



Waterford Mennonite Church | April 19, 2020

buzz

The Mystery Sabbatical

In the March 8 Buzz, you first read about Ministry Leadership Council's support for my 14-week absence on a sabbatical this summer. In that Buzz issue I also outlined the main activities I had planned for that time, which was to begin later this month. Any of you who have recently canceled plans for travel, parties or special events due to Coronavirus know what the disappointment feels like of giving up something you looked forward to.

The good news for me is that I won't need to cancel the sabbatical leave itself. For that, my mind and spirit rejoice! The bad news is that the specific plans and activities I anticipated during this time (other than resting at or near home) have either already been canceled or are unknown and doubtful now. I have chosen to proceed with this time away from ministry, even if most or all of it will be spent right here at home. As named in the MLC update in the April 5 Buzz, my plans are now delayed by two weeks. This means **my last Sunday with the congregation will be May 3, and I will return to the church office (or to working remotely if necessary) on August 10.**

What will I do while away? That is the mystery of this sabbatical. I have a longer list of desired books to read than I will likely make it through. Outings on my bike will be a mainstay, of course. Janette surely relishes my help with a basement remodeling project in the works. About the only mandates I'm taking with me are "Stay healthy, and slow down ... way down!"

In my absence most of my regular ministry tasks will be picked up by other pastors. (Go team!!!) A few things will be let go or delegated to lay persons. For pastoral care please contact one of the other pastors.

We hope to announce one or two persons within the congregation with pastoring and caregiving experience who will substitute as needed for the pastors in providing pastoral care. Yet even that arrangement will likely be altered as Coronavirus realities extend into the summer.

With such a stay-at-home sabbatical leave, will I see some of you around Goshen? Undoubtedly so. Please feel free to say Hi and chat if you like. I only request that you also refrain from engaging me with church questions or comments.

Life these days feels quite fragile and future plans tenuous for all of us. When I occasionally succumb to feelings of self-pity for the collapse of my sabbatical plans, I recall my sermon (to myself) on Palm Sunday, in which I denounced our indulgent Western tendency to gripe, "But it's not supposed to be this way!" I am deeply grateful for the huge gift of sabbatical itself, no matter where it is spent, when much of the world today is in emotional shock and economic pain, searching for productive things to do. I know that Waterford Mennonite Church will be in good hands while I'm gone.

— *Pastor Neil Amstutz*





Fairhaven Mennonite

Fairhaven Mennonite, listed in our Prayers for Brothers and Sisters” (April 5, 2020 Bulletin) was a church plant by Leo Mennonite (my home church) in the 1950’s. As an MYFer I passed out “The Way” in the African American community, in the western part of Fort Wayne.

In the summer of 1963 Sylvia, I and one-year-old Kevin spent the summer living in Fort Wayne, making this church our place of worship during this transition from Goshen College graduation to teaching in the fall at Christopher Dock, near Lansdale, Pa. While there, Kevin became attached to one of their friendly lay leaders, Jimmy Russel. He even chose to go home with them after church one Sunday. Later, after we moved to Pa, Kevin saw a black person and excitedly pointed and told us Jimmy, Jimmy!

As a small child, Kevin was instrumental in our establishing a life-long friendship with Jimmy and his wife Gene. In the 1970’s they came to visit us and stayed over night with us when we lived in Harrisonburg, Va. Our last time together, Kevin joined us as we went to the funeral of Gene in Fort Wayne.

Raymond “Jimmy” Russel has been a lay leader at Fairhaven Mennonite Church for many years. Years ago it moved in location from the western side to a more southern part of Fort Wayne. It is now composed of blacks and whites, seemingly well integrated. Duane and Rachel Yoder, former Eastern Mennonite College students of mine, have been involved there, too, following their graduation in the early 1970’s. May God continue to bless this thriving congregation.

— Don Miller

Blooms courtesy of the Remembering Life Garden.

Right: Dan Stoltzfus shared this photo of his sanctuary for the Easter sunrise service conducted over Zoom.

What are Stephen Ministers up to?

Stephen Ministers are still active! In this time of physical isolation, it is important to continue to care for each other and maintain community. Waterford’s Stephen Ministers continue to meet with the individuals they are caring for. However, rather than being present in person, they are doing things like using phones, video technology or walking outside while keeping the recommended six feet apart. It is still possible to hold each other in prayer!

Our Pastors want to make sure all are cared for during this time of isolation and increased anxiety. In conjunction with our Pastors, Stephen Leaders are contacting SS Class Shepherds to see if there are those who could benefit from extra phone calls or a listening ear. This is an attempt to support our Pastors and add to the congregational voices that are reaching out during this time of isolation.

If you or someone you know could benefit from extra support, feel free to contact a Pastor, your SS class Shepherd or Stephen Leaders, Liz Gingrich or Mel or Lorna Claassen. We care!

— Stephen Leaders (Mel & Lorna Claassen, Liz Gingrich, Bill Minter)




Waterford Mennonite Church
 65975 State Road 15
 Goshen, IN 46526
 p: 574 533-5642
 f: 574 533-0879
 office@waterfordchurch.org
 www.waterfordchurch.org

Staff Team
Administrative Ministry
 · Karen Hostetler
Secretary
 · Elvina Schmidt
Bookkeeper
 · Janet Shoemaker
Coordinator of Administrative Ministries
 · Andrea Golden
Business Manager
 · Mikki Bowman
Director of Children’s Ministries
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 · Neil Amstutz
Pastoral Team Leader
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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. Monday preceding publication.

Janet Shoemaker,
 Interim editor
 buzz@waterfordchurch.org