

buzz

“Can We Talk ... (about Mennonite Education)?"

You may recall that A) a group was named in the spring as a committee to lead one of our periodic reviews of Waterford's Mennonite Education Fund (MEF) guidelines, and B) the next series of Conversations That Matter (CTM) activities in the fall would focus on how we think and feel about Mennonite Education. The specific plans for our activities and conversations in the early stages of this review process are still being formed. However, here is a teaser to at least get a few events into your calendars for September.

We will meet twice in September for conversations specifically about our Mennonite Education-related thoughts and values. This first stage of the anticipated MEF review process will probably be the longest stage, dedicated to respectfully and honestly hearing and speaking with each other, to name and clarify what the main issues are. The process stage after that is for key church leadership to synthesize what's been shared and heard in the first stage into several specific options for congregational consideration and action. A congregational vote would be the final stage of the review process.

Please put the following two introductory conversations on your calendars:

- **Wednesday Sept. 5, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.** A World Café-style event similar to the format we've had before, with conversations around small tables in the sanctuary. This will be an introductory time, with the specific topic announced later.
- **Sunday Sept. 23, 4:30 to 8:00 p.m.** Come help us try out a new way of meeting and discerning our directions with Mennonite Education – a method called Open Space Technology (Google it if you like).

- Definitely not “business as usual,” this is a more free-flowing way of hearing from people. There is no pre-set agenda because the participants name the agenda themselves, and everyone gets the chance to engage the topics that matter most to them. This is a longer block of time, but the method cannot be condensed into just an hour or two.
- A light supper will be provided as part of the activity.
- We want as many people as possible to come out for this, because it will help steer the course of future conversations. This is probably the one event this fall in which your voice brings the greatest impact.

There will be subsequent Conversations That Matter events this fall, which have not yet been scheduled. Their contents will be shaped by the Sept. 23 meeting. More information will follow soon about those dates and times.

—Pastor Neil Amstutz, for MEF Review Committee
(Jason Herrmann, Gordon Bontrager, Dan Stoltzfus)

Spiritual Formation Group Reminder

The spiritual formation group, about which you received information in your mailboxes a couple of weeks back, still has an opening or two. Contact Sheldon Swartz (sheldon@lifeda.com or text 574 536-5630) if you want more information and/or are interested in joining. It will meet monthly on a Tuesday or Thursday evening for two hours September through May.

Treasuring a Memory

With the upcoming visit with our Beninese friends, my memories of my trip to Benin in February 2016 flood me. Upon exiting the airplane, I remember the blast of heat in the airline terminal and the craziness of trying to fill out immigration forms written in French. Rod and Lynda extended much patience as each person in the group encountered the same questions at different times amid the chaos that manifests itself in the immigration process. (Why do I always feel so much urgency to get through immigration? The country will still be there when I'm finished.)

A big surprise greeted me when I left the terminal and encountered the welcoming delegation from BBI. A bottle of water, greetings, and introductions reassured me before we piled into vehicles for our trip to the hotel. Despite the immigration form written in French, I don't remember a language barrier—it seems friendship and goodwill transcend language.

I intentionally chose no air conditioning for the trip in the interest of experiencing the culture, but on arrival at the hotel I questioned that decision. However, I was up for the adventure and hoped that my humanity didn't smell any worse than those around me. I learned to appreciate any small breeze, especially from upwind.

I was set to see it all during my time in Benin, and I was not disappointed. Our first morning, the group met at BBI for a mostly all day meeting with BBI people and others who had cleared their busy schedules to spend the day with us, including an elaborately prepared lunch of many courses. After being served several courses of salad, rice, chicken, and other foods, there arrived butterscotch pudding. But no, it wasn't butterscotch pudding, but a look-alike main course food not even remotely related to pudding in taste and texture. Recalling some helpful advice not to worry about what I couldn't eat because the food would not go to waste, I tasted it and left it for others to enjoy.

The week continued with trips to the hospital, La Casa Grande, the Door of No Return, the Voodoo forest, Clarice's school, a visit to the sustainable agricultural farm, introductions to Femi's parents, and a boat ride out to the village built on stilts. One of our stops was the BBI demonstration farm and off-site campus where I would end my trip by working on the farm for three days while others either returned home or went on a safari upcountry.

That day arrived and I could try Benin on my own. I spent three days living in the dormitory, meticulously pulling weeds in the vegetable beds, being reminded that there are no shortcuts to pulling weeds, wondering when we would take a break for lunch (never), resting in the heat of the day, and cycling into town for an evening meal. I even attended an evening worship service in the village where I heard a dynamic preacher deliver a fiery sermon in French. When I met him later, his calling to minister to the people of Benin impressed me and his perfect English, one of several languages that he knows, surprised me.

A chicken feast culminated my days on the farm. I witnessed the process from beginning to end—the catching, killing, scalding, defeathering, butchering, cleaning, marinating, cooking, and then frying—all the while telling myself that I can eat this. Being the honored guest, I was given the breast and a leg while the other seven shared the rest of the chicken. After weighing my options, I felt comfortable sharing what I had not eaten, even though it was very tasty.

In a few weeks I look forward to returning some of the hospitality that I was shown on my trip. I believe that I serve our guests best by being who I am, living in a typical way, making sure of their comfort, sharing what I can of my life, learning from them, catching up on the people that I know, and affirming the specialness of the relationship of BBI and Waterford. I anticipate hearing what surprises they encounter during their time with us.

Upon my return from Benin the blast of cold air that hit my face when I stepped out of the Chicago Airport let me know that my special trip was over.

—Len Harms



Jenna Oostland, Naomi Ross Richer, and Teresa Ross Richer prepare to zip line at the MYF fall blast retreat.

Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale

The 51st Annual Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale will be held September 21 and 22 at the Elkhart County Fairgrounds. Are your donations ready? **Items for Online Auction and Children's Auction need to be donated by September 7, before start of auction September 21, 6:30 p.m.** Please contact Carolyn Kauffman (574-537-8716 or cdkauff@gmail.com) for pickup or with questions.

Donations, plus hundreds of volunteers, help make this sale possible. Waterford has had an integral part in making the Relief Sale a success. Our congregation has been in charge of three different areas:

Sausage Tent:

Byron Yoder has chaired the sausage tent for many years! Sausage is fried for sausage sandwiches and for the Saturday morning pancake and sausage breakfast. Approximately 20 volunteers, working two-hour shifts, are used throughout the weekend. Volunteers' primary job is to arrange cut links of sausage in the baskets to be fried. Someone else does the frying and the work

is not heavy. Byron is also looking for someone to co-chair this booth. Please consider if this is the position for you.

Dairy Bar:

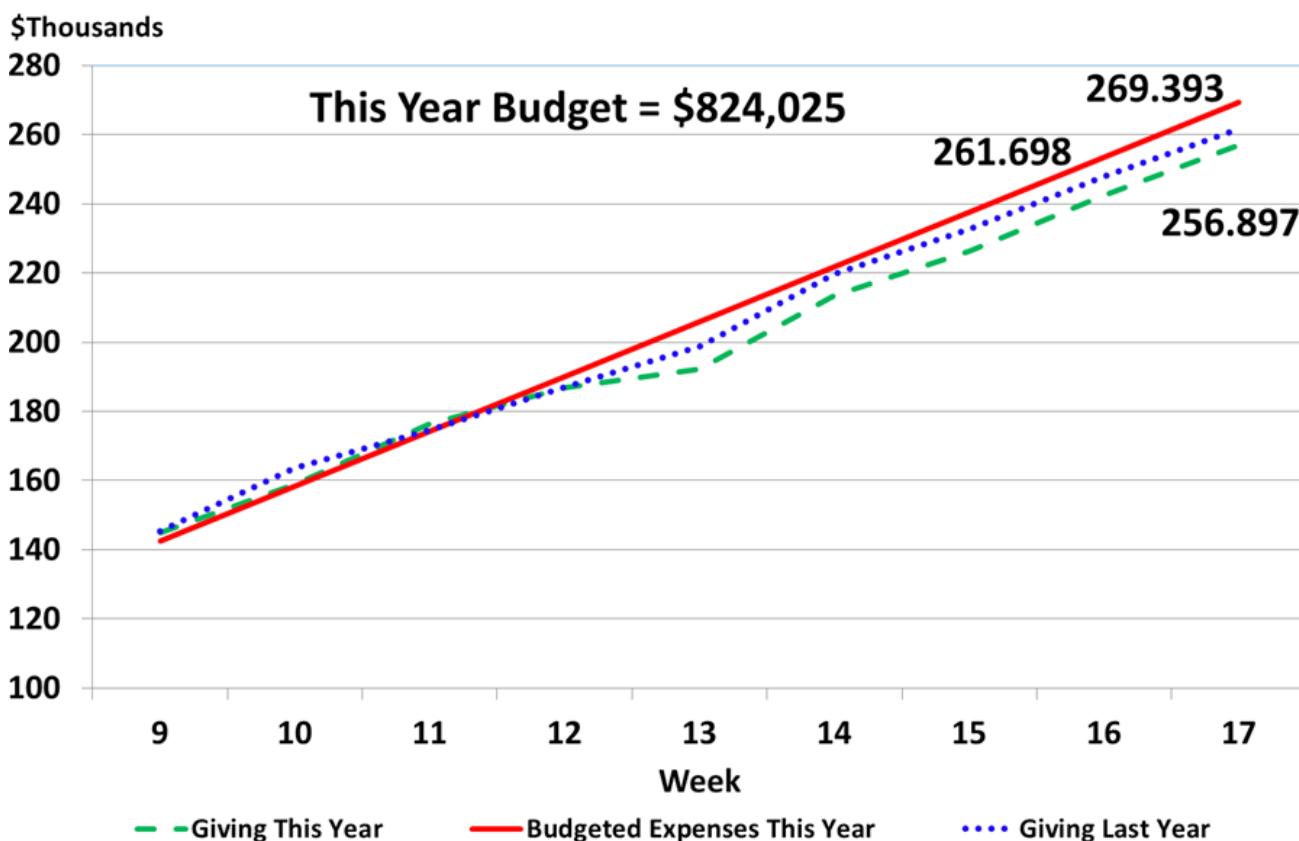
Aaron Lehman and Al Zimmerman chair this booth. Menno tea, pop, water and ice cream are sold. Approximately 20 – 24 volunteers, working two-hour shifts, are used throughout the weekend.

Popcorn:

Kevin and Lorene Miller provide leadership for this booth, which sells various Yoder Popcorn products to take home, as well as freshly popped popcorn for eating at the sale. Additionally, children and parents roam the Saturday auctions, selling popcorn and drinks. Approximately 12 adults and 8 – 10 children are needed to work in two-hour shifts throughout the weekend.

Please consider if you would like to volunteer for one of these areas. If you have questions, talk to one of the chairpersons. Sign-up sheets are on the Relief Sale table.

Waterford Mennonite Church Cumulative Total Giving



Through the end of August, giving to WMC amounts to \$256,897. That compares to \$261,698 at the same time a year ago and the YTD budget of \$269,393.

Considering Spaces That Welcome

At the August congregational meeting, participants encouraged the Facilities and Finance Ministry Team (FFMT) to address some deferred maintenance issues we face as a congregation. Here are some updates shared at the Aug. 5 congregational meeting.

First, we recognize that a church's space issues are never solely about space. They are about a congregation being able to carry out God's mission. In Waterford's case, our mission statement calls us to "welcome everyone to faith and fellowship in Jesus Christ." While FFMT has focused on several specific needs, we also recognize that there may be other space issues that could make a difference in how we provide welcoming spaces.

Second, we recognize that money issues are never solely about money. Money issues are issues of faith and we want to take seriously what it means to respond (and actually grow) in faith, both in our personal lives and in our corporate life.

So, we have a couple updates, both specific and general. A specific one is that we've asked Lyle Miller to help us think about these issues of faith and mission. Helping congregations and individuals consider the intersection of money and mission is much of what he does in his role with Everence. With his help, we'd like to think of this as a "faithraising" project, rather than solely "fundraising." You will be hearing regularly from him and others in the coming issues of the Buzz.

A more general update is that we continue to work at issues of mission and space usage. We're doing some of the intentional work on the projects we've already named to the congregation, like considering our space usage and getting preliminary price quotes. We've also been reflecting about other issues that affect our ability to welcome everyone. For example, what would it look like to give fuller access to the platform in

the sanctuary? Those conversations will continue.

In the weeks to come, we will flesh out these ideas and invite feedback. There will likely be opportunities for group input, but we'll also be looking to have some individual conversations as well. One specific timing issue is that we hope to be far enough along with both sets of questions to consider working at the parking lot issue before the snow flies.

Our hope in this process is that we'll all be able to prayerfully think about how we can grow in our faith, both in terms of generosity as a congregation and in our faithful use of the physical spaces God has entrusted to us as a congregation.

—Neil Amstutz, pastoral team leader

Leave the MYF your Leaves!

The MYF has entered the Elkhart County Leaf Collection Competition. If you live in Unincorporated Elkhart County, the MYF would like to collect your leaves! If we collect 4 truckloads (1 ton) of leaves, the MYF will be given \$500. Plus, the more we collect, the more money we might raise! Sign up at the participation station if you would like your leaves collected. Sign up your neighbors and friends too! We will be collecting on Wednesday, October 17 and Wednesday, November 14. You can select to either rake them to the curb or have us rake them for you. If you want, feel free to bring your leaves on your own to the Elkhart County Landfill anytime between September 10 - November 21 and tell them you are with Waterford Mennonite MYF.

Sorry, if you live in an incorporated area we can't take your leaves. We'd be disqualified. But, let us know if you'd like to loan us your truck, your leaf blower, or your strong raking arms to help out!!



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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. Monday preceding publication.

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