



buzz

Thank you from Lyle and Bonnie

As I make the transition away from ministry at Waterford to a new call to ministry in the broader church through Everence, Bonnie and I continue to be grateful for your many words of blessing and support along this journey.

Thank you in particular for the meaningful farewell gathering during the nurture hour on March 20, with a special thanks to Melanie and Greg Hire and others who were involved in the planning and implementation. Our dining room table is now blessed by the tablecloth full of hand prints from students and the friendship candle holder from staff. I look forward to wearing my “God’s Team” Minnesota Twins jersey to games this summer and beyond and to wearing the shawl of your prayers. I have also been “eating” my basket of popcorn notes one kernel and one day at a time, taking the time to savor each note. I have certainly been taking in more than the recommended daily allowance of affirmation and encouragement each time I uncrumple a sheet! Thank you to all.

At my ordination several years ago, I chose Colossians 3:12-17 as the scripture. This text invites us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and love, doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the kind of pastor I have tried to be. For those times when I have not ministered in that way, when you have not seen me clothed in that manner, I ask for your forgiveness.

As Bonnie and I continue seeking to be faithful to God and to each other, our relationship to Waterford will change. Beginning in April, we will worship elsewhere for at least the next four to six months. We have attended here for 29 years, and it’s hard to imagine regularly worshiping anywhere else, but we also want to be open to God’s leading. It’s quite possible that we will eventually return to Waterford, but during the coming months, we will be in prayer about where that leading may be in terms of a congregational home. If there is a congregation we feel led to and where our gifts can be used for God’s mission, we want to be open to the possibility of attending there as well.

But we also want to remain friends. So don’t call me to move the chairs, but do click “like” on my Facebook posts. Don’t

expect me at your baseball game or choir performance, but do root for my Hawkeyes and my Minnesota Twins (and as of recently, my New England Revolution!). Don’t ask me to substitute teach in your Sunday school class, but do say “hello” when you see me at Kroger or McDonald’s.

And finally, do pray for us. We will do the same for you.

—Lyle (and Bonnie) Miller

Is Waterford Mennonite Church going through hard times?

After my March 20 sermon “Beyond the highlight reels”, a few of you may have asked that question yourselves. In that sermon, I speculated whether a possible “resource deficit” (both financial and human resources) might be evidence of a “dark night of the church.” Please let me clarify a bit what I meant, lest you believe I am a pessimist or alarmist about the state of our congregation.

I got a little direct and indirect feedback on this sermon. Thank you for that feedback. I do encourage you to come talk with me directly if you have questions or concerns about what I’ve preached. I appreciate such feedback, even if you disagree with what I said. It helps make the sharing and hearing of the word of God more of a dialogue and less of a monologue. I hope you heard the “dark night” language as an open-ended question and not a firm declaration. In today’s politically and theologically polarized society, it’s common for people who hear a hint of critique or acknowledgement of difficulties to assume it’s much worse and then to wonder, “What’s the real story?” In retrospect, I now understand my usage of the “dark night” language could paint a darker or more severe picture of Waterford church life than most people experience.

In fact there are wonderful things happening at Waterford Mennonite Church, and I have never seriously questioned whether God is active among us. But I recently read a December 26, 2012 Christian Century article by L. Roger Owens and Anthony B. Robinson, titled “Dark night of the church.”

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**There will be
no *Buzz* next
Sunday, April
10.**



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An update on Lyle's transition

As of this publication, Lyle Miller has officially concluded his Waterford pastorate, although he will be consulting with us on end-of-year financial matters through the month of May. It is considered wise practice in churches at times of pastoral transition for the departing pastor to be completely away from the congregation's worship and social life for a period of time. This allows the former pastor to adjust to a new daily routine and a new identity. It also facilitates the congregation moving on in its new life without that pastor.

Ministry Leadership Council has agreed with Lyle for him to be away from worship and congregational activities for a period of four to six months, beginning April 1. While we may not have a new Pastor of Family Life hired by the end of that time, this provides some buffer time for the family life ministries and also for the congregation as we work with Interim Business Manager Mel Claassen in overseeing the management of congregational finances. When a new Pastor of Family Life begins, Lyle and congregational leaders will work flexibly with his or her comfort level with Lyle's worship presence, for the sake of a strong start for that pastor's ministry here.

As Lyle alluded in his March 20 farewell remarks, his and Bonnie's future church affiliations are open-ended, depending on what God brings their way. While they may return to worship at Waterford, they are open to God's leading in terms of a congregational home. As they will continue to live in the Goshen community, do be friendly and talk with them if you see them around. But please also respect his leaving this pastoring role by not engaging with him on church business. We need to allow space for what new things God may develop in our midst and in Lyle & Bonnie's lives & ministries. May God bless the new realities of all of our ministries in Christ's name.

—Pastor Neil for
Ministry Leadership Council

Have you completed your will?

If you were one of more than 80 people who took part in a will-planning seminar in January, remember that you can receive \$50 toward the cost of establishing or updating your will, thanks to a grant from Waterford's Endowment Fund.

The seminar was sponsored by the Facilities & Finance Ministry Team with support from the pastoral team. As an act of pastoral care, we have a desire for everyone in our congregation to have a current will in place. It is also an act of stewardship, helping families to manage the assets that they have accumulated and have been entrusted with.

To receive reimbursement, provide a copy of your invoice to bookkeeper Elvina Schmidt. This grant program will be available through July 1. If you were not able to attend the seminar, but would like to have the information to be eligible for the congregational grant, contact the church office to receive a copy of the DVD for you. In addition, those who own an Everence product or use an Everence service are eligible to receive a \$50 grant from Everence. To apply, visit <http://www.everence.com/benefits/>.

—Pastoral team

Hard Times, from page 1

In it, the authors described settings where mainstream Christian churches find their numbers and their influence in the community declining. The forms and strategies that used to work for them no longer work. They experience this disorientation not so much as a darkness or abandonment, but rather as an obscurity.

This article caused me to consider if our difficulty in finding leaders and ministry team members (unprecedented in my eleven years here) might not be merely a technical problem for us to solve. Instead I wonder if it reveals a spiritual issue in which God may be trying to teach us something. The point for that part of the sermon was to ask an open-ended spiritual question, rather than to make a disparaging statement. I do not believe we are in crisis. It's possible that "dark night of the church" is an overstatement for us. But I do think it behooves us to seek God's face and voice in or behind situations that perplex us. When at first we see are problems for overcoming, let us pause long enough, in our search for solutions, to consider whether God may have a larger hidden purpose in allowing the problems to go on. And even if not every challenge we face represents some obscure spiritual lesson from above, it is indeed a good exercise to look and listen for God at work in the midst of adversity.

—Pastor Neil Amstutz