

JULY 4, 2022  
STAUNTON, VA

# COVENANT CONNECTION

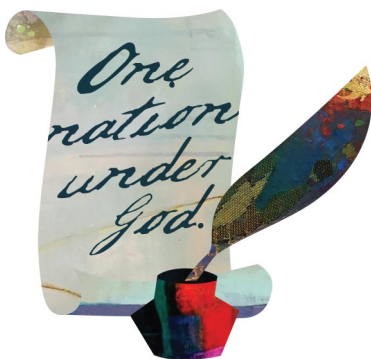
A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## *From the Pastor's Desk*

Is America a Christian nation? The answer by any measure is pretty clearly, NO! There is no reference to Jesus or God in the Constitution, and only a vague reference to "Nature's God" and "their Creator" in the Declaration of Independence. The Founding Fathers included more deists than Christians; for instance, Thomas Jefferson's revision of the Bible excluded all Jesus' miracles and omitted the Resurrection! While some Christian principles are consistent with our constitutional rights, others are less so – one can hardly imagine Jesus advocating for a right to bear arms after saying, "Turn the other cheek" and "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." The establishment clause of the Constitution specifically forbids the state establishment of any religion, and Thomas Jefferson himself argued for a clear separation between church and state. What then is the role of a Christian with respect to our nation in this week when we celebrate our American independence?

Jesus says that all the law and prophets hang on the Great Commandment: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength*, and its corollary: *Love your neighbor as yourself*. Our love of nation should never exceed that of our love for God, and if it does, it is idolatry. That said, we should be grateful to God for the blessings of living in this great land with its incredible beauty and vast resources, for God created it all! We should be grateful for the freedoms we enjoy and to those who sacrificed to preserve those

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## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK (cont'd)

freedoms for us. We should be honest and repentant about the sins of our nation, including the slaughter and oppression of indigenous people; the enslavement of Black men, women, and children; and our abuse of the land, seas, and skies entrusted to our care. While we should not try to impose our faith on anyone, we should freely share the good news and live into our faith by serving our neighbors in this nation and around the world, for "neighbor" exceeds any geographical, racial, or ethnic boundaries. We should encourage justice for all people, following the call of the prophet Micah to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." Our faith should also shape our advocacy for policies that help the poor, fight racism that denies we are all created equally in God's image, and honor ALL people.

Theologian Jim Wallis often says, "God is not a REPUBLICAN or a DEMOCRAT." Our loyalty should be to God above any party, and our politics should never move us away from faithful paths; rather our faith should encourage us to hold politicians accountable for any actions that we find unfaithful to God's call. Our relationships as citizens should be grounded in respect and a shared commitment to make our nation and world a better place not as any party or individual defines "better", but as God defines "better". No one is fully up to that task, but together we hope that as Christians living in America, we may be faithful to God's call each day, and by our example, live into that vision of "one nation under God with liberty and justice for all."

Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, July 15th.**

Please email Martha at: [covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com](mailto:covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com)



THANKS  
*from the*  
HEART

Thank you to our Covenant family for the meals, cards, prayers, and congratulations we've received upon welcoming baby Maeve! We are blessed to be part of such a special community of faith. — Joe & Katie Bowman





## **FROM FAITH'S HEART — May 2022**

(Crystal Gosnell Raphael)

We know that the news out of Nigeria can sometimes sound scary. Recently a personal friend (also a friend of the ministry) was kidnapped as he headed home from work and held for 4 days before his release was secured. Many of you saw the awful story about the massacre at the Catholic Church in Ondo State recently and reached out to check on us. Kidnappings, violent religious attacks, terrorism, armed robbery, and political thuggery have, sadly, become endemic in Nigeria. And with national elections right around the corner (2023) and the primaries concluded, we expect to see an uptick in such activities. While this may seem like a dark and heavy update, we share this with you for two reasons:

1. To remind you to pray — pray for safety for our family and our co-workers; pray for God's Truth to transform the hearts of the people of Nigeria; pray for new and effective leadership for the country.
2. To remind you to praise — praise for protection God has provided us thus far; praise for the transformations we see in those we are discipling as God works in their hearts; praise for the will and determination of the youth in Nigeria to demand better from their leaders.

Nigeria is our home; our heart for Nigeria is for all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (1Tim. 2:4)

## **MISSION CONNECTIONS — Spring 2022 (abbreviated version)**

(Sharon Kandel, Mission Co-Worker, Horn of Africa)

It had been 2 years since I visited with many of these partners, face to face. Listening. That is what my trip was all about: reconnecting and listening.


South Sudan — Listening to the struggles of a church that is in conflict with each other; everyone hurting. Listening to hopes and dreams of a united church that can be a witness to those around them.

General Assembly of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church — Listening to the opening comments and sermons. Listening to the hopes and dreams for a peaceful change in leadership. Listening to that peaceful change happen and the joy that all expressed in things going so well.

Ethiopia — Listening to all the things that the church is doing with so little funds but with a commitment to God. Listening to the success of 2 Community Health Evangelism programs (and visiting those places). It was a challenge to hear the pain in the mothers' voices as they lament the lack of education for their children. Listening as they told of the Hoekstra family who brought them the Word of God and how that family will always be a part of who they are. Listening to how thankful they are for their new synod president, a young man with lots of ideas and energy. Listening to the impact of COVID (closures, job losses, congregations no longer able to support their pastors). Depression is a real concern.

Thank you for your prayers as I travel, listen, and learn.

# JULY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>10</b> 8:30 AM Worship Service in Sanctuary 9:15AM Happy Half Hour 10:00 AM Worship Service in Sanctuary 10:00AM Worship Service via Live Stream on Facebook 11:45 AM Caregivers Group in Room 5	<b>4</b> <b>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</b> <b>COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED</b> 	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>11</b> 8:30 AM Worship Service in Sanctuary 9:15AM Happy Half Hour 10:00 AM Worship Service in Sanctuary 10:00AM Worship Service via Live Stream on Facebook 11:45 AM Caregivers Group in Room 5	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 5:30 PM Preschool Team	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 9:00 AM Newsletter Deadline	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 8:30 AM Worship Service in Sanctuary 9:15 AM Happy Half Hour 10:00 AM Worship Service in Sanctuary 10:00AM Worship Service via Live Stream on Facebook	<b>18</b> <b>COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 2:00 PM Memorial Service for Sebastian Wimmer



Children's Corner

# We Have Rails!

In 2019, Lou Dolive got Facilities in touch with another master woodworker Nevin Geiman to create handrails for the inner wall of the choir loft stairs. After a little pandemic pause, a little patience with lighting, and electrical adjustments, they have been installed. The rails blend in as though they've been there from the beginning. Many thanks to all who helped this project along.



## COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2001 N. Coalter Street,  
Staunton, VA 24401

Office — 540-885-2138

Fax — 540-885-4399

Office Hours:

Mon - Thurs, 8:15AM - 3:15PM

FRI, 8:15AM - 12:15PM



### 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:**

**Worshipping 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](http://www.covenantpresstaunton.org).



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**Pray for  
the World**

*Striving to be Faithful Disciples of Christ:  
Worshipping with Joy, Growing in Faith, Serving in Love*

**Summer**  
WORSHIP TIMES  
JULY AND AUGUST

8:30AM—Blended Service  
10:00AM—Traditional Service

**July & August  
Happy Half Hour**

Every Sunday in  
July and August at  
9:15AM by the Memorial Garden

Join us between the 8:30AM and 10:00AM services for an opportunity for BOTH services to come together for fellowship and conversation! Refreshments will be provided. Gather with old friends or make new ones!