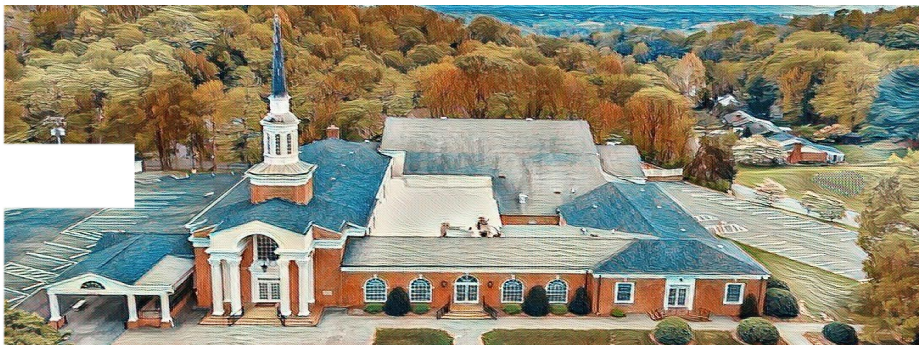


FEBRUARY 15, 2021
STAUNTON, VA



COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

From the Pastor's Desk

This week we begin our journey through the forty days of Lent to Holy Week and Easter. It was last year in Lent that we last gathered together in person as a Covenant family. It hardly seems possible that almost a year has passed since we were all together – but then again maybe it seems more than possible, for the virus has wreaked havoc on all our lives in various ways, and the church is no exception. The church is the people, and

it is people who are afflicted with this virus, people who are asked to social distance and wear masks and wash hands seemingly all day every day, people who are dying from this virus, people who are being vaccinated to ward it off.

Lent is a season for reflection and repentance, a season to pause and take stock of God's world and your place in it, a season to give up something in remembrance of what Jesus gave up for us (his life) or to take on something in a faithful way. Let me suggest that this year in addition to whatever other Lenten practices you practice, you give up one thing and take on one thing. The thing I suggest you give up is impatience. We all are impatient for this virus to leave us, impatient to get back together, impatient for our turn to come to get the vaccine, impatient for life to return to normal. Being impatient will not bring us any closer to any of those desired goals, but it will make the waiting worse and our lives more miserable and our spirits more irritable and may even push us into some hasty, ill-advised actions. *Be still and know that I am God*, says the Lord. Be still. Be patient. Trust that God is at work in this and that we will get through this!

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VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

"Lament over the City, the Community We Call Home" is lesson six in the series that is the Bible Study for Presbyterian Women, ***Into the Light, Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament***.

We pray: God of all places, help us to remember that where your people are, there you are, in towns and cities, in villages and hamlets. May we build ourselves into your city, shining your light in the world. Amen. (p. 62)

Linda Foster, PW Co-Moderator, facilitated this lesson on the church's website and she shared a [Lament for the City of Staunton](#). Here it is:

Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us.

There is discord among our city's leaders.

Persons in power make decisions and statements that create division among groups of people.

Our city's buildings stand empty, damaged by floods.

Our city streets are empty of celebrations from fear of disease.

Our people are unemployed and go hungry.

Our churches are empty; your children yearn for their church family.

The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.

Restore to us a peaceful city where your people live and work together in unity, equity, and equality.

Restore jobs and give us our daily bread so that no one goes hungry.

Remove the COVID virus from our city and the rest of the world.

Fill your churches with people who praise your name above heaven and earth.

Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored.

A prayer for now: Thank you, LORD, for bringing us this far. Thank you, LORD, for being present with us this day and in all the days to come. Thank you, LORD! Amen.



Contributions to the
Church World Service Blanket Sunday offering are welcome.

Make your check payable to
Covenant Presbyterian Church,
include "***Blanket Sunday Offering***" in the
memo line and mail or drop off your
check at the church office.

Thank you!

Congratulations, Martha Pierce, on being conferred the degree of Bachelor of Arts Cum Laude in Business Administration by Mary Baldwin University in December 2020. Great work, Martha!! PW is proud for you!!

Items for the next
newsletter are due
to Martha by
**9:00 AM on Friday,
February 26th.**

Please email her at:
covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com



From the Pastor's Desk (cont'd)

And then I suggest that you take on an intentional practice of prayer – each day, every day. Pray for the world afflicted with the virus. Pray for our nation afflicted with partisan divisions and racist rancor. Pray for our community and neighbors. Pray for your family and friends. Pray for patience for all those who are impatient – including yourself. Pray for God to deliver us! Our Covenant Lenten devotional might be a helpful resource in stimulating your prayers each day. Try it!

We hope that long before next year's Lent rolls around we will be back together in worship in person. It is hard to tell when that day will arrive, though it is unlikely to be here before these forty days run their course. So, while we wait, make good use of this Lenten time – give up impatience, take on prayer, be at peace!



YOUTH Activities

Laura Lawson

covenantyouthstaunton@gmail.com

OPEN TABLE(s)

Sunday, February 21 @ 4:30pm

This month, we are going to make food from a different culture with James! We will meet via Zoom, cook for our families, and have discussion around our tables about how even our food experiences can make us feel welcome or outcast.

Contact Laura to RSVP and get a shopping list.

Youth Group Racial Justice Study

Sunday, February 28th @ 7:00pm

We will meet via Zoom to conclude our month with a discussion about responding as a community of faith to aid in dismantling structural racism.





WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

MIDWEEK WORSHIP SERVICE (In Person)

PLEASE REGISTER AS SPACE IS LIMITED

To provide an opportunity for safe in-person worship, we offer a service of prayer, Scripture, reflection, and instrumental music in the Sanctuary each Wednesday evening beginning at 6:00 PM. The service is about a half hour in length.

There is no congregational singing or choir as current evidence indicates those have the greatest potential for spreading the virus. Masks and social distancing are required, which means we are limited to about 60 people in the sanctuary for each service. Those who want to attend will need to sign up by noon on the day of the service you will be attending. Register via the sign in offered through an opt-in email or contact Martha Pierce at 540-885-2138 or covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com.



SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

Please join us as we worship together via live stream at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday. Below is the link to the Facebook page where the live stream will be shown. The video for this Sunday's service will be in the top-left spot of the video page.

www.facebook.com/pg/Covenant-Presbyterian-Church-163891301309/videos/

STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE

Our giving for 2020 ended strong as giving exceeded our budget of \$577,558! Our thanks to all those who so generously shared their resources through these challenging times and to the Session teams who did a fine job in controlling expenses. Year-end financials are as follows:

General Fund Receipts	\$586,895
Less General Fund Expenses	-\$542,409
Less Reinvested Dividends	- \$3,302
Net General Fund	\$40,184
Preschool Receipts	\$75,231
Less Preschool Expenses	-\$96,748
Net Preschool	-\$21,517
Net Total Funds	\$18,667

We anticipated the preschool loss as we had limited spaces available due to COVID, and school was suspended for the last two months of the school year in the spring. Teachers have done a great job to maintain continuity of the program in a safe environment for children and staff alike, and we are hopeful of returning to full enrollment in the fall. In most years, the preschool has generated a surplus at full enrollment, and we are grateful for this vital ministry of our church. In addition to the above figures, there is a \$94,000 Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan which was secured in the spring which enabled us to purchase equipment and supplies to address COVID and to cover staff expenses for the church, including preschool teachers and nursery workers, throughout the year. In coming weeks we will be applying for loan forgiveness under the PPP program, and if it is approved, will have these funds available in addition to the net surplus indicated above. Our pledges for 2021 are down about \$12,000 from 2020, but we are hopeful that as we move out from under the cloud of this pandemic, we may again realize growth in our budget to support our vital ministries. Thank you for your faithfulness! God is indeed good — all the time!

THE LENTEN DEVOTION IS COMING SOON

We enjoyed hearing each other's voices so much through our Advent Devotion, that we decided to do it again for Lent! Our Covenant-written Lenten devotion is hot off the presses and ready for your perusal. You may pick up a hard copy in the vestibule beginning on Tuesday afternoon, February 16. We will also post each day's devotion on Facebook. If you would like to receive an email every morning with that day's devotion, please fill out this form (<https://forms.gle/PmpXZzaDRJbuPz788>) and we will add you to the unique Lenten Devotion-only mailing list.

ASH WEDNESDAY FIRE PIT

While we can't have our traditional service with the imposition of ashes, we would still like to offer a time for folks to reflect on the past year as well as on the season of Lent ahead. On Ash Wednesday, from 3:00 - 5:30 PM, we will have a fire pit in the north parking lot. We encourage you to write your personal transgressions on a slip of paper and stop by and place your paper in the fire. We will use the ashes from this fire for our next in-person Ash Wednesday Service. Sarah will offer personal prayer if desired.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SARAH WOLF

revsarahwolf@gmail.com

Christian Education Links are at the Covenant website: www.covenantpresstaunton.org/christian-education/

The COVID pandemic has disrupted our in-person opportunities for Christian Education learning. But all is not lost! There are still ways that we are able to come together virtually or ways that we can study God's word individually that fill some of our Christian education needs.

While we cannot meet in person, your Christian Education Team wants to be sure that you are aware of all of the opportunities for Christian Education in the coming months.

Watch opt-in emails for announcements of study opportunities.

Contact Sarah if you have any ideas for Christian Ed.

Monday Morning Bible Study

Join us each Monday at 10:30 am via Zoom online. A link to the meeting is sent out each Sunday via opt-in email.

Wired Word

Check out the Wired Word each week which provides a Christian perspective on current events. You can find the link on the church website. See link above.

Presbyterian Women's Bible Study

This year's PW study is "Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament" by Lynn Mill. Each month a different member of Covenant's Presbyterian Women group will lead via a YouTube video. The link is updated the second Tuesday of each month. Find the link at the church website. See link above.



OUTREACH

Peanut Butter Sunday First Sunday of Each Month

You can drop off your jar of peanut butter in the vestibule area just outside the church office.



FILL THE BUCKET - HELP RESTOCK THE VERONA FOOD BANK



Help feed our neighbors in need! Donations can be dropped off in the **RED BUCKET** located in the vestibule area just outside the church office.

Boys and Girls Club

We continue to participate in the Nextrex Program. ***So far we have collected 440 pounds of plastic bags to go towards a park bench.*** 500 pounds = 1 bench. Collect your bags and bring to the church office vestibule to drop in a designated receptacle, or drop off at RefillRenew, 110-1 Baldwin St. Also, we need volunteers to

help with taking the bags collected at the church to Food Lion. Volunteers will need to weigh the bags (there is a luggage scale next to the receptacle at the church), advise Robyn of the weight, and drop bags off at Food Lion. If you would like to help, you can sign up at: www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0A4AAAAE2BA6F94-covenant1

Donate supplies to Boys and Girls Club: school supplies (especially dry erase pens, lined paper, kindergarten lined paper, pencils, crayons, and colored pencils). Look for a drop off box in the church office vestibule.

Shelburne Middle School Project

Items continue to be accepted for students and their families. Assorted food items

such as cereal, packaged snacks, peanut butter, jelly, and pasta sauce are always welcome. With the move to a hybrid school schedule and most students at the school for breakfast and lunch two days a week, the more important needs have shifted to hygiene items. Donations of shampoo, deodorant, hand sanitizer, toothbrushes, tissues, etc. are now in demand. Collection boxes are located at the church in the vestibule by the office.

McSwain Learning Packets

Distribute Learning Packets to McSwain students. Drop off/Pick up packets once a week in a socially distanced manner to student homes. Contact Karen Peterson to sign up!



OUTREACH (Cont'd)

BLESSING BAGS: A Bite-Size Opportunity

In thinking of ways to be an active congregation of service to those around us, the Outreach Team is organizing a plan for Covenant to create Blessing Bags for people experiencing homelessness. As in November when we sent Blessing Bags for Thanksgiving Feasts to families at Wenonah Elementary School, we are working with Promiseland Christian Fellowship Church.

An Opt-In is coming this week with information on how to donate backpacks, specific personal items, and snacks to put in Blessing Bags for folks experiencing homelessness. The Opt-In will include a Sign-Up Genius to choose which items you would like to contribute.

The Blessing Bags will be assembled, blessed, and delivered to Pastor Rose of Promiseland Church on Sunday, March 7. She will distribute them in coordination with Valley Community Services Board.

If you are interested in donating a completely-filled Blessing Bag, contact Joan Sayers or Sarah Wolf .



Here are some excerpts from recent thank you notes Outreach has received. We thought you'd like to read the response to your gifts.

From Oliver Dahl for EVACE

Thank you for your continued support which has meant a lot this year as while COVID slowed down a lot of things our work at the clinic helped a number of patients who couldn't get to the mainland for procedures.

From Lou Siegel and residents of Valley Supportive Housing

Thanks for the renovation of our floors. They look 100% better!

From Crystal Gosnell Raphael, John, and Tom

We are excited to continue this journey into the new year and our transition to working with Commission to Every Nation. The process for acquiring land for our new venture is going well.

From Susan Richardson at Valley Mission

Thank you all so very much for this incredibly generous donation to our shelter. You all are so supportive of us—thank you! God bless you.

From Emilie Slechta Thomas at Valley Pastoral Counseling

Your donation helped make it

possible for low income and uninsured clients to obtain mental and spiritual health-care at a crucial time.

From the PCUSA

Your gift to Presbyterian Mission supports programs and projects that make a life-changing difference for individuals and their communities. Your gifts to Disaster Relief brings the selfless love of Christ to people and communities you may never meet.

The Outreach Team thanks you, Covenant, for your gifts and is glad to share a few of the responses from the agencies Covenant contributes to.



February 2021 March

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
21 10:30 AM Worship via Live Stream on Face-book 4:30 PM Youth Open Table 7:00 PM STATED SESSION MEETING	15 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 7:30 PM Book Study on Biased via Zoom	16 10:30 AM Book Study on Biased via Zoom 7:30 PM Stewardship & Finance Team	17 6:00 PM ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE (in-person & online) In-person service is limited to 60, please sign-up.	18 8:30 AM Executive Team 10:30 AM Book Study on Biased via Zoom	19	20
21 10:30 AM Worship via Live Stream on Face-book 4:30 PM Youth Open Table 7:00 PM STATED SESSION MEETING	22 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 7:30 PM Book Study on Biased via Zoom	23 10:30 AM Book Study on Biased via Zoom	24 6:00 PM Midweek Service In-person service is limited to 60, please sign-up.	25 10:30 AM Book Study on Biased via Zoom	26 9:00 AM Newsletter Deadline	27 9:30 AM Shenandoah Presbytery Meeting via Zoom
28 10:30 AM Worship via Live Stream on Face-book 7:00 PM YOUTH via Zoom	MARCH 1 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 5:30 PM Congregational Care via Zoom 7:00 PM Facilities Team in Breezeway 7:15 PM Worship Team in Fellowship Hall	2 7:00 PM Fellowship Team via Zoom	3 6:00 PM Midweek Service In-person service is limited to 60, please sign-up.	4	5	6

THANK YOUs

Thank you for the kind words, cards, and prayers for my family in the loss of my pap pap. He was an example of unending love in my life that I hope to reflect. We are blessed to be held and loved by our Covenant community.

Gratefully, Laura Lawson & family

ALL THE DARKNESS IN THE WORLD
CANNOT EXTINGUISH THE LIGHT OF
A SINGLE CANDLE

-St. Francis of Assisi



Thank you to those who wrote memories to send to our youth. Many will be blessed to read their notes.

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
John 1:5

FELLOWSHIP

Covenant's Virtual Talent Show

Share your secret talents with us!

You can recite a poem, tell a joke, choreograph a dance, sing a song, play an instrument, or show off your bike skills! The options are limitless! Record yourself and send the video to Katie Campbell at kscampbell40@gmail.com.

If you need assistance with recording yourself or your group let the Fellowship Team know and we can help. Send in your short video by Monday, March 15th. Please keep your submission to under **three minutes**. Covenant's Virtual Talent show will premiere on Facebook in April.



COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Office 540-885-2138
Fax 540-885-4399
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MINISTERIAL & PROGRAM STAFF

John C. Peterson

Pastor

Sarah Wolf

Associate Pastor

Laura Lawson

Director of Youth Ministries

Jeffrey Ryman

Minister of Music

Christopher Wszalek

Organist

Lou Dolive

Handbell Director

Joan Swift

Director of Children's Music

Mitzi White

Developmental Preschool Director

Martha Pierce

Administrative Assistant

Paul Sorrell

Treasurer

Kathy Henderson

Covenant Nurse

Cleo Holly

Custodian

**The Mission of
Covenant Presbyterian Church
is Striving to be
Faithful Disciples of Christ:
Worshiping with Joy, Growing
in Faith, Serving in Love.**

Covenant Connection is a
publication of
Covenant Presbyterian Church.
The newsletter is published bi-weekly to
inform members and friends of church
programs, news and events.
The Connection newsletter is online at
www.covenantpresstaunton.org.

COVENANT



Presbyterian
Church

2001 N. Coalter Street
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***Striving to be Faithful Disciples of Christ:
Worshiping with Joy, Growing in Faith, Serving in Love***

40 DAYS
of Lent

Ash Wednesday - February 17
Palm Sunday - March 28
Maundy Thursday - April 1
Good Friday - April 2
Easter Sunday - April 4

Create in me a
clean heart,

God,
and renew a
right spirit
within me.

Psalms 51:10. ESV