

Fellowship Informer

Stephens City Mennonite Church

Stephens City, Virginia

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts:
and though all its parts are many, they form one body.
So it is with Christ. I Corinthians 12:1

Worshiping: 2011 Lenten Series *Shaped by Jesus*

April 3 – **Called to Light**

I Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41
What are those areas that you keep hidden from God?

April 10 – **Called to Life**

Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45
Do you believe that God can transform your fears into hope?

April 17 – **Called to Worship (Palm Sunday)**

Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 31:9-16, Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 21:1-11
Is your identity grounded in God?

Passion Week

Thursday, April 21 – **Agape Meal and Footwashing** at 6:30 P.M.

April 24 – **Easter Morning**

Sunrise Service begins at 7:30 A.M.

Breakfast at 8:30 A.M. Bob and Kelly offered to make sausage gravy with biscuits. The rest of us are invited to add juice, fruit, or anything else you want to share.

Christian Education hour 9:30 A.M. Adult classes will meet.

The youth can hide the eggs for the younger children at this time.

Easter Worship service at 10:30 A.M. We plan to have lots of songs of celebration, a reader's theater presentation of John 20:1-18, and a dramatic monologue by Mary Magdalene.

Upcoming Activities

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| April 9 | Book study: 7 P.M. at Snodgrass home |
| April 16 | Bike Hike (Details Inside) |
| April 21 | Maundy Thursday Service: 6:30 P.M. |
| April 24 | Easter Sunrise Service: 7:30 A.M. |



FRIENDS AND VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

Reader's Corner



Title: *He Loves Me! Learning to Live in the Father's Affection*

Author: Wayne Jacobsen

Submitted by: Sandra Snodgrass

What is my view of God? A loving God or a demanding judge? We often say and sing that God is love, but do we believe it? We say we are sons and daughters of a God who loves us, but do I believe it? How are we experiencing the Christian life? Is it frustrating, full of drudgery, surrounded by temptations? Or is it a fulfilling adventure that transforms me each day? This book challenged me to believe this statement from Brennan Manning: "If we take all the goodness, wisdom, and compassion of the best mothers and fathers who have ever lived, they would only be a faint shadow of the love and mercy in the heart of the redeeming God."

Catherine Marshall said, "By giving humans freedom of will, the Creator has chosen to limit his own power. He risked the daring experiment of giving us the freedom to make good or bad decisions, to live decent or evil lives, because God does not want the forced obedience of slaves. Instead, he covets the voluntary love and obedience of sons who love him for himself." God wants us to live in freedom, the freedom of children who are loved and who respond to that love. Do we truly believe God's love is able to transform people? Or do we think only fear of God and judgment will keep people in line with God's will? I believe God's love will give us greater passion for Jesus, greater freedom from sin, and more engagement with the world.

What is my view of the cross? Wayne Jacobsen explores how the cross was meant to lead us into a love relationship with God. He says, "The cross was not primarily about exacting punishment; it was about prevailing over sin's power." The cross was meant to lead us out of sin, into an understanding of God's love, and into a new life.

If I truly believe God is love, then I will also truly trust Him completely. If I truly believe He loves me, then I will be free to live in His love each day. Brennan Manning says, "You will trust God only as much as you love him. And you will love him not because you have studied him; you will love him because you have touched him." What does living in His love each day look like? It means I won't feel as if I need to perform to earn His favor. When bad things happen, I will be able to trust His love through that difficulty. I won't need to live with shame or guilt. I won't need to live in fear. I won't constantly be striving to please Him and other Christians. Phillips Brooks said, "The great danger facing all of us . . . is that some day we may wake up and find that we have been busy with husks and trappings of life and have really missed life itself. That is what one prays one's friends may be spared – satisfaction with a life that . . . has in it no tingle or thrill that comes from a friendship with the Father."

This view should also transform how we treat each other in the church. Do we try to manipulate people into serving our purposes, or are we about freeing people to live in relationship to the God who loves them? Do we put guilt on people so things will get done "in the church"? It's the pull of religion versus freedom of relationship. Do we live out of obligation or out of God's great affection for us? I hope the message we give our young people is not: "God is good; you are bad; try harder." This was the message quoted by one 15-year-old in the book. It was the message she received from her home church. This is not God's transforming message of love.

Wayne Jacobsen says, "When Jesus asked people to "repent and believe" the gospel, he was not asking them to be sorry for their sins and embrace an orthodox theology. He was asking them to forfeit their own agenda and embrace his. That's the invitation to the kingdom. It is not whether we want to go to heaven or hell, but whether we want to trust God or continue trusting ourselves." Living for God is not about our own agendas, nor our congregations' agendas, but only about God's agenda. And His agenda is about loving each one of us so much that we can't help but trust Him with every detail every day.

Easter Cookies for Children

To be made the evening before Easter

submitted by Monica Carr

You need:

1 c. whole pecans pinch salt 3 egg whites 1 tsp. vinegar 1 c. sugar
 wooden spoon zipper baggie tape Bible preheat oven to 300 °F

Place pecans in zipper bag. Let children beat them with a wooden spoon to break into small pieces. Explain that after Jesus was arrested, HE was beaten by the Roman soldiers. *Read John 19:1-3.*

Let each child smell the vinegar. Put 1 tsp. vinegar into mixing bowl. Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross he was given vinegar to drink. *Read John 19:28-30.*

Add egg whites to vinegar. Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus gave HIS life to give us life. *Read John 10:10-11.*

Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it and brush the rest into the bowl. Explain that this represents the salty tears shed.

So far, the ingredients are not very appetizing. Add 1 c. sugar. Explain that the sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because HE loves us. HE wants us to know and belong to HIM. *Read Psalm 34:8 and John 3:16.*

Beat with a mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. Explain that the color white represents the purity in God's eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed by Jesus. *Read Isaiah 1:18 and John 3:1-3.*

Fold in broken nuts. Drop by teaspoons onto wax paper covered cookie sheet. Explain that each mound represents the rock tomb where Jesus' body was laid. *Read Matt 27:57-60.*

Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven off. Give each child a piece of tape and seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus' tomb was sealed. *Read Matt 27:65-66.*

Go to bed! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven overnight. Jesus' followers were in despair when the tomb was sealed. *Read John 16:20 and 22.*

On Easter morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! On the first Easter Jesus' followers were amazed to find the tomb open and empty. *Read Matt 28:1-9*



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Reflections on MDS Trip: March 13-20 Gulfport, Mississippi



God was with us on this trip. Everyone was healthy and alert. We had safety on the road and one close call but God was with us even then and kept us safe. It was an eerie feeling to drive along the gulf and see calm waters and yet see concrete pads and peers sticking out of the ground but very few houses or buildings where those same calm waters had become a raging stormy wall of wind, water, and destruction during the hurricane Katrina.

The house we stayed in with MDS staff was nice and we were comfortable. We all took turns driving, cooking, and doing dishes, but all of us worked together and worked hard and long days. We were able to insulate the walls, hang drywall through the whole house except for the kitchen area, do one coat of mud, and do some insulating in the attic thanks to the skinny guys on the trip (Jerry, Carlin, and Rick). Jerry and Ron worked in another house for an older lady named Miss Bailey for one day. Rick also did some countertop cabinetwork for Miss Bailey. They painted her kitchen, put down baseboard and thresholds, and hung telephone and cable wires outside the house.

And of course there were lots of games of bull and rook in the evenings and during the long car rides to and from Mississippi.

One of the highlights was morning devotions where read God's word, prayed together, and focused on attitudes and why we were there, which was to give of our talents, time, and gifts to serve God and this family and help them to recover from damage done from Katrina and wind and rain. We all took a turn to lead devotions before heading out to work each day.



It's good to be home with family and church family again, but what an awesome opportunity to work as a team and to accomplish something for God's Kingdom and to make new friends that we may never see again on this earth, but hopefully in heaven where there will be no more tears, or storms, or trouble. May we continue to experience God's hope and peace here on earth as it is in heaven and to extend that to others, neighbors, strangers, and even enemies when we have opportunity.



I want to thank God for this experience, Rick for organizing it and pushing us to act on it, and for the team that went along and worked so well together. God is good!!! And thanks to our families and spouses and friends who made it possible by serving at home while we were gone. Praise the Lord!!! —Ron Snodgrass

Upcoming Events



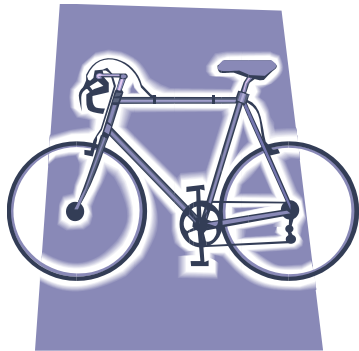
Vacation Bible School Monday June 20 – Friday 24

Theme: Taste and See: God is Good

Time: 6:30 – 8:45 P.M.

Location: Stephens City Mennonite Church

If you would like to help in anyway, please contact Malinda Kleman at malindakleman@gmail.com or Phone: 540-535-8810



Bike Hike

Date: April 16

Time: 9 A.M.

Location: We will plan to meet in the parking lot of the C&O Canal in Williamsport, Maryland. We will ride the canal going South. We will ride as long as everyone is able.

Dress in layers with a hat and gloves for the early morning breeze. Bring snacks for after the ride.

Directions to the C&O Canal: Take Interstate 81 North to exit 23 (Falling Waters/Marlowe) in West Virginia. Turn left and take Route 11 all the way to the parking lot. Contact: Kelly Phillips

Intergenerational Soul Care

Sharing God's Love: Intergenerational Faith-sharing

May 21, 2011 from 8 A.M. -10:00 A.M. at SCMC

Breakfast included along the Emmaus Walk

Luke 24:13-35

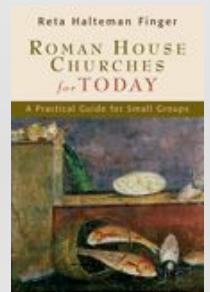
This year our soul-care event is including all ages, not only teachers. This is designed to increase our ability to share faith stories and respectfully listen to others' experiences across the generations.

Youth Gathering

Pittsburgh 2011
the Mennonite Church USA convention - July 4-9
BRIDGES TO THE CROSS

Youth are hoping to attend Youth Gathering during the Mennonite Church USA Convention July 4-9. Stay tuned for additional details and fundraising activities.

Bible Study



Bible Study coming this summer:

Christian Education is offering an exciting hands-on approach to studying Paul's letter to the Romans using the book *Roman House Churches for Today*. This class will meet during the Christian Education hour running June through August.

More details coming next month.