

NEWS & VIEWS

March 7, 2021

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Doylestown Mennonite Church

PASTOR'S PEN—

Encouraging Discipleship

For the month of March, we will be praying with Psalm 51. This psalm feels appropriate for Lent. Traditionally, Lent is a time for self-examination and confession. David certainly invites us into that practice with these words. It strikes me immediately in verse one that David pleads for mercy, not because he is a good person, not because he deserves leniency, and not because he promises to do better in the future. David pleads for mercy because he knows God and he knows God's character. **Our God is a God of unfailing love and great compassion.**

When I feel safe with someone, when I know they love me despite my quirks and faults and failings, I can more easily tell the truth about myself. I feel assured that if I tell them about a wrong I have done, they won't scold me or walk away from me. I can confess to them and they will accept me and encourage me to grow. Their love is like a safety net that catches me when I fall.

On the other hand, I find it very difficult to confess to someone when I do not feel safe with them. If I have known them to be critical or judgmental in the past, I will likely be afraid that they will be offended by my weakness or shocked at my sin and then reject me. My fear of their judgment makes me want to hide any wrong I have done.

There have been times in my life when I have been afraid to approach God in confession. I was not convinced that his love was unfailing or that His compassion was great. I realized later that because of fear, I was trying to hide parts of myself from God (as if I actually could). I would only talk to Him about

things I was thankful for or things I wanted Him to do for me or for people I cared about. But as I grew in my understanding of His deep, deep love, I began to trust God with ALL of me...even the parts I don't like. I began to see His compassion as a big, strong safety net that I could fall into and be gently caught.

Now, God's love has new meaning for me, and I am being transformed by grace and set free from old patterns and fears and anxieties. I can talk to God about my sins, confess them, and let them go. Of course, it is an ongoing journey; there is always more for me to confess and more ways for me to be transformed. **God's safety net is strong and will catch me as many times I need it to. Brothers and sisters, I am confident that it can catch you, too...as many times as you need it.**

How safe do you feel in the Presence of God? When you imagine confessing to Him, telling the truth about yourself to Him (the good and the bad), are you confident of His unfailing love for you? Do you trust His great compassion? **Ask God to reveal his unfailing love and great compassion to you this week, in new and deeper ways.**

-Pastor KrisAnne



COMING UP....SOME SPECIAL DATES

Birthdays

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Coleen Ryan | 3/3 |
| Timothy Landes | 3/10 |
| Tiyanna Landes | 3/16 |
| Alyssa Ryan | 3/16 |
| Phillip Zeo Jr. | 3/17 |
| Karen Fennell | 3/18 |
| Grace Brenneman | 3/28 |
| Randy Heacock | 3/30 |
| Matthew Ryan | 4/1 |
| Louise Beyer | 4/2 |

Anniversaries

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Jon & KrisAnne Swartley | 3/13 |
| Phillip Jr. & Hannah Zeo | 3/22 |
| Ronald & Robin Miller | 3/26 |

KAREN'S PLACE

For now, Karen's Place will not be open to the public. However, they will continue to offer events and live stream them so you can watch them live online or later at your convenience on their website or Facebook page. Scheduled for March 6 was Jim Winder with Jim Oakley, live streamed at 8 pm.



CARE TEAM REPORT

The Care Team met via Zoom on Tuesday, February 9. We began with Psalm 23 as our Biblical focus. Then we read a butterfly story, which demonstrated how each insect/person is unique and events don't necessarily follow expectations. We talked about how different people grieve. We have felt the loss of Jenni Garrido, Lester and Sara Heacock and Ruth Hart. In addition, we have lost routines like fellowship meals, hugs, Sunday School classes/discussions, church and family gatherings. Covid 19 restrictions and job loss/changes also impact us. The first verse of Psalm 23 says, "I lack nothing." How do we trust for ourselves and offer grace as we interact with those suffering from loss? Listening is important, for God's Word offers wisdom.

We prayed blessings on Russ Pride, who is leaving our church family. We hope he will be able to participate and share his musical gifts in another church family. We thank God for the gifts he shared with us while he worshiped with us.

We reviewed the draft of a Churches Care Mental Health Resource List. This will be distributed to the congregation so these opportunities can be readily available for ourselves and other suffering from mental health issues. Sandy reported a balance of \$6,000 in the Compassion Fund. This past year more Acme gift cards were needed than in previous years. Everence recently matched/reimbursed \$2,000, which DMC provided to persons in 2020. We prayed for individuals with special challenges right now. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 9.

-Freida Myers for the Care Team: Sandy Landes, Randy Heacock, Kendrick Garrido and Robin Miller

FROM THE LIBRARY- 2 REVIEWS

OF MIGHT FROM THE MARGINS

This is a timely 183-page book about empowering marginalized Christians to transform the church, described in ten inspiring chapters. The author served as a church planter working in urban ministries for almost 30 years and currently is Associate Professor of New Testament at North Park Theological Seminary. This book presents a thorough and well-written discussion of Christianity as experienced by people of color, primarily African-Americans, but also by other races and ethnicities. His timing is spot on. Many issues that he covers are critical in today's culture, especially with the recent formation of our new Mosaic Mennonite Conference, which includes Christians whose primary language is either English, Spanish, Indonesian, Creole, Cantonese, or Vietnamese. Amazon's synopsis of the book on their site states: "God has empowered marginalized Christians to transform the church. The power of the gospel is often most visible among those who have been the least respected, including racial or ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, women, and people who have been displaced from their homeland. Yet in many faith communities, these are the same people whose leadership gifts are least likely to be recognized. But the power of the gospel comes from God, not from other humans. This book is a passionate affirmation of the power already present among marginalized Christians and a call to recognize and embrace the power for the sake of helping the church become more like Christ. Marginalized Christians are already changing the face of the church. Will we embrace their power to change the church's heart?"

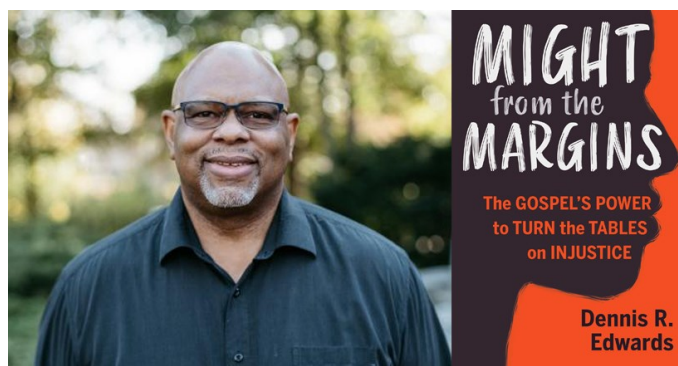
While a few of Dennis's statements conflicted with my own observations and current beliefs, I'm grateful that his comments made me think in much more depth about each one and God is still doing a work in me about those. I've been richly blessed by relationships with people from a wide variety of backgrounds during my lifetime. African American farmers supplied most of the okra, collard greens, kale and black-eyed peas to our Birds Eye plant in Arkansas in the 1960's when that area was still predominantly segregated. I worked with migrants from Puerto Rico in

upstate New York every harvest season and with Mexicans at a hydroponic greenhouse in Arizona. Native American Indians from several different tribes at our Purina pet food plants in Oklahoma and Arizona became very good friends. So did many of the Asians who worked at the Chinese, Japanese and Thai restaurants where my wife and I frequently dined.

I can positively vouch for the validity of the author's claim about the ability of marginalized Christians to transform the church. I saw that in mission trips to Peru and Bolivia where poor, indigenous people from ancient native and slave heritages accepted Christ and freely gave whatever little they had to help others. Not all African slaves were sent here to North America. Many went to South America to collect guano for fertilizer and do a wide variety of other things that Mike Rowe would never even consider doing on his Dirtiest Jobs TV series.

I'm deeply grateful for times when African Americans have reached out to help us understand how they relate to Jesus and how we should devote more time to worship Him... such a when a group from a Black Church in East St. Louis made a mission trip to our mostly White church and when a group of Black "brothers from other mothers" came out from Pittsburgh every year to lead our Baptist men's group weekend retreat at the Lake of the Ozarks. May God bless you as you read this thoughtful book.

-Karl Strauch



For Mosaic Conference-wide readers, Pastor Randy shared this review of the same book by his friend Dennis Edwards:

Transforming My Limited Perspective

Besides being one of my favorite movies, *White Men Can't Jump* accurately describes my reality. Throughout my life, I have known what it is to be leaping-impaired. When I see people who can leap, hang, and glide, as if floating in air, I certainly know their reality is far different from my own. In a similar way, I have learned that others who do not share my skin color often experience a different reality than mine in school, work, faith community, and the world at large.

In his book, *Might from the Margins* Rev. Dr. Dennis Edwards invites people of all races to embrace the gospel's power to transform humanity. From the very first page, Edwards shares openly about his experience of being marginalized and treated unjustly, yet prophetically proclaims that God's power is made known out of such experiences. In some ways, Jesus began his life as a marginalized person: born to unimpressive parents who identified with people under the yoke of Roman oppression, hung out and ate with social outcasts, and died at the hands of the keepers of societal status quo. Yet the movement Jesus began, with marginalized people and a unique understanding of power, transformed an empire.

Edwards rightly calls all people to live this robust Gospel as a way to both experience and share the salvation given in Jesus. There is no need to wait for permission or support. Jesus has already commanded and empowered his followers to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Edwards' chapter on the power of anger was especially insightful. I was raised in what I would consider a rather typical white evangelical home. While I am forever grateful for this upbringing, I learned a strong bias against the idea of anger having any redeemable qualities. Christians should control their emotions at all times. Doubt, fear, and *especially* anger were tools of the devil. People who expressed anger in any way were discounted as being less-than-Christian and certainly not worthy of our listening to their concerns. When it came to questions of justice, I found it easy, due to my training, to dismiss people whose tone had any sense of anger. It took years of unlearning and gaining a realistic understanding of Jesus' own anger before I could see how anger can fuel an appropriate Christian response. The Apostle Paul certainly teaches and models this very

approach.

Although each chapter in Edwards' book is worthwhile, the chapter on the power of worship is especially valuable. Edwards articulates a needed correction to the goal and purpose of worship. He proclaims that worship is a way of life, not an event. Based on Romans 12, Edward declares, "Worship is about following Jesus in order to understand and practice love for God and love for other people" (p. 133). It is only when we see worship as a way of life, and not an event, that we begin to allow the Gospel to penetrate our entire being.

Might from the Margins is an invitation to discipleship. With a strong Biblical foundation and a breadth of personal wisdom, Dr. Edwards shares his pastoral heart for all people to more closely follow Jesus Christ. With rich historical context and examples from lesser-known writers, this book exposed this limited white man to many more things than just my poor leaping ability....all while extending an invitation to a fuller, more hopeful future. For this, I am incredibly grateful.

REMEMBERING Margaret (Peg) Freed (1923 - 2021)

On Saturday, February 27, we celebrated the life of a dear sister known to our congregation for over seventy years and loved for her warm personality. Peg and Jake became connected to our church when they moved in 1948 to a farm nearby, further from their former church. They raised their five children here and attended faithfully until some time after they moved to the Souderton Mennonite Home.



Peg was a capable helper in Sunday School, Summer Bible School, Mennonite Women, MYF, and 4-H. Their children remember many summers of helping with the garden and preserving the produce. After their move to Souderton Peg continued to help with quilting here, and until very recently continued at Souderton and the MCC Resources Center. Memories shared at her funeral included her generous hospitality, love of playing games, and singing and whistling the songs she loved. Her family had arranged many of the beautiful quilts she made for them around the room. Pastor Joy Sawatzky shared personal memories of her and used portions from her Bible in the meditation. Her five children and their spouses, 14 grandchildren, 30 great-grandchildren, and many friends have been blessed by a life well lived.



Susie Churchmouse writes:

What a lovely time! When they got back from the cemetery the Freed family gathered here for a meal. I haven't seen such a crowd in many months and it felt good to see all those people again. The food wasn't bad, either; although I could take little advantage of the ice cream, the pretzel crumbs were just fine.

DEADLINE for submitting items to the April News & Views: March 30th

PARTING THOUGHT:

"See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land." -Song of Solomon 2:12 (Spring IS coming.)

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