanity: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." These verses remind us that our lives will change, just as God's creation around us will change. We can find comfort in this truth when we are in a stressful or sorrowful season. We can humble ourselves in this truth when we are in a prosperous or grace-filled season.

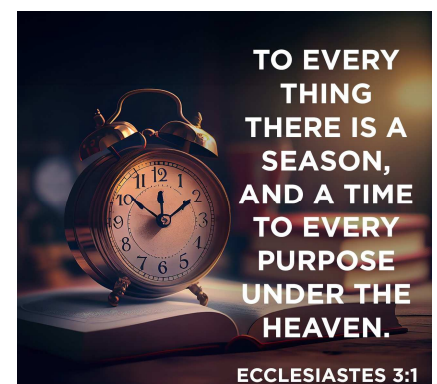
Regardless of the type of season, the second part of the promise remains: a time to every purpose under heaven. There is a time for all of our human pursuits and priorities. There is a time for this and a time for that. But our most

fulfilling strengthens our faith and informs our actions during the seasons of life. Here is what's going on with discipleship at West Swamp.

- The Bible Project Sunday School Class continues to meet at 8:45, taking a deep dive into the story of the Bible. They are currently in the middle of the story of Abraham. Join by Zoom or in person.
- TLC Sunday School class is currently working through six prayers in the Bible, in a study called *When You Pray*. This resource ends Oct 27. For the month of November, look for an update on the topic and resource to be used.

For December, this SS class time will be used for weekly reflection and discussion about a congregation-wide Advent calendar devotional. This resource will be available and distributed to all West Swamp folks in late November as we approach Advent.

~ **Katie Mood**



Stewardship: Crossing things off the list

A fairly minor update from the Stewardship Commission this month, which is a good thing because it means there have not been many large issues to attend to outside of regular building maintenance.

I performed the bimonthly regular maintenance and inspections that are handled by my commission early September with no issues found. Minor signage was added to the elevator control room and related fire panel loca-

tion as requested by the Township during their last inspection. In advance of next summer we intend to purchase some replacement chairs for the fellowship hall so that there are not shortages during next summer's services as some chairs have become unsuitable for use. We will also be adding additional mulch to the playground bed in order to satisfy insurance requirements.

One thing that I would ask of the congregation is to consider and

let Ministry Team members know of potential renters of the pavilion/playground area for next year. One of our current focuses is to more greatly utilize those spaces for rentals and church income and visibility. Making them useful to the community also makes our church and congregation more visible to the community.

~ *Alex Parzych*

Worship: Fall happenings

It's almost October, and time to think of World Communion, which will be observed on Oct. 6, during our worship hour. Come join us, and prepare yourself for this time of inner contemplation, and soul searching.

In November, we will have a round table discussion during our worship time. We will discuss questions about our church. The service will be held in the fellowship room.

November 17, Pastor Michael will be away; we will have a guest speaker.

Let's not forget Thanksgiving! Celebrate all God has given us, and come and sing songs of thanks and praise.

~ *Joan Hallman*

Community: Seniors go "Back to School"

Our senior members and friends enjoyed a "School Days" event on Sept. 19, and they didn't have to pack their lunches! Everyone was treated to a delicious meatloaf dinner – not like the school cafeteria lunches we remember, luckily! A big 'Thank You' to Jan and Denny Wieand for planning such a scrumptious menu.

Lunch-goers also brought pic-

tures from their own school days, and had fun and laughs sharing memories together.

If you are over 60 and free for lunch the 3rd Thursday of the month, come out and share lunch with us! The next Senior Luncheon will be Oct. 17, at 12:00 noon.

~ *Nancy Jacobs*



Standing up for Springfield

(Continued from page 1)

ise to visit his people as a stranger, the witness of the Christian tradition you claim is that God is present to us as a migrant stranger. This is not only a Christian value, it is shared across all of our faith traditions and roots us in the shared practices of hospitality.

To reject the stranger is to reject God. To bear false witness against the immigrant stranger is to bear false witness in a way that endangers vulnerable neighbors. Haitians in Springfield came to the U.S. legally under protective status. They

were welcomed by our congregations, which helped them find homes and businesses that put them to work in our communities. Their children have been a vital part of our schools.

Your false claims have not only made these immigrant neighbors less safe; they have made an entire community less safe.

Whatever political calculus tells you that your campaigns might benefit from this community's suffering, we reject it. The point of public service is to serve all the people by establishing justice in order to ensure domestic

tranquility. Your words and actions have made a mess in this community. In the name of the God we serve and worship, we call on you to repent your lies and tell your supporters to let the people of Springfield live in peace.

With prayers for peace in Springfield and beyond...

May we all find some way to support the community of Springfield, whether through prayer, donations, or loudly speaking the truth in the face of lies. Our faith demands it.

Mission: Always something to do



As we all prepare for the changing of the seasons, please think about volunteering for Code Blue. They are hoping for 70 volunteers for the winter.

Thanks to all who donated items for MCC school kits. We put together 84 kits. Well done, everyone!

We are doing a coin collection this fall, which will benefit both the Ripple Congregation (Allentown) and Crossroads Community Center (Philadelphia). There is a container for your coins in the back of the sanctuary and upstairs outside the elevator.

~ Karen Parzych



Marian Hinkle and Joan Hallman staff the West Swamp Tent at Milford Twp Ag Days.



**west swamp
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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Calendar of Events

October

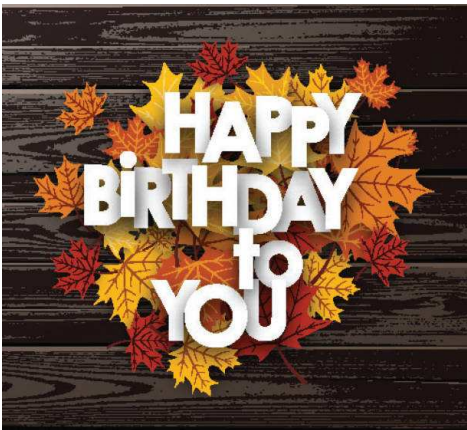
- 1, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 6, 9:30 am—Prayer Breakfast
- 8, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 9, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 9, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 15, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 16—Chicken Pie orders due
- 17, 1 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 20, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 22, 7 pm—DISCO
- 23, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 23, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice

November

- 3, 9:30 am—Prayer Breakfast
- 5, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 6, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 6, 7:15 pm—Choir 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
- 26, 7 pm—DISCO
- 28—Thanksgiving

Regular Activity

Tuesdays, 8 am—Knotting & Quilting



October

- 10/6 Matthew Opdyke
- 10/7 Deb Stevenback
Jan Wieand
- 10/14 Don Rosenberger
- 10/17 Case Mood
- 10/18 Paul Heimbach
Joann Rush
- 10/20 Amanda Wieand
- 10/21 Randy Rush
- 10/25 Corinne High
- 10/27 Dick Landt
- 10/29 Dale Loch

November

- 11/3 Nancy Jacobs
John Riley
- 11/05 Olivia Mood
- 11/06 Jordan Husvar
- 11/08 Alex Parzych
- 11/19 Pam Grube
- 11/20 Don Butcher
- 11/21 Bernice Keller
- 11/26 Les Rice
- 11/28 Kitty Stauffer