

# West Swamp News

Volume 6, Issue 1

December '16/January '17

## 300th Anniversary Kick-off

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### FYI

- Pick up your cookie dough orders from the youth fundraiser on Dec. 4.
- Knotting takes a break in December and will resume on Jan. 3.
- Our 2017 Annual Business Meeting is Jan. 22 at 1 pm, following a fellowship meal.
- Donations to Pastor Bernard's continuing Haitian relief efforts can be sent to SCCDA, 4718 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19141.

It's finally here! Another milestone in the life of West Swamp Mennonite Church! In January we begin our celebration of 300 years as a congregation.

To kick off our year of commemoration, the Anniversary Committee has planned a special worship service on Jan. 8.

Special guests from the Mohr family will enhance our service: the Mohr sisters will sing;



Bonnie Mohr Simcox will be our guest organist; and Dean Mohr will present some of our history (as much of 300 years that can be fit into a short space of time!).

Stay after the service for a fellowship hour reception, with a cake made by Amanda Wieand and book-signing by Lee Irwin, author of our history book (if the weather cooperates for a trip up from Virginia).

The committee is excited to offer 300th Anniversary note cards for sale—as soon



as they're printed. The cards feature an original painting by Sue Shelly. Proceeds from their sale will help offset costs of the anniversary events scheduled for the year.

May 2017 be a year of celebrating the past, present and future of West Swamp Mennonite Church, inspiring us to continue to be an active, growing congregation that reflects God in our living, loving and serving!

**Left: The Mohr Sisters sing at a wedding at West Swamp in 1979. Above: Sue Shelly designed this special 300th Anniversary note card.**

## Pastor's Corner: A season of surprises

***“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned...”***

***For to us a child is born,  
To us a son is given, and the  
government will be on his  
shoulders.” Isaiah 9: 2, 6***

I guess I'm just like my Mama. I always have to have a bouquet of flowers on my table. This time of year I get desperate. It seems I'm made to watch things grow. And in a season where sunshine is limited and gray is the color of the day, I want light—and the brighter the better. But no calla lilies, daisies, or daffodils are growing in my yard. And so, it's the time of year I turn to my trusty Christmas cactus.

I like the way they surprise you with those tiny little nubbins on the end of the stalks showing up all of a sudden. You can watch them every day as, little by little, they get bigger and fatter. And then almost overnight they begin

to bloom all at once. Bright pink and red and white and yellow blooms blazing out into such a sweet display of beauty.

A couple different legends emphasize the surprise nature of their blooms. One comes from Brazil, the country from which we get this bright Christmas gift. A young boy who lived in the Amazon jungle asked God to give him a small Christmas sign in his hot and humid land. When he woke up on Christmas morning, the jungle was alive with the blooms of the Christmas cactus high up in the trees.

Another story comes from Bolivia where Father Jose, a Jesuit missionary, worked to bring Jesus to the people. For the year he had been there, he had cared for their sick, shown them how to improve their dwellings and had tried to teach them the stories of



Jesus. He wondered if the people were finding any meaning in his work. On Christmas Eve he was praying at the altar when in came a procession of the village, children carrying armfuls of blooming Christmas cactus they had gathered from the jungle for the Christ Child. Its blooming message in winter still gives us faith and hope.

And every winter, God continues to surprise us with angels, a pregnant young Mary, and God's only Son come down to earth in a baby. There is the guiding star that drew the world to see him – this even brighter light of Love. Yes, this season is full of surprises – light dawning all over the place, and not just on my kitchen table. May each of you find God's light and love-filled surprises this Christmas season.

***~ Pastor Kathy***



## DISCO: Invest in our children!

We hope that you will plan to join us on Sunday, Dec. 11 for the viewing of the Children's Sunday School Christmas Video: "On the First Christmas Ever"\* during the worship service. (In case of bad weather, we'll save it for Dec. 18.)

Thank you to Jamie Smith for writing the screen play; Lynne Rush and Madison Mood for filming; and Lori Farrell for organizing the costumes and actors.

Children and Youth activities are occurring on a routine basis

monthly:

Junior Youth – First and Third Tuesdays of the month at 6:30 pm, led by Katelyn Opdyke and Lynne Rush. (Parents, please note that in December and January, we are adjusting to Katelyn's schedule. Please check the calendar for date changes.)

Senior Youth – Every Wednesday at 6:30 pm, led by Lori Farrell.

Children's Church – First and Third Sundays during the Worship service. Please contact Lori Farrell or Jan Wieand if you would be willing to lead Children's Church one Sunday.

Come and join us for Sunday School at 9:30am. All are welcome!

~ Jan Wieand

*\*Any similarity to "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is purely intentional.*



Madison Mood films Aly and Jasper Riley with their fellow donkey.

## Community: Christmas cookie bakers needed!

Did you know there are several local families that need some Christmas Cheer? This year we will be participating again in the Salvation Army Christmas Carnival, held on Saturday, Dec. 10 at the Methodist Church on Freier Road in Quakertown. The Community Commission will be preparing around 80 trays of our delicious and festive Christmas cookies for these special families.

### We need YOU to bake your favorite holiday cookies!

We are hoping to get 3-6 dozen from each baker. We need approximately 1900 cookies!! Please let us know your willingness to help with this important Christmas ministry. We will have a Cookie sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Room.

Have fun with it: make family

favorites or try a new recipe, put on your favorite Christmas songs and get into the holiday giving spirit.

Please deliver your cookies to church by Friday, Dec. 9 at 6 pm. We will be arranging the cookie trays at 6 pm if you'd like to help. If you have any questions, please contact Barb Moyer.

~ Barb Moyer

## Stewardship: Battery recharge

During this time of family thanksgiving and celebration that comes with the end of the year, it's also good to reflect on the blessings and celebrations in our Church family. While much has been accomplished, both physically tangible and spiritually intangible during 2016, there is a bit of unfinished business yet to do.

Examples of the tangible include completion of the elevator project, replacing a boiler furnace

and painting the hallways and stairwells. Examples of the intangible include another successful SWAP mission trip, the year-long work of our mission partners, and the sharing of our faith in the West Swamp booth during the Quakertown Alive event.

So what is left to do? Well quite frankly, paying for all of the tangible and intangible accomplishments without dipping into what remains in our reserves from the sale of the parsonage. Our offer-

ing receipts during the late summer/early fall were depressed somewhat and so we are looking for a strong finish to the year so that we can balance the 2016 budget and confidently plan for the work of our Church family in 2017, our 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

Please prayerfully consider an extra contribution so that our Church family can move into a new year with no unfinished business.

*~ Randy Rush*

## Worship: Make Christ the center of your Christmas Day

It's not often we get to celebrate Jesus' birth in our worship service *on* the day we celebrate Jesus' birth in our homes!

Christmas on Sunday sometimes occurs six years apart, sometimes eleven or five. (Maybe mathematician Stephen Shelly can tell us a pattern, but I can't see one.)

So we invite you to arrange your Christmas Day schedule to in-

clude our worship service at 10:30. Sunday School will not meet that day, so that gives you time to open presents before you come.

And don't forget the Candlelight Christmas Eve Service on Saturday night at 7 pm, featuring carol singing, the choir cantata "Were You There on That Christmas Night," and the traditional candle lighting to "Silent Night."



## Why Knot! Week prep: Men wanted!

The comforters are stacked and ready, we're stocking up on thread and pins, and advertising is soon to go out. But preparations won't be complete without some manpower.

Before Why Knot! Week gets here, the knotters would appreci-

ate getting all the wheeled chairs serviced and all the frame stands and boards checked. Some chairs need oiled or have bolts that need tightened. Stands may have some loose nails and some boards may need sanding.

So guys, if any of you have time

to check any of these things out and get them ready for March, see Lynne Rush or Joyce Rosenberger.

The knotters take a break in December, so that is a great time to work on this, but January and February are OK too.

## MCC Native American Learning Tour

On Oct. 31 Lee and I went to Akron, Pa, to attend a week long learning tour, designed to shed light on the untold history of Native Americans in Pennsylvania and beyond.

The first day we talked about "Turtle Island," which is an Indian term for what we now call North America. We did a partici-

patory exercise where blankets were laid on the floor, and we stood on them. One by one the blankets were taken away, like the natives' land. It gave a good idea of how the indigenous peoples felt when they were pushed off their land and had to adjust to their new situation.

(Continued on page 6)



## Mission: All I want for Christmas is...

Depending on who you ask this question, the answer could be any number of things. As a kid I would often ask for some new Hot Wheels or Match Box cars, and stuffed animals were big for a while. I also loved getting sports-related gifts. I will always remember the new pair of hockey skates I got one Christmas. I am reminded of those skates every time I look in a mirror and smile. (If you'd like to know more about that, just ask me sometime, but now back to my point.)

Now that I'm in my 50s, I still enjoy getting gifts, but when asked what I might want for Christmas, it's not as easy to come up with something as it was when I was a kid.

Christmas is about *giving* anyway, right? But to *give*, someone or something must *receive*. So that brings the question, "What do you get the person who has everything?"

Food is always good, but oh no! They are on that gluten free diet

now. I'm not sure what they can or can't eat. OK then, how about tickets to a show? Well, maybe not. Traffic is just so bad; it would be a hassle for them to get there.

Here's a thought: How about finding out what charities they support, or would like to support, and make a donation in their name to that charity. Can we ask our children to add a "charity gift" for someone else to their list? Would this be a good way to teach our children about thinking of others?



With that in mind, here is a plug for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). MCC has a Holiday Gift Catalog that allows you to send all sorts of practical gifts to people in need around the world. You can send chickens, pigs, water pumps, education materials—and the list goes on. Check out the MCC website ([mcc.org](http://mcc.org)) for more information. Some gift catalogs are available on the mission table in the fellowship room.

All I want for Christmas is...my two front teeth. You could probably make that happen for someone.

~ Rod Rush

DISCO has chosen  
an MCC catalog item  
for their Advent  
Giving Project: Goats!  
Each goat costs \$45.  
How many can we get?

## MCC Native American Learning Tour

(Continued from page 5)

Our speaker was Mark Charles, who is a Navajo and works in Washington, D.C. as a lobbyist for the Quaker church. He presented "The Doctrine of Discovery." This document originated with the Christian church in 1455. It gave authority for the capture of indigenous peoples, taking possession of their land and possessions, and justified the right of Europeans to subdue all "pagans" (those who do not worship God the way they did).

Outside of indigenous people and scholars, few people are aware of this doctrine and the systematic injustice it has caused.

Whoever writes the history books gets to tell the story their way. There are many myths, such as the "discovery" of the U.S., when the American Indians were already inhabiting this land. The "expansion" to the west was really "ethnic cleansing." All the treaties the government broke with the Indians caused them to fight, and they were considered savages. Scalping was started with the whites scalping the Indians, so they could have proof of how many Indians they killed, and be paid appropriately. We have to stop perpetuating the myths of history. Charles likened "The Little Bighorn" to 9/11. Feels different

when the shoe's on the other foot, doesn't it?

Many injustices were done to the natives—stealing their land, the Indian Removal, Trail of Tears, massacres, Indian boarding schools whose goal was to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man," etc. We visited one of those school sites, the Carlisle Indian School.

When the entire system is corrupt, what does justice look like? What are Christians to do? Lament and feel the pain. Look for things to get better, look for hope, and ask God to show us a way to move forward. To apologize, you need to know what it's all about. You need to grieve it, and show empathy.

Dialogue needs to begin, to repair the oppression and racism of the past and present. Many have been traumatized, and pass this trauma on to the next generation. We need conciliation.

The big question is: do we want to be just or do we want to keep the fruits of our injustice? Mark Charles is looking to form a truth and conciliation commission by 2021, to start the dialogue.

Lee's favorite part was at the Presbyterian church where the Paxton gang originated and was led by their pastor, Rev. John Elder. The gang murdered all but 20 Indians in a local Indian village, in revenge for the Hostetler family who was murdered by a different tribe. The 20 survivors escaped to Lancaster, and were put in the jail, for their own safety. The Paxton gang got into the jail and killed the last 20 Indians. On the tour, when the church's tour guides talked of this event, they claimed their pastor tried to stop the Paxton boys, even though their brochure took pride in their pastor being known as "The Fighting Parson," and organizer of the Paxton gang. At this point in time, the church does not want to take responsibility for the Lancaster Jail Massacre.

~ *Joan Hallman*



Lee & Joan Hallman pose with the Native American Learning Tour participants.

# \*Kid's Page\*



## Light OF THE World

In a world full of sin and darkness, how can we find our way?  
Discover Jesus' answer in John 8:12, NIV.

*Directions: Use the key to fill in the missing vowels.  
Then read the completed Bible verse.*

KEY:

A

E

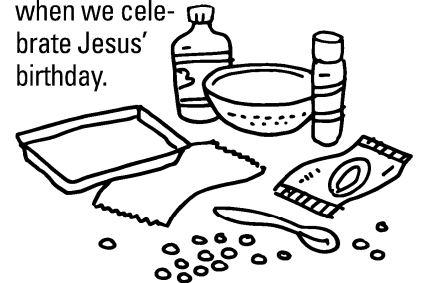
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" \_ \_ M T H \_ L \_ G H T \_ F  
T H \_ W \_ R L D. W H \_ \_ V \_ R  
F \_ L L \_ W S M \_ W \_ L L N \_ V \_ R  
W \_ L K \_ N D \_ R K N \_ S S."  
J \_ H N 8:12, NIV

## birthday bark

Make this yummy treat to give to family and friends at Christmas, when we celebrate Jesus' birthday.



### What you need:

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3 cups chocolate chips
- Microwave-safe bowl
- Spoon or spatula
- 2 Tbsp. shortening
- Baking tray lined with wax paper
- Red and green M&M's (or sprinkles)

### What you do:

1. Lightly spray bowl and wax paper.
2. Microwave chocolate chips in bowl for one-minute intervals until chocolate is melted. (Stir after each minute.)
3. Stir in shortening. Heat in 10-second intervals, stirring until smooth.
4. Pour chocolate onto tray and firmly press in M&M's or sprinkles.
5. Refrigerate until firm. Remove bark and break into pieces.

Answer: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness." John 8:12, NIV



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Reflecting God in our  
living, loving and serving



## Birthdays

### December

12/1 Pauline Stelmach  
12/4 Dennis Wieand  
12/7 Debbie Bauman  
Wayne Moyer  
12/8 Stanley Stauffer  
Ken Yoder  
12/9 Betty Lou Green  
Penny Rice

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  
12/21 Kim Moyer  
12/23 Barb Moyer  
12/24 Beatrice Bauman  
Elliana Kirkpatrick  
12/25 Dave Wojs  
12/26 Glenn High  
12/27 Bob Leber  
Elaine Propst

### Calendar of Events

#### December

1, 1 pm—Senior Luncheon  
4—Cookie Dough Pick-up  
6, 7 pm—Community Com.  
8, 7 pm—Stewardship Com.  
9, 6 pm—Cookie Drop-off &  
10—Salvation Army Christmas Carnival  
11, 10:30 am—Christmas Movie shown  
during morning service  
13, 1 pm—Worship Commission  
13, 6:30 pm—Junior Youth  
14, 6 pm—Chimin' In  
17, 8 am—Men's Bible Study  
18, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch  
(Christmas celebration at Yoder's)  
20, 6:30 pm—Junior Youth  
20, 7 pm—Ministry Team  
24, 7 pm—Christmas Eve Service  
27, 7 pm—DISCO  
27, 7 pm—Anniversary Committee

#### January

3, 6:30 pm—Junior Youth (tent.)  
3, 7 pm—Community Com.  
4, 6 pm—Chimin' In  
5, 1 pm—Senior Luncheon  
8—300th Anniversary Kick-off  
10, 1 pm—Worship Com.  
10, 7 pm—Mission Com.  
12, 7 pm—Stewardship Com.  
17, 6:30 pm—Junior Youth (tent.)  
17, 7 pm—Ministry Team  
18, 6 pm—Chiming In  
21, 8 am—Men's Bible Study  
22—Fellowship Meal & Annual  
Congregational Meeting  
24, 7 pm—DISCO  
24, 7 pm—Anniversary Comm.  
29, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch

#### Regular Activities

Tuesdays, 8 am—Quilting & Knotting (No knotting in December)  
Tuesdays, 6 pm—Joyful Noise Choir  
Wednesdays, 7 pm—Adult Choir

12/28 Wilma Myers  
12/29 Charles Spiess  
12/31 Kevin Huff

#### January

1/4 Ken Prosock  
1/5 Jamie Smith  
1/5 Cindy Troxell  
1/11 Tom Mood  
1/12 Jim Smith  
1/14 Cole Prosock  
1/16 Julie Wojs  
1/20 Weston Prosock  
1/27 Jessie Keller  
1/28 Brent Keller  
1/29 Katelyn Opdyke  
1/30 Rod Rush