

NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Wisdom for Everyday	2
LT Highlights	2
ELC News	3
Book Excerpt	4



This newsletter belongs to all of us. Your input is greatly appreciated. Please feel free to submit articles to the editor.

Editor: Judy Nguyen

Mission Statement

As we encounter God's heart of love, our hearts are made new by God's Spirit. We invite people to experience Christ's love, welcoming each one into a caring fellowship, serving Christ with our gifts and resources.



New Holland Mennonite Church

18 Western Avenue
New Holland, PA
17557
717-354-0602
nhmc@frontiernet.net

SOME REFLECTIONS ON SOLITUDE AND SACRIFICE

BY PASTOR DAWN RANCK HOWER

When was the last time that you were alone? Did you experience solitude or loneliness? How did it make you feel?

In her book, "Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal" Mennonite Pastor April Yamasaki talks about the importance of solitude. "Solitude allows time for sustained reading and thinking, for the kind of creativity that's part of excellence. There are many other benefits, like the space and time to develop our own goals and sense of purpose; time for reflection and prayer; reading Scripture, journaling, and other spiritual practices; for discovering who we are apart from our family, friends, and other people."

Some of us crave quiet times alone with our thoughts and God. For others of us it is hard to disconnect from others -- to turn off our cell phone, iPad, laptop, television, MP3 player, and take time to be silent with God. We all need times of solitude in order to be healthy spiritual beings.

Numerous times in Jesus ministry he went off on his own to pray. At the beginning he spent 40 days alone in the wilderness. Near the end of his life he spent time alone praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. April notes that "Jesus' entire ministry is characterized by a deliberate rhythm of time with others and time alone." At times Jesus encouraged his disciples to go off by themselves to rest.

As a group of us met the other evening to discuss this chapter of April's book, we were struck by the

fact that at times when Jesus planned for solitude, he was interrupted. "When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been killed by Herod, Jesus tried to withdraw to a quiet place by boat, but by the time he reached the shore, a great crowd had already gathered, and 'he had compassion for them and cured their sick.'" Jesus was sad and tired and needing to mourn the death of his cousin, and yet, when the crowds came to him he met them with compassion. At times Jesus set aside his own needs to care for others.

So, we pondered, are we, like Jesus, able to rise above our own plans, our own needs, to care for others? When we're interrupted, how do we respond to others?

April points out that "even Jesus did not heal all the sick, or cure all the lame, or raise all the dead. So humanly speaking there were certainly some limits to his ministry. But Jesus was not overly concerned with drawing boundaries not overly concerned with reserving time for himself alone, but able to respond to other with generosity and compassion." She concludes: "For all the legitimate concerns about stress and burnout in ministry and in life ... I also wonder whether it's possible to be too careful, to draw our boundaries too tightly and so miss out on showing compassion and allowing God's grace and power to be revealed in us. You and I are only human with limited time and energy. You and I are not Jesus. But just as we ask ourselves what place solitude has in our lives, we might also ask what place is there for sacrifice?" (Cont. on Page 4)

WISDOM FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

BY PAUL MARTIN

THE ASSEMBLY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Psalm 1 speaks about the assembly of the righteous.

Lord, on Sunday I plan to attend the assembly of the righteous at New Holland Mennonite Church. We are part of your righteous people, aren't we? Yes we are--- made righteous by your blood shed on Calvary's cross; certainly not by our own righteousness which is but "filthy rags."

Thank you, Lord, for that imputed righteousness. Thanks for accepting me/us into the family of God.

As we meet in worship bless Pastor Dawn as she delivers the sermon. Help me/us to be open and to hear the voice of your Holy Spirit. What might your Spirit plan for me/us to do in response? Open our minds and our hearts; help me/us to discern the assignments you plan for me/us to do this week.

Thank you, Lord, for your love. May we as a congregation continue to love you and love each other. AMEN

LT HIGHLIGHTS

BY JENN ESBENSHADE

Convention – Monies were added to the budget to finance participation in both the MCUSA convention and the Mennonite World Conference.

Future of NHMC – The LT spent individual time reflecting on the future of NHMC by journaling and sharing together. We shared our hopes and our fears. Dawn then shared about a meeting of the ELANCO ministerium and how there was a focus on revitalizing churches. There are two main ways to revitalize: close the doors and begin as a church plant or work with current leadership to bring about change. There was consensus that NHMC is better suited towards working with current leadership to bring about change. Dawn then shared notes from the presentation and highlighted important aspects about churches in decline and decline. Dawn emphasized our need for

prayer. Some 65% of people in New Holland don't attend a church and 18% of children in New Holland are under 14. There is a need to reach others in the community, especially children. The church needs to be built around the gifts of the congregation rather than what the church wants to do or feels it should do.

MCUSA – Various groups have been looking at the future of MCUSA. 1) A committee was formed by MCUSA to evaluate the current structures. They determined there is no other structure to solve the current issues affecting the church. 2) The "Hartville Group", a group of leaders from various MCUSA conferences which is looking at beginning a new structure apart from MCUSA. 3) A group in Lancaster Conference is looking at what this all means for the conference. The main issue is the

polity in regards to how conferences function and relate to MCUSA. Some conferences want a more authoritative center while others like the current looser structure. Information will be given to the congregation as details become more clear.

Congregational Meeting – The LT discussed how to structure the meeting. Dawn will allow for a time of reflection for members. There will be a handout of Keith Weaver's letter that will inform the congregation about events in MCUSA.

Audit financial records – Betsy Kennel, as treasurer, had asked that the 2014 records be audited. Bob E. will assure that is done using two people from within the congregation.

EARLY LEARNING CENTER NEWS

BY JEN MORALES, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The definite highlight in February was beach Day! After rescheduling a few times due to snow delays, the kids put on their swimsuits and headed to the beach! The Church mailbox room became our beach. We spread out our sand (a brown tarp), filled the wading pool with water, rolled in the sand tables, blew up some beach balls, hung up all of the



decorations and splashed! And splashed! And splashed! It was a great success



This month we will be talking about our communities and Community helpers! If you would like to share with the children about your involvement in the community, please give us a call! Thanks and have a blessed month!

HOW DID EARLY PRAYER BEGIN?

BY GLADYS RUTT

In the late 1970's New Holland Mennonite Church people spent an August weekend camping at Camp Swatara. On Saturday, two women went on a hike. As they walked along this beautiful day, they got into a serious discussion about church issues. They also discussed their personal desires to grow personally as Christians.

Both yearned to see persons from our congregation at New Holland gather regularly for united prayer. This desire was buoyed by a desire for revival in our own hearts, as well as in our church family and in our community.

They were thankful for our weekly Wednesday evening midweek meetings. However, these meetings were more centered on Bible Study than on prayer. There was prayer to open

and close the meetings, usually by the person leading the Bible Study. This, however, was not what they envisioned. They thought of most of the people gathered praying, with prayer the main focus of the meeting. They knew God had promised that when His people pray, He will answer. Acts 1:14, Jeremiah 33:3, and more. They believed that God was pleased when His people sought Him, united and agreeing together in prayer. These two women wondered if a prayer meeting in the morning before people went to work would be possible.

They had read that in Korea, Christians were gathering to pray at 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning. Many people! They had an intense desire for revival and new converts. And God was answering their prayers in the 1970's with true revival.

These two women spoke of their desire to their husbands and then to their small group. With the encouragement of these, they went to the pastor, who affirmed them.

It was decided to try meeting at 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday mornings. This was 1978 or 1979.

Early prayer has always begun with songs of praise followed by devotions. Attendees take turns having a short devotional. Then praying begins. The meeting ends with a song or two. This time always seems a good start to the day. Many prayers have been answered over the past 46 years that early prayer time has existed.

You are invited to pray in the library at 6:30 a.m. each Wednesday morning.

BOOK EXCERPT

BY BERYL FORRESTER

A book, written by Beryl Forrester, is scheduled to be published in this next year. Each month, until the book is printed, we will be excerpting a section of the book *Animist to Anabaptist: Pioneering the Mennonite Mission in Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal* in our newsletter.

It Makes You Weep

When Christians, whether African or from outside of Africa, get a good picture of what is happening here in West Africa in terms of who is in control of the spiritual and physical well-being of these people, and daily confront the devastation and carnage of Satan's power, their hearts and spirits respond very similarly to the way Jesus reacted when he came to live among his people.

Within days of the end of his earthly life, as Jesus was approaching Jerusalem for the last time, Luke records that "when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.'"

Time and time again as I see with my eyes and contemplate in my spirit the lostness and wretchedness of God's creation and his people in West Africa, I weep. I weep because I know that Jesus is also here weeping. His words are the same today as they were then: "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."

Another incident from the life of Jesus that compels the missionary in the West Africa setting is found in the Gospel of Matthew – "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"

Jesus' reaction to the human situation is one of compassion. He created us and knows our need to be shepherded and cared for spiritually and physically. When he sees his creation lost and helpless, far from the wholeness he created us to enjoy, he is moved to great compassion, praying that laborers will be sent out to bring shalom to his sheep.

That's what being a missionary is all about. We want to open doors for people, encouraging them to leave their brokenness and enter into the way of peace and joy which our Father God has created us to enjoy.

We are not here to impose a foreign culture on the locals; we have no desire or reason to destroy their culture and way of life. We are simply offering God's salvation, which will transform individuals and communities through friendship with God. As new believers begin to experience the joy, forgiveness, and peace of life in his kingdom, they begin to find ways to transform their culture so that the culture reflects the will of God for his people.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON SOLITUDE AND SACRIFICE

(CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

**When was the last time that you were interrupted?
How did you respond?**

April suggests a spiritual practice that I would like to pass on to you this month. Plan to spend some time by yourself this month – whether it be a few moments, an hour, a morning, an afternoon, a day. Give yourself permission to disconnect from your family and social network. Turn off your cell phone, your laptop, your television, your MP3 player, and any other gadgets. Use this time for solitude as spiritual practice. Go for a long walk, run, or bike ride, read, pray, think, cook a meal from scratch, lift weights, do a jigsaw puzzle – but plan to do it alone. If you are interrupted, ask for God's blessing and patience, and practice compassion. Then return to your time alone when you are able.

I'd love to hear your experiences with this practice.