

Nurture Commission Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2023 @7PM via Zoom

1. Present– **Lois Herr** (Co-Chair), **Gina Strouse** (Co-Chair), **Ellen Flury**, **Allison Mattern**, **Pastor Pam Reist**

2. Meeting Minutes–
 - a. We reviewed the November minutes as accurate.
 - b. Following each meeting, **Ellen** will send a SUMMARY of the minutes to Lois and Gina for approval. Once the summary is finalized, **Gina** will send it on to Alyssa for inclusion in the church board meeting packet of information. This allows all of the board members to be aware of our current commission work.

3. Member Roles and Expectations–
 - a. **Lois** will run our meetings as our Co-Chair.
 - b. **Gina** will report to the church board as our Co-Chair.
 - c. **Ellen** will be our secretary—for the first half of the year, at least. As Ellen will complete her term this year, it may be good to transfer the secretarial duties to someone else while Ellen is still here to answer any questions.
 - d. We made introductions all around.
 - e. There is an expectation for our members to attend the Nurture meetings the third Wednesday of every month, via Zoom, beginning at 7PM. **Lois** will send us a link.
 - f. There is an expectation that the Nurture Commission will be represented at the Monday evening monthly church board meetings. **Gina** will attend, currently via Zoom. All of us are welcome to attend, and we have the voice of two votes. **Thus, there is an opening for one additional member to attend the monthly board meetings** in order to place a vote on any motions.
 - g. The Gifts Discernment Committee is aware that Nurture is in need of an additional member.
 - h. The January church board meeting is set up as a Saturday retreat in place of the usual meeting time. All of us are welcome and encouraged to attend from 9-1 on Jan. 28th at the Young Center at Etown College. Please RSVP to Alyssa Cross, who sent us each an email invitation. We will be brainstorming the structure of our church body.

4. Online Devotional Discussion Forum–

- a. We discussed the downturn in views and low participation for the Advent devotional. Are people out and about more? Was this devotional not conducive to prompting in-depth discussion?
- b. We decided we will continue the format of **Ellen** posting a daily discussion question post with the 2023 Lenten Devotional from the Brethren Press. The author, Liz Bidgood Enders, will be preaching at our church on March 12th, so that might promote interest.
- c. We mentioned that some people missed receiving notifications of the daily posts. **Ellen** will include a directions post for the Lenten forum that mentions how to sign up for notifications.

5. Holiday Activities–

- a. Card Outreach–We verified that prior to Christmas, we sent out holiday cards to the shut-ins and others in need on the list from the deacons.
- b. *Elf* movie presentation–No one came. We thank Bill for all his preparation.

6. Faith Markers–

- a. Here is our explanatory document about Faith Markers:

Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren



Faith Markers — Passing On THE Faith

"One of the most significant ways we include children in worship is through ritual. Because young children think concretely and learn through their senses, the actions of rituals are particularly potent ways for them to experience the love of the community as well as God's love." (Marlene Kropf, "Builder," March 2001.)

1. **Rosebud** in worship service (at birth of baby) – delivered to home
2. **Baby dedication** during worship service – Gift of knotted comforter and certificate
3. **Blessing of Children** – Prekindergarten class, done annually in the spring during worship service – each child receives personal blessing and given Bible story book
4. **Library Bag** – presented to each kindergarten child – bag presented during Children's Story in worship service, also orientation of kindergarten Sunday school class. **This was discontinued prior to COVID. Another group then provided child activity bags available at the back of the sanctuary.**
5. **Presentation of Gift Bible** – grade three – done annually in the fall during worship service
6. **Presentation of Book of Heroes** (*Meanest Man in Patrick County* by Frank Ramirez) – grade five, presented on Memorial Day weekend during worship
7. **Baptism** – presentation of certificate and carnation
8. **High school graduation** – recognition in worship, gift of book *Shoes for Peace*, bag and embroidered blanket

- b. Last year, 2022, we had to skip Faith Marker book presentations, so this year, we will need to present the books to the groups that should have received them last year along with the groups that are ready this year.
- c. The springtime **Blessing of the Children**: We usually have a springtime presentation of a book to the children soon to enter kindergarten. This year, we will need to add the current kindergarteners to that group for Faith Markers because they were missed last year.
- d. We usually have a springtime presentation of a **Book of Heroes** to the children in grade 5. This year, we will need to add the current 6th graders to that group for Faith Markers because they were missed last year.
- e. We usually have a fall presentation of a **Bible** to third graders. We can either have a springtime presentation of the Bibles to the current third graders to catch up because they were missed last fall, OR we can wait until this fall and then will need to add this year's 3rd graders (who will be 4th graders this fall) because they were missed last fall.
- f. **Ellen** will contact Crystal about compiling the lists of children.
- g. **Pastor Pam** will finalize the lists with Crystal for our February meeting.
- h. **Pastor Pam** will verify that we have the correct number of books.
- i. At our next meeting, we will need to determine the presentation dates and who is contacting the children's parents to see who will be present at worship for the presentations.
- j. We will need someone to inscribe the books with each child's name and the year.
- k. We want to consider these Faith Markers as part of a **Family Ministry** to be intentional about serving young families.
- l. We would like to consider a possible luncheon for the families after church on the Faith Marker presentation Sunday(s).

7. Small Groups—

- a. We reviewed recent groups:
 - i. The book group discussing John Pavlovitz's *If God Is Love, Don't Be a Jerk*, has concluded and was successful. Linda Hope says she is willing to lead another Zoom book discussion in the future.
 - ii. The craft group is ongoing and meets at Becky Eisenbise's house, usually the last Saturday of the month.
 - iii. The Women's Together Circle is ongoing and uplifting.
 - iv. In February, Julie Keith is starting a study on bias for four weeks. The group will be referencing the book *Blind Spot*.
 - v. The TransParent Support Group is in progress. It would be great if there were a larger number of people receiving the support. We

decided that **Ellen** will ask the group if they feel comfortable with an article going in the church newsletter about it so that more people may become aware. If the group is in favor, then **Ellen** will write the article.

- vi. The *God and Guns* study about gun violence has concluded and was well attended.
 - vii. The memory loss support group continues to meet monthly as a hybrid of in-person and Zoom.
 - viii. The Women's Bible Study is thriving weekly via Zoom.
 - ix. The Men's Breakfast and Conversation is robust and is well-attended.
 - x. The Winter Walking Group is continuing.
- b. We determined that short-term groups work well for learning and building relationships.
 - c. We discussed some suggestions that have come to us about potential small groups:
 - i. Quaker 8 Groups—Groups of 8 meet in homes for a potluck and discussion weekly for about 2 months (somewhat similar to our Lenten groups in the past).
 - ii. *Younger* “Older” People Activities—Activities for people in their 50s or 60s
 - d. We discussed having a list available of small groups. An online list seems like a better idea than a printed brochure because the small groups keep changing. Perhaps a list of groups could be on a slide(s) during the offering time of the worship service? Maybe a Small Groups button could go on the website. Once someone clicks that button, they could see a listing of the small groups with live links that take them to more information about any of the groups. **Pastor Pam** will ask the office about a button for a list of small group opportunities and possible subsequent links for details on each small group going onto the website.

8. Senior Ministry—

- a. **Gina** shared from the survey results that this Senior Ministry is much needed for a large percentage of our church family.
- b. We discussed the need for additional leadership beyond Gina and Deb Ziegler, including pastoral support for this Prime Time Ministry.
- c. Perhaps at the church board retreat we will be able to share the need for a steering committee about this ministry and the need for leadership support for it.

- d. We plan to discuss the steering committee at our next meeting in February.

9. John Pavlovitz Weekend of Events–

- a. We are in favor of revisiting the pre-COVID plans with the Witness Commission to host John Pavlovitz for a weekend of events.
- b. Karen Ungemach is now the Chair of Witness. Possible contacts for information are Jim Hollinger, and Amy Karr, both previous Chairs of Witness who had worked on this idea.
- c. We would like to invite the public/community to the events.
- d. **We need a Nurture member to meet with Karen about arranging this.**
- e. Would Amy Karr also be interested as a helper? **Gina** will call Karen Ungemach to see about inviting Amy Karr to help.
- f. **Allison** offered that there might be a youth connection for a sleepover at the church in between events.
- g. We discussed the benefit of placing flyers in businesses in town to promote the events.
- h. **Allison** suggested that a feature article in *The Merchandiser* might be helpful. She has connections there that might bring a discount.
- i. Perhaps this project could be discussed at the board retreat on Jan. 28th.

10. Listening Sessions–

- a. We should read over the listening session notes prior to the retreat. They were included in an email from Alyssa.
- b. In the meantime, we should consider these questions that Gina shared:
 - i. What do we need in order to feel nurtured?
 - ii. Are we planning things that really nurture the congregation's needs?
 - iii. How can we reach out to our online congregants?

11. Online/Streaming Congregants–

- a. **Allison** will take the lead on investigating a possible Google form on the church website for online attenders to complete just as in-person attenders fill in the booklet that is passed down the pew during the offering. We are looking to collect names and contact information along with some additional demographics, such as age, location, and if they attend online always, sometimes, or for the first time.
- b. We suggested having online people participate via video for various parts of worship, such as reading scripture, presenting music, and lighting candles.

- c. Perhaps the church could offer a Q&A session about how to tune into live streaming and/or how to connect to a Zoom group.
- d. Several people have found it very difficult to hear via Zoom in the hybrid meetings. Anyone who is speaking from the in-person group but is not next to the microphone sounds very muffled to those on Zoom. Do we need to underwrite more technology/microphones?
- e. We discussed the possibility that more outreach to the online attenders may lead to in-person attendance and/or more involvement in the church.

12. The next Nurture Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15, 2023, via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Flury