

buzz

April 5, 2015

Renewal Leave for Neil Amstutz

Ministry Leadership Council (MLC) is grateful that our congregation has had the forethought to provide renewal leaves for our pastors. Neil Amstutz has served our congregation as pastoral team leader for ten years and last experienced a renewal leave in 2009. MLC is following our revised sabbatical policy which makes him eligible for sabbatical every fifth year. This would have made him eligible for it in 2014, but the timing fits better for Neil's family to have delayed it until now, so we are scheduling for May 25 through August 30, 2015.

MLC is pleased that Pastor Ron Guengerich, recently retired from Silverwood Mennonite Church, is available up to half-time as our interim Pastoral Team Leader while Neil is on sabbatical. This will allow the others on the pastoral team to continue their usual roles with some modest adjustments to complete the coverage plan in Neil's absence. In addition to Ron's pastoral experience in several congregations, he has been an Old Testament professor at both Hesston College and Eastern Mennonite University. His special interest in wisdom literature makes this very timely as our Year of the Bible emphasis for the summer is on Psalms, Proverbs and wisdom literature. More formal introductions will come later.

Following is a word from Neil outlining some of his plans for this sabbatical time—time we believe will also benefit the congregation as he returns to lead the congregation with a renewed focus.

—Timothy Burkholder, on behalf of
Ministry Leadership Council

Neil's Renewal Leave Plans

As my ministry energies have started to wear thin in the past year, I look forward to some regeneration time. I am very grateful to the Waterford congregation for its pastoral sabbaticals policy and the renewal opportunities that provides. My past experiences reassure me that, with a coverage plan in place and with good pastoral colleagues to carry on here, I have nothing to worry about.

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Financial Update Through 11 Months

In your mailboxes today are contribution reports for the first quarter of calendar year 2015. We again thank you for the ways that you have contributed financially toward living out God's vision among us at Waterford. On the report, you should have a record of contributions from January through March. Please be in contact with bookkeeper Elvina Schmidt (bookkeeper@waterfordchurch.org) if you have questions.

The end of March also marks the 11-month point in our congregation's fiscal year. With four weeks remaining, it is clear that we have significant stretching to do if our contributions are to meet expenses for the year.

In general, our anticipated expenses are tracking below the level of our congregational spending plan as approved last spring. However, our giving has been tracking further below our spending plan, resulting in this challenge. In order to meet anticipated expenses, we currently project a need of about \$96,000 in contributions over the final four weeks of the year, requiring an average offering of about \$23,000 per week for the combined Operating, Mennonite Education, and Either Funds.

In two primary areas, our expenses can be reasonably predicted for the remainder of the year. This includes our salaries and benefits for pastors and staff and our commitment to Mennonite education, which has been paid by the semester to match student billings from the schools and to take advantage of prepayment discounts.

The programming areas overseen by pastors and ministry teams make up the smallest component of our spending plan, and many expenses are complete for the year. For example, the entire year's curriculum has been purchased for Sunday school, and the programming year for many areas is complete or nearly complete. We have asked pastoral team to monitor closely any remaining expenses, though potential savings are very small.

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My plans for this time away feature a combination of family travels, and focused personal and ministry-related readings, with some emphasis on spiritual and physical wellness.

- I will kick off the time celebrating Jesse's Bethany Christian High School graduation, where I will be the guest speaker.
- The highlight will be visiting our son Matthew in China. Janette, Leah, Jesse and I will spend about five weeks with him during his summer teaching break. We will see not only the city where he lives, but tour several other cities and scenic parks, as well as visit a Chinese Christian seminary where other Mennonite Partners in China workers serve.
- Other places I'll visit will include: St. Meinrad Abbey in southern Indiana for a week-long spiritual retreat; my elderly mother in Kansas and Akron, PA., to drop off Jesse for orientation before he leaves to Honduras with the SALT program.

Along the way I look forward to readings and other kinds of ministry resources:

- Inspirational readings for my prophetic side from a historical narrative trilogy of the American civil rights movement, focusing on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Readings in preparation for the "Fanning the Flames" congregational emphasis on spiritual gifts and giftedness, which will kick off in September.
- Readings from The Colossian Forum, a Christian nonprofit organization aiming to help churches and church colleges and institutions thrive (and not merely survive) amidst diversity and conflicts.
- A week-long intensive improvisational comedy workshop at Second City, in Chicago, since many executive leaders in the business and nonprofit world have found improv beneficial for strengthening leadership skills.

—Neil Amstutz



There are two general areas in which significant adjustments could still be made in expenses. Our budgeted contribution to external agencies is distributed quarterly, with each quarter's gift totaling about \$30,700. The fourth-quarter contribution is scheduled for April. In addition, there are three expense lines which are considered "fundable" because of their cyclical nature. This means that we attempt to set aside funds in a year when actual expenses are not incurred in order to support the years in which they are. For this year, these three fundable lines would support travel to and from Benin Bible Institute and our support for the MYF and for congregational delegates to attend the Mennonite Church USA convention. Not funding these lines would result in a savings of about \$11,000, but create additional challenges for next fiscal year.

The \$96,000 referenced above assumes that we will be able to make our fourth-quarter giving contribution and also fund these expense lines. However, the Facilities & Finance Ministry Team will wait to determine whether making these distributions is possible, based on our giving patterns during April.

We invite your prayers on behalf of FFMT and congregational leaders as we approach the end of the fiscal year. We also invite your prayerful consideration of additional financial gifts for the work of God at Waterford and in the world.

—Lyle Miller, on behalf of Facilities & Finance Ministry Team (Jim Fisher, lay ministry partner; Dave Hostetler, Tom Yoder, and Alan Zimmerman)

Palm Sunday Coats

For Palm Sunday, congregation members placed a total of 116 coats on the ground in the aisles and up front.



Pastors Day at Bethany Schools

Lyle was one of 27 area pastors who headed back to school for part of the day to shadow one of their youth attending Bethany Christian Schools. Pastors began the day attending chapel and then participated in their students' activities: discussing Bible topics, assisting with social studies and science projects, using an iPad, or recalling their days in math and English classes. Pastors Day allows pastors to experience Bethany to connect with their youth outside of church on their turf—to see a small window of what their day-to-day life is like.

Lyle Miller is pictured with Bethany fifth-grader Joel Brookmyer Graber on Pastors Day at Bethany on March 17.

Photos from MYF-Senior Adult Game Night



Nathan Berkey, Gabriel Hartzler, Miriam and Loren Stauffer enjoying games at the MYF & Senior Adult social time on March 18.



Jackson King and Ariana Perez-Diener sharing conversation with Gene and Shirley Leinbach at the MYF-senior adult social time. It was a great evening of food, fun and conversation.

Photos from Agape and Venture Club Service Project

Several members of the Agape Sunday school class joined Venture Club students and sponsors for an intergenerational service project assembling MCC school kits at The Depot on March 25.



MCC Essay Contest

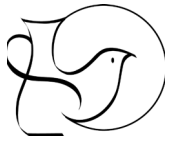
Isaac Brenneman was one of four students nationwide recognized in the 2015 MCC Washington Office High School Essay Contest. Jared Knepper, a senior at Shalom Christian Academy in Chambersburg, Pa., won the grand prize. Brenneman, a senior at Bethany Christian Schools, received honorable mention, along with Kyle Snyder of Bethany Christian Schools and Brooklyn Ries of Freeman (S.D.) Academy. The grand prize winner receives \$300 and honorable mention winners receive \$100 each.

Brenneman's essay focused on the Central American migration crisis. Following is an excerpt:

"Gang-related violence is one of the root causes of the increase in migration to the United States.... A lack of jobs is another cause for the increase.... With our Christian and Anabaptist values in mind, our response needs to be hospitable and welcoming towards these immigrants because as children of God, we are called to help those in need. One way we can respond is by supporting more organizations that help provide assistance and services to these immigrants."

The essay contest highlights the perspectives of youth on significant public policy issues and promotes the involvement of young people in faithful witness to government authorities.

MCC contest rules state that "The contest is open to Anabaptist youth of high school age and to all youth who attend Mennonite high schools. Entries are judged on the participants' understanding of the issues, clarity of argument and degree of creativity in crafting thoughtful policy positions."



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- Lyle Miller
Pastor of Family Life and Financial Stewardship
- Velma Swartz
Pastor of Senior Ministries
- Cindy Voth
Pastor of Community Life

The *Waterford Buzz* is normally published weekly for members of Waterford Mennonite Church. Items for inclusion should be given to the editor by 5 p.m. Tuesday preceding publication.

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Stephen Ministry Training Continues

This Saturday, the Stephen Ministry training class will be considering the subjects of bringing a caring relationship to a close and participating in monthly peer group supervision. During this full-day session they will consider how the sometimes-difficult process of bringing a caring relationship to a close can instead be turned into a relationship-strengthening event. They will also be learning how to engage in the process of peer supervision with each other so that they will be able to offer the highest quality Christian care possible for their care receivers.

Thank You

Thank you, Waterford Mennonite Church, for your gift to Mennonite Mission Network in 2014 of \$57,084.74! Your donations, prayers, participation, and enthusiasm for mission are deeply felt across the street and around the world. Because of your generosity this year, we have been able to respond to new calls to ministry! We are very grateful.

—Stanley Green, executive director;
staff of Mennonite Mission Network

Thank you from the MYF

Thank you to the many people who came to eat pulled pork and bid on items at our annual MYF Supper and Service Auction on March 8. During the evening, we received more than \$14,000 to support our various faith formation activities, particularly this year's convention in Kansas City, but also events such as the Building Authentic Relationships and Winter Youth Retreats and more.

We are grateful for the congregation's support in so many ways, including prayer, encouragement, and financial generosity.

—Lyle Miller, on behalf of the MYF

Tissues for Prairie View

Prairie View Elementary School could use big boxes of facial tissues for the classrooms. The Goshen schools adopted the practice of not requesting that children bring items from home for the classroom. With winter drawing to a close the classroom teachers' supplies of tissues are about depleted. Please put the tissues in the boxes by the north door or stack them neatly nearby. Thanks for supporting SOS—Serving Our Schools.

Juniors and seniors attend BAR Retreat

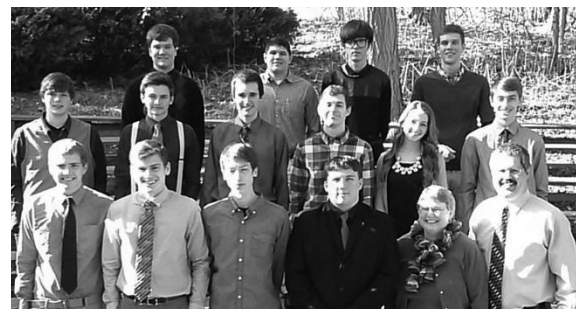
It was a great experience to have 14 students take part in the Building Authentic Relationships Retreat at Camp Friedenswald March 27-29. This event is scheduled every other year for high school juniors and seniors and is planned by a group of area pastors who work with youth in faith formation.

The purpose of the event is to help students think about what it means to be involved in relationships that are formed in Christ. Though oriented toward thinking about future marriage partners, the concepts we discuss are helpful in all kinds of relationships, including with family and friends, recognizing that not all students will choose to be married in the future.

This year's content included sessions about our hopes and dreams for relationships; the role that our families of origin can play in relationships; having holiness rather than happiness as a prime goal in relationships; how unexpected events might affect our relationships; and how we can build relationships that are built on friendship. A regular highlight is a Saturday evening panel discussion in which couples with varying life experiences are invited to tell their stories and respond to questions from leaders and youth alike. This year, we were grateful to have Sheldon and Velma Swartz as a part of the panel that Bonnie and I moderated. On Sunday, each student shared their hopes and fears for future relationships as part of our closing ritual in worship.

As a pastor, I am grateful for the emphasis that our parents and congregation place on building healthy relationships. Our youth feel the encouragement of their parents and the congregation praying for them as they take part in the event and ask questions about it afterward.

—Lyle Miller



The MYF juniors and seniors are pictured at Camp Friedenswald.