



Waterford Mennonite Church | August 12, 2018

buzz

WMC Celebrates Ten Years as a Stephen Ministry Congregation

In 2007, the Adult Nurture Ministry Team began exploring further ways WMC might build on its strength of providing care and support within the congregation. Several members attended an information workshop sponsored by Stephen Ministries, a nonprofit religious and education organization based in St. Louis, Mo. They were excited about the possibilities of the Stephens Series system of Christian lay caring ministry that has currently supported over 13,000 congregations, from more than 170 denominations, since 1978.

In the spring of 2008, WMC officially enrolled as a Stephen Ministry congregation and called Pastor Tina Schlabach, Bill Minter and Cheryl Snyder to attend a weeklong Stephen Leader Training Conference. These newly trained Stephen Leaders recruited and provided 50 hours of training to four persons from our congregation in the winter/spring of 2009. These persons then began serving the congregation as its Stephen Ministers. Thirteen additional persons have been recruited and trained as Stephen Ministers. Nine are currently active, including two who were originally trained, Len Harms and Kay Miller. Other current Stephen Ministers include Cynthia Kauffmann, Gary Shetler, John Birkey, Helen Bowman, Rachel Brenneman, Marge Gingerich and Anita Myers.

Stephen Ministers complement the care of Pastors and SS Class Shepherds by providing an average of 20-25 hours of care per month. Since 2008, more than 60 persons in our congregation and community have benefitted from regular visits of a Stephen Minister. A person may meet with a Stephen Minister from several weeks to several years, depending on the need.

At the beginning of 2012 Mel and Lorna Claassen accepted the call to be trained as Stephen Leaders and

serve on the Stephen Leader Team with Bill Minter. Liz Gingrich received leadership training and joined the Team during the fall of 2015. These four individuals, along with the support of Pastor Velma Swartz, continue to guide the congregation's Stephen Ministry program.

Stephen Ministry continues into the next decade fulfilling part of WMC's mission to... "Call out each others gifts... and Minister to the needs of one another and our neighbors through the Holy Spirit..." by enabling those called to this ministry to offer Christian care to hurting persons within the congregation, and to receptive persons with whom the congregation relates in our community.

—WMC Stephen Leader Team

Fall Worship Series on Conflict and Reconciliation

"Talking about conflict? Do we have to?" Is that your honest gut-level response to hearing that the featured worship series this fall will center on conflict and how we deal with it? As pastors we hope that you don't take the common Mennonite tendency of conflict-avoidance to the extent of avoiding this series altogether!

We believe there is much to be gained from re-examining both our own beliefs and habits toward conflict, as well as the biblical message of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. The structure for the content of this nine-Sunday series will be drawn from John Paul Lederach's groundbreaking book Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians (Herald Press, ©2014). Our purpose in this series is to encourage us, as followers of Jesus, to engage more healthily in conflict and reduce conflict-avoiding behaviors as we seek to live into our calling to join Christ in the ministry of reconciliation.

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In Lederach's book, he draws from many biblical texts and stories, which we will also: Jacob and Esau; creation in Genesis; the Psalms; Jesus in Matthew 18 & 22; Acts 15; and Paul's letters. In the series you will hear from all of us pastors, including Mariah Martin before Cindy Voth's return.

Kicking off the series on August 26 will be guest preacher Malinda Berry, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. In her sermon, Malinda will share on the intersection of conflict, culture and race, as Christians in the USA today. She will also be our guest in an interactive combined nurture hour in the fellowship hall, engaging us on nonviolent communication and what she calls "reconciliation's 'cousin': forgiveness." This series will run from August 26 through October 28, with two Sundays in the middle focusing instead on our Benin Bible Institute partnership.

In addition to the Sunday worship series, here are a couple other supplemental activities with this series:

- An **elective Sunday School class** studying the book Reconcile will be offered during the fall quarter, led by Bill Swartzendruber and Neil Amstutz, for those who haven't already studied

Know Jesus, July 27-29

Waterford's JYF participated in the Know Jesus weekend hosted at Goshen College and organized by Amigo Centre.

Photo: Mark Daniels leads a time of sharing and response with Waterford's JYF after a worship session.



the book in more depth (as Pathfinders, Seekers and MYF classes have). Sign up for this elective at the Participation Station.

- Do you know what your own style of dealing with conflict is, relative to other people? We invite all adults and youth in September to take a standardized and well-tested tool called the **Krabill Conflict Style Inventory**, which shows five common conflict styles. We encourage you to discuss your inventory results with others who know you well. Sunday School classes will be urged to make nurture hour time available for this sharing and discussion.
- In your church boxes you already received a "save the date" card for the **workshop "Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches"** on November 10. This workshop, presented by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, will be hosted here at Waterford with others from the local community also invited. This is a high quality and practical workshop which we encourage all Waterford attenders to register for. Thanks to a subsidy from our Endowment Fund, cost for Waterford attenders will be only \$20, which includes lunch. A brochure with more details is coming soon.

—Pastor Neil Amstutz