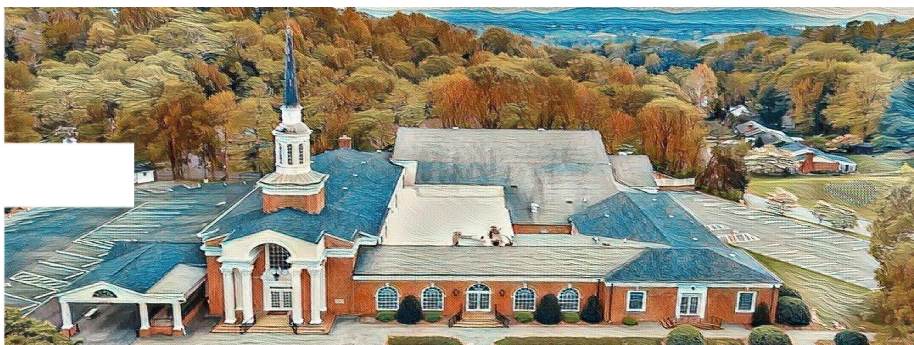


MARCH 25, 2024
STAUNTON, VA



COVENANT CONNECTION

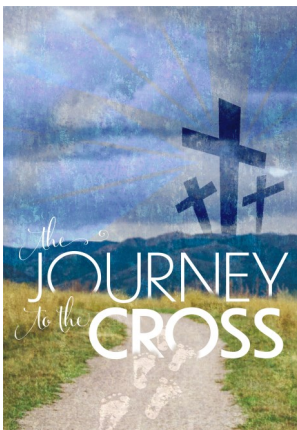
A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

From the Pastor's Desk

As we move into Holy Week, there is a temptation to rush from Palm Sunday to Easter, from hosannas to alleluias, without having to endure the harsh reality of the cross and Jesus' cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" As a friend once said to me, "The whole crucifixion thing is so depressing!" The cross IS depressing - and violent and frightening as the Romans intended it to be; it was an instrument of torture! But we cannot call ourselves Jesus' disciples without stopping there on our way to the empty tomb. We cannot appreciate the joy of his resurrection without also appreciating his suffering on Calvary. We cannot understand his call to follow him without following him to the cross, for there he showed us what sacrificial love is.

"If you would be my disciple, then deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me," Jesus says. Jesus insists that we too bear the cross as his disciples, that we follow him even when it is hard! Most of us want to be disciples without suffering in any way; we want to share the good news of Easter without recalling Jesus' agonizing death on Good Friday. We wear shiny smooth crosses as a symbol of our faith without remembering

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VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG

Serving
GOD
Together



GREETERS

MAR. 31 -

8:30 AM....Jeanne & Mick Lambert

10:30 AM....Dan Drumheller, Jonathan Griffith, Jane Wimmer

APR. 7 -

8:30 AM....Janice & Rae Rockwell

10:30 AM....Melissa Druff, Sue Morley, Janet Surratt

NURSERY (10:30 AM)

MAR. 31 - **Volunteer needed**

APR. 7 - **Volunteer needed**

COVENANT KIDS (10:30 AM)

MAR. 31 - NO Covenant Kids

APR. 7 - **Volunteer needed**

FLOWER COORDINATORS

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING

MARCH - Tom Bellamy

APRIL -- Kent Diduch

Paper & Cleaning Products Drive for Valley Mission April 7 - 21



Please help the Outreach Team with this collection drive by bringing any of the products listed below. Place products in the big white box in the vestibule area by the church office.

- Toilet paper
- Toilet cleaner
- Paper towels
- Paper cups
- Napkins
- Kleenex / tissues
- Clorox / bleach
- Pinesol
- Mr. Clean
- Sponges
- Liquid hand cleaner



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**HELPERS (age 14+) ARE NEEDED FOR
NURSERY & COVENANT KIDS
SUNDAYS DURING THE 10:30 SERVICE**

These volunteer spots are for the second adult present to satisfy our Child Protective Policy.

SIGN UP FOR NURSERY:

<https://bit.ly/3Y9CvWf>

SIGN UP FOR COVENANT KIDS:

<https://bit.ly/4b2wFxA>



Monday Morning Bible Study

Join us on Mondays at 10:30 AM

We look at the text for the next Sunday's sermon. Come dive a little deeper into God's word, share your insights, and get a head start on the next sermon.

We will meet **in person** in Room 6 **and** also offer this meeting **virtually** through Zoom. A link to the Zoom meeting will be sent out via opt-ins each Sunday afternoon.

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

that the cross was a brutal instrument of death that has been repurposed as a sign of the trust, hope, and peace we find in the crucified and risen Jesus.

Dietrick Bonhoeffer, who as a prisoner ministered to guards and other prisoners in a Nazi prison camp, spoke of "the cost of discipleship", which is to say that often it is not easy to follow where Jesus leads us. The crosses we bear are sometimes painful – figuratively if not literally – but we are called to follow anyway. Those who embrace a prosperity gospel suggest that discipleship is all rosy blessings. That is not the path Jesus walked, nor is it the path we are called to walk as his disciples! That is why the events of this Holy Week – the joyous and the painful – are important for us to recall.

This week, take some time on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday to remember Jesus' sacrifice for us before we gather again on Easter morning to celebrate the joyful, hopeful promises we hold in his resurrection. For it is all part of the story of salvation – the cross and the empty tomb – for us and for the world! Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

At its stated meeting on March 17, the Session took the following actions:

- ◆ Designated funds allocated from presbytery's 200th stated meeting anniversary to Covenant programming with the Boys and Girls Club
- ◆ Approved receiving international peacemakers for a visit to the presbytery in September
- ◆ Approved a letter to inactive members encouraging their reengagement
- ◆ Approved use of building funds for roof repairs
- ◆ Approved revisions to the preschool COVID policy to comply with revised CDC guidelines
- ◆ Approved a job description for the Covenant Preschool Director
- ◆ Approved a request for use of the church facilities for a wedding

Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, April 5th.**

Please email Martha at: covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com



EQUAL EXCHANGE SALE



The next Equal Exchange Sale is **Sunday, April 7th**. Items available are: regular coffee for \$9, decaf coffee for \$10, tea for \$4, and dark chocolate for \$3. Make your purchase between the 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM worship services and after the 10:30 service. You can place a pre-order by calling 540-290-1089 or emailing bettyandcliff@comcast.net.



FROM FAITH'S HEART — Feb. 2024 Update (Crystal & Raphael)

It's been a while since we've shared pictures of our project site where the community center will be built, so we wanted to give you a quick update. We are working hard to be able to start doing our agricultural trainings at our project site, because for our trainings to be most effective, we need to have demonstration gardens growing so people can see, with their own eyes, the effectiveness of this new method of farming.



We currently have three things going on there:

- 1) We are working with Ika Christian Mission to renovate some buildings that they will allow us to use for accommodation and lectures until we have our own buildings built,
- 2) we are preparing a 2.5-acre field using the pfumvudza method right on the project site! (in the picture you can see our guys working to get a full mulch cover on the field, and
- 3) we are making arrangements to start the fencing of the property (finally!). We have also submitted an application for some grant money to enable us to build our first building — a training hall.



With all of this going on, in addition to still holding trainings and getting ready to plant our commercial crops in May (maize, soybeans, rice, peanuts, and more this year!), we have some busy months ahead. Please pray for strength and wisdom, for the remaining funds for the fence to be provided, and that our grant application will be received favorably.

"First get your fields ready, next plant your crops, and then build your house."

~Proverbs 24:27

MARCH

APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Easter Blessings 	25 COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study	26	27 9:30 AM Yoga Class in Breezeway	28 7:00 PM Maundy Thursday Service  <i>Maundy Thursday</i>	29	30
31 EASTER 4 Cents a Meal 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream	APRIL 1 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 5:30 PM Congregational Care Team 7:00 PM Facilities Team 7:15 PM Worship Team	2	3 9:30 AM Yoga Class in Breezeway 6:00 PM Together on Wednesday (TOW) 7:00 PM Intergenerational Activity	4 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	5 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline	6
7 Presbyterian Coffee Project Peanut Butter Sunday 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:15 AM Alpha Choir 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Omega Choir 11:45 AM Outreach Team 4:00 PM Youth Apostles' Creed Walk (grades 6-12)	8 COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study	9 9:30 AM PW Coordinating Team 10:30 AM Presbyterian Women 5:30 PM Preschool Team	10 9:30 AM Yoga Class in Breezeway 6:00 PM Together on Wednesday (TOW) 7:00 PM Intergenerational Activity	11 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	12 10:00 AM Novels & Needles Book Group	13



Christian Formation Links are at the Covenant website: www.covenantpresstaunton.org/christian-formation/

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

RACHEL WATSON • (540) 885-2138
revrachelwatson@gmail.com

There will be no Sunday School on Easter Sunday. All classes resume on April 7. There is a place for everyone, younger and older, learner or leader, in Christian Formation at Covenant! Check out the opportunities below for ways to learn with us each week!

Adult Christian Formation

Sunday School | 9:30AM | Fellowship Hall | Sundays

The adults will be beginning a six-week study of the parables of Jesus on April 7. No prep is needed and all are invited.

Monday Morning Bible Study | 10:30AM | Room 6 and on Zoom | Mondays

We look at the text for the next Sunday's sermon. Come dive a little deeper into the story, share your insights, and get a head start on the next sermon. Watch for the Zoom link sent out via opt-in email every Sunday.

Wired Word | Online Resource

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

A SPECIAL NOTE FROM RACHEL—

You are invited to come join the Christian Formation team after TOW on Wednesday nights in April for some intergenerational fun. After we eat supper together (and welcome desserts back after a Lenten fast), we will gather up for worship, a Bible story, and time responding to the story in a variety of ways – through art, storytelling, play, song, and more. It's worship in a new way! The best thing about the church is the diverse group of people who are a part of it and this is an opportunity for us to get to learn more about each other and celebrate our gifts. This is a time for the family of God to gather together, to play together, and to learn together. You don't need to have a kid come with you. . .this is for everyone! We will be learning about how we all fit into the story of the people of God, young and old, energetic and tired, student and teacher, artist, singer, and joyful noisemaker, shy and outgoing, reader, scientist, and mathematician. Come wonder and grow with us!

Children's Christian Formation

Sunday School | Age 3-Grade 1, Grades 2-5 | 9:30AM | Preschool Wing | Sundays
 The children gather for stories, crafts, and activities in the preschool wing. They will begin a new unit on prayer on April 7.

Covenant Kids | Age 3 – Grade 1 | 10:45AM | Covenant Kids Classroom | Sundays
 Our youngest disciples are invited to go to Covenant Kids following the children's message to learn about the day's Bible story in an active way during the service.

Faith Explorers | Grades 4-6 | 6:30 -8:00 PM | Great Hall | April 12

All 4th-6th graders are invited to join us once a month for fellowship and games.

Youth Christian Formation

Sunday School | Grades 6-12 | 9:30AM | Youth Room | Sundays
 The youth gather for discussion and games. They will begin a unit on prayer on April 7.

Confirmation Class | Grades 8-9 | 11:45AM | Youth Room | Sundays
 This class works together to explore faith and discipleship in the Presbyterian church.

Youth Journeys | Grades 6-12 | 3:00-5:00PM | April 7

The youth group meets once a month for a special activity. All youth are invited to come participate in a labyrinth walk. This will not be your usual labyrinth – it'll have a special twist.



ONGOING 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.

Fun Fact: On average you donate over 80 lbs. of food per week. That's a lot of peanut butter!

FILL THE BUCKET - HELP RESTOCK THE VERONA FOOD PANTRY



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



BAGS TO BENCHES

THANK YOU, COVENANT! We have kept over **2866 pounds** of plastic out of the landfills, **AND** we've donated 4 benches to the Boys and Girls Club. A fifth bench is on order. Help us keep up the good work:

- Please make sure your bags are **CLEAN, DRY** and **FREE OF FOOD RESIDUE**.
- Plastic bags need to be stretchy. Look for a #2 or #4 recycling symbol (polyethylene films).
- You don't need to cut off zip tops or remove paper labels.
- Please no cellophane (as in snack bags) or metallic films (see nextrex.com for details)

WANT TO HELP? Volunteers are always needed to do the weekly weigh-in and take bags to Food Lion. Sign up at <https://bit.ly/3CzoJTW>

Questions? Contact Robyn Sommerfield at robysommerfield@gmail.com

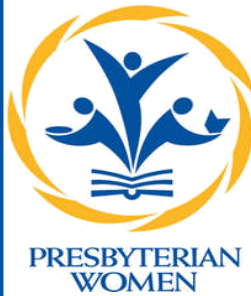


SHELBURNE PANTRY UPDATE

The **most needed items** for the pantry are **hygiene products** such as **shampoo, conditioner, liquid body wash, deodorant, and shaving razors**, as well as foods such as **canned vegetables, canned fruits, and soups**. Also, snacks that are easy for the kids to grab and eat.

Please place your donations in the boxes outside the church office or in the Narthex.

As always, thank you for helping our community's children and their families!

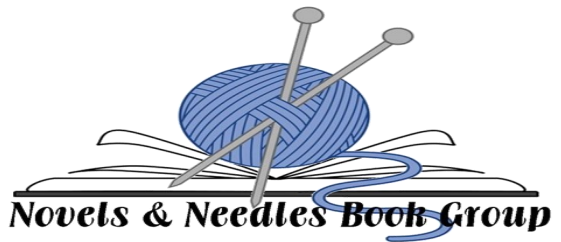


Winners of the Peoples' Choice Award:
Mary Ann Stripling,
Claire Drumheller,
Meredith Miller,
Karen Watson,
Juli Wszalek, and
Susan Wszalek
directed by
Rachel Watson!

This stalwart cast kicked off the annual Church World Service Blanket Sunday Campaign. A tour de force! Bravo! And thank you!

Contributions at this time exceed \$2000 and there are additional contributions to be counted. Once again, the Covenant Presbyterian Church family has been generous. People everywhere will be warmed and comforted because of you. Thank you!!

**Join us at the next Bible Study
on April 9th at 10:30 AM!
All women are welcome!**



Novels & Needles Book Club
will meet at 10:00 AM on
Friday, April 12th
in the Breezeway.

The book being discussed is
The Last Green Valley
by Mark Sullivan

Members are encouraged to bring
their knitting or crocheting
which could benefit
the Prayer Shawl Ministry.

***We also welcome those who
do not knit or crochet.***
Please join us!

75
YEARS



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

SUNDAY, MARCH 31



IN THIS SEASON OF LENT, we follow Jesus' example; walking alongside the most vulnerable to partner in repairing the harm inflicted upon them. WE ARE THE CHURCH, TOGETHER; and we are there with those who need us. Each gift to One Great Hour of Sharing helps improve the lives of the suffering and the vulnerable through three life-saving programs ~ Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self Development of People.

WAYS TO GIVE:

- ♦ Through our church on March 31 — note on your check "One Great Hour"
- ♦ Online at <https://bit.ly/3PwPzUa>
- ♦ Text OGHS to 91999 to give



WITH KATHY HENDERSON, RN

Kathy Henderson, RN • (540) 290-6396
covenantnurse@gmail.com
Contact Kathy with medical questions or
for a blood pressure check.

Surprising (to me) news from the Pew Research Center:
Fewer than 40 percent of U.S. teens and their parents argue about “phone time” — and only 10 percent reported arguing frequently. Even better, a quarter of the parents – and 31 percent of their children – say they never argue about phone use.

But ... almost half the teens (46 percent) said their parents were more than occasionally distracted by their own phones at times when they should have been paying attention to their children.

“How Teens and Parents Approach Screen Time,” released earlier this month, was based on Fall 2023 interviews with 1,453 U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 and their parents and includes dozens of interesting (sometimes surprising) factoids about our digital lives. To read the complete report, check out:
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/03/11/how-teens-and-parents-approach-screen-time/>



Worth noting: A 2022 Pew study showed that 95% of U.S. 13-year olds up have a smart-phone, with 97% saying they use the internet daily. Among 13- and 14-year-olds, 61% said they use TikTok and 51% said they use Snapchat. Older teens (15 to 17) use those social media platforms at higher rates, with 71% saying they use TikTok and 65% using Snapchat. To read this report, which inspired U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, to release his own report saying “13 is too young to be on social media,” read:
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>

We may be living longer.... A two-year-long decline in U.S. longevity seems to be reversing itself, a new CDC report suggests.

Life expectancy rose to an average of 77.5 years (an increase of 1.1 years) between 2021 and 2022, and the death rate overall decreased by more than nine percent, according to “Mortality In the United States, 2022,” released March 14.

Leading causes of death remained the same, although Covid dropped from third to fourth place. Top 10 (in 2022) were: heart disease, cancers, unintentional injuries, COVID, stroke, chronic respiratory diseases, Alzheimer's, diabetes, kidney disease, and chronic liver disease (including cirrhosis).

One distressing statistic emerges in the report's numbers: Our infant mortality rate increased by 3.1%, with 20,553 children younger than 1 year old dying in 2022. The report includes lots of graphs, detailing who died when – and why. To check it out: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db492.pdf>

THANK YOU FROM THE SULTANI FAMILY

Malalai and the entire Sultani family want to thank Covenant for the baby shower on Thursday, March 14th. Covenant's generosity was only outdone by Malalai's appreciation and gratitude. The fun part was explaining how to use many of the items as so many of our necessities are truly luxuries for them!!



Baby Umar came into the world on Monday, March 18th weighing in at 7 lbs., 9 oz. Malalai and Umar are doing great!

As exciting as the birth was, it couldn't compare with the excitement that Khalil, Iqbal, Dina, and Emran showed when seeing their baby brother for the first time. Baby Umar is well loved!!

Thank you Covenant for your prayers, generosity, and your kindness!



FEEDING FOLKS AT THE S/WARM SHELTER

Our church family contributed time and food to make 2 dinners for 50 people; and 3 sets of grab-and-go breakfasts and bagged lunches for 35 people. We provided food and drink for 310 meals for the people who stayed in the S/WARM shelter over 3 days. What a great way to work together to share God's love!



COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mailing Address:

PO Box 2948, Staunton, VA 24402

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2001 N. Coalter Street, Staunton

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

Rachel Watson
Associate Pastor

Jeffrey Ryman
Minister of Music

Christopher Wszalek
Organist

Lou Dolive
Handbell Director

Katherine McLean
Director of Children's Music

Miltzi 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.

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



LENTEN WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Maundy Thursday Service in the Sanctuary
Thursday, March 28 at 7:00 PM (live streamed)

Easter Services in Sanctuary:

Sunday, March 31 at 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM (live streamed)

Live streams can be viewed at

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

