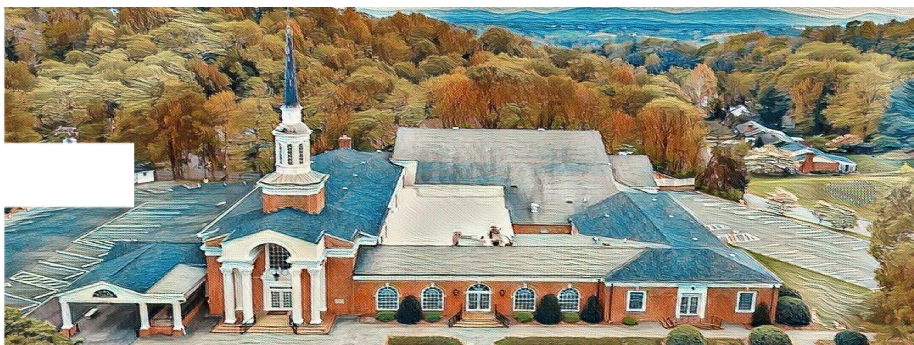


APRIL 7, 2025
STAUNTON, VA



COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

From the Pastor's Desk

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. DEI. Those words have become lightning rods in our nation and are anathema to the current administration that seems intent on punishing any organization or individuals that try to address issues around DEI. The terms mean different things to different people; for some they are essential to being a better nation as we grapple with a legacy of discrimination that cannot just be wished away! For others DEI focuses too much on the past and holds us back from being the nation they envision us being.

I chaired the DEI committee at the hospital which was formed to address health disparities identified in the COVID epidemic. In fulfilling our mission to care for the whole community, we found that within our larger community there were diverse communities that had different health needs and outcomes for a variety of reasons. For some, transportation was an issue; for some rural communities, lack of internet access made telehealth a problem; for some, language was a barrier, while for others it was stigma associated with their circumstances that proved a barrier to seeking care. DEI work helped us better understand the issues of individuals within those communities and find solutions to improve the health of folks in all the communities within our community. People could have better health outcomes and costs could be saved by understanding and meeting the particular needs of individuals before untreated health problems landed them in the ER! It was a win-win for the community!

(continued on page 3)

EVERYONE
matters



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VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG

Serving
GOD
Together



GREETERS

APRIL 13 -

8:30 AM....Janice & Rae Rockwell
10:30 AM....Sally & Jonathan Griffith,
Janet Surratt

APRIL 20-

8:30 AM....Janice & Rae Rockwell
10:30 AM....Janet Surratt

NURSERY (10:30 AM)

(sign up below to volunteer)

APRIL 13 – **Volunteer Needed**

APRIL 20– **Volunteer Needed**

COVENANT KIDS (10:30 AM)

(sign up below to volunteer)

APRIL 13 – **Volunteer Needed**

APRIL 20 – **Volunteer Needed**

FLOWER COORDINATORS

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING

APRIL — Kent Diduch

Welcome,
New Member



On Sunday, March 30, Covenant welcomed new member Don Netschke, pictured here with John and Don's wife, Bobbye Kimbrough.

VALLEY MISSION COLLECTION UPDATE

Thank you to all for your willing support and care of the people at Valley Mission. We pray that through our giving they may know the love of our risen Lord and His support for them to recover and thrive again.

We gathered the following:

- ◆ Personal Hygiene:
 - ◆ 4 toothbrushes
 - ◆ 10 little toothpaste tubes
 - ◆ 20 personal deodorants
 - ◆ 24 bars of soap
 - ◆ 13 family-size bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and lotion.
- ◆ Housekeeping Supplies:
 - ◆ Several jugs of laundry detergent
 - ◆ a couple of bottles of dishwashing liquid
 - ◆ 24 scrubbing sponges
- ◆ Paper Products:
 - ◆ Bundles and bundles of various sizes of paper plates and cups - counting stopped when it began to look like there was enough to serve the 5000
 - ◆ 90 rolls of toilet paper
- ◆ Family Care:
 - ◆ 5 cases of Huggies
 - ◆ several boxes of pull-ups
 - ◆ wet wipes



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED in Sunday School, Covenant Kids, & Nursery

Our Children and Youth Protection Policy requires that we have two adults (present whenever we are working with kids. This helps keep our kids and our volunteers safe. We have a fantastic team of Christian Formation program leaders that work hard to prepare for our kids, but we simply cannot provide these programs without help.

SIGN UP HERE:

<https://bit.ly/3Z80CXM>



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK (cont'd)

For Christians, DEI is at the heart of the Gospel. In the creation stories in Genesis, God makes clear that the **diversity** of creation is a good thing to be celebrated. Paul lifts up the diversity of spiritual gifts as a blessing to be cherished, not lamented. All gifts are important without exalting one over the others. At times such diversity provoked fear of "the other" who is different; Jesus broke down those barriers and calls us to repent of our own prejudices and actions that fail to recognize our common creation as children of God.

Equity is fairness. Jesus goes out of his way to emphasize that fairness may demand more than equal treatment. Sinners great and small are forgiven. The prodigal son is loved and welcomed home by the same father who seeks out the loyal son who stayed by his father's side. The rich are to share with the poor, and the stranger is to be welcomed as a neighbor. "The first shall be last and the last first" may sound unfair to our ears, but in God's eyes it illustrates how God's priorities differ so radically from those of the world. Jesus is interested in persons where they are with a view toward all being saved, recognizing that may involve helping different people in different ways.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasizes **inclusion** – welcoming those on the margins of society, showing love toward those considered unlovable, including those who were excluded by the religious, cultural, and political powers. God's love is an inclusive love for all! And repeatedly Jesus encourages us to repent of the sins of the past, not ignore them, and commit to a better future together as God's faithful people.

We who are called to be Jesus' disciples are called to practice God's kind of DEI – in Micah's words: to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God; to love God with all that we are and to love all our neighbors as ourselves. Maybe that is not the way you have thought of DEI; but if you would be Jesus' disciple, then you ought to embrace God's DEI with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love – regardless of what the political powers may say! For, at the heart of God's DEI and Jesus' calling is love – love for God and for our neighbors, one and all!



Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, April 18th.**

Please email Martha at: covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com





We are so excited, and here's why!

March 17, 2025
kicked off the very
first Decapolis/EFI
Nigeria 5-day
training of trainers!
This group of 19
farmers success-
fully implemented
the regenerative
agriculture training
they received in
2023 and 2024

and were selected to continue their path to becoming certified trainers. After a long week of review of the basics, additional training in alternative crops and vegetable gardening, lessons on asset-based development and agriculture as ministry, and opportunities in the field and in the classroom to practice teaching, they all received their International Certificate in Conservation Agriculture from Dordt University. The final step in their journey to becoming independent trainers will be for each of them to co-host a training or two with us. This is the beginning of the next phase of our ministry – allowing us to reach all of Nigeria – more effectively and efficiently – with regenerative agriculture and the redemptive message of Christ. This will also help to ease the burden of training on us and give us the opportunity to begin developing our permanent project site and building up other aspects of the ministry. We are so grateful for your prayers, encouragement and support during this growth, and we ask that you also keep all our new and upcoming extension workers in your prayers as well. It's all for His glory! Click here for a photo album of some of the highlights of the week: (<https://bit.ly/March2025ToTAlbum>).

"...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." 2 Timothy 2:2

Editor's Note: Covenant supports Decapolis through our Outreach budget and Glorious Gifts.

checks: Commission to Every Nation
PO Box 291307
Kerrville, TX • 78029-1307
online: www.cten.org/crystalraphael

Helpful links to follow Decapolis
Community Development Center:

[FACEBOOK](#)
[WEBSITE](#)
[YOUTUBE](#)
[EMAIL](#)

OPPORTUNITIES to SHARE GOD'S GIFTS with GOD'S PEOPLE



COOKING

TRINITY NOON LUNCH
VERONA COMMUNITY CENTER
WARM MEALS
COOKIES FOR GEMEINSCHAFT (once a quarter)
COOKIES FOR MEMORIAL SERVICE RECEPTIONS
TAKE THEM A MEAL (Opt-in for church members)
TOW DINNERS & FELLOWSHIP DINNERS



GARDENING

JONES GARDEN
CHURCH MEMORIAL GARDEN



READING/TEACHING

COMMUNITY CHILDCARE CENTER
SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES



DRIVING

RECYCLING PLASTIC BAGS
MEALS ON WHEELS
DELIVERY for special collections
DRIVING CHURCH MEMBERS to appointments or church



VISITING

GEMEINSCHAFT LADIES LUNCH
VERONA COMMUNITY CENTER



BUILDING/REPAIRING

RENEWING HOMES
CHURCH REPAIRS



CREATING

CONNECTION ARTICLES, BULLETIN BOARDS,
SPEAKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

WARM Shelter Report

We were prepared to serve Three days of breakfast, lunch and dinner (9 meals for 30 people = 270 planned and provisioned meals).

Covenant volunteers included:

- ◆ 20 Covenant members who planned to prepare and serve meals
- ◆ 22 Covenant members who provided foods for breakfasts and lunches and dinners

Unfortunately for us, the WARM Shelter closed Friday morning, March 29 instead of Monday, March 31. We were unable to serve six meals.

However, we were able to give all the donated foods to the VALLEY MISSION, where it was graciously and gratefully accepted.

THANKS to all who contributed to helping the WARM Shelter and to helping people without homes in our community.

ONGOING OUTREACH

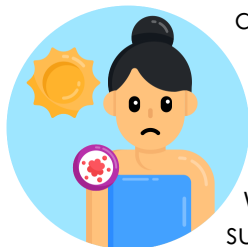
- ◆ Peanut Butter Sunday (first Sunday of each Month)
- ◆ Verona Food Pantry Collection
- ◆ Plastic Bag Collection
- ◆ Shelburne Pantry Restock

Any questions about the Outreach Team, contact Team Chair Joan Sayers.

Dad gum it. Mom was right again: Chewing gum is not a good idea. A pilot study released last week indicates that as many as 637 microplastics per gram (about one stick) might be released when chewing either synthetic or plant-based gums. (Brand names were not noted.) Researchers found four main plastics in participants' saliva, with polyolefin being the most common. Although polyolefin is FDA-approved as "food-safe" and used as shrink wrap for meats and other foods, studies have indicated that Micro plastics have begun to breach the blood-brain barrier, with as-yet-unknown long-term effects. But we needn't worry too much – yet – the project's principal investigator assures us. "Scientists don't know if microplastics are unsafe to (people) or not. But we know we are exposed to plastics in everyday life, and that's what we wanted to examine here."



Skin cancer alert. Sunlight is good for our physical and mental health. It also causes all sorts of problems, including cancer in spots we don't normally expect. In addition to the "usual suspect" spots – face, outer ears, scalp, arms, back, and chest – WebMD suggests checking under your fingernails, eyelids, tongue, and lips. The whites of your eyes – as well as your irises – may also be affected. Other spots include your inner ear, the soles of your feet, and the palms of your hands. We all "know," of course, to be faithful in our use of a broad-spectrum sunscreen with 30+ SPF. But even with sunscreen, many common medicines cause photosensitivity. Included: NSAIDs like Naproxen (ibuprofen, however, is OK); anything with Retin-A, diuretics like HCTZ; sulfonylureas used in diabetes treatment; amiodarone for heart arrhythmias; medicines with quinine; Claritin and other antihistamines. A more comprehensive list can be found at GoodRx or Drugs.com. The American Academy of Dermatology Association (AAD) recommends annual dermatology visits starting in our early 20s. AAD has several excellent, downloadable "infographics" on topics ranging from "How to SPOT Skin Cancer" to a "Mole Map" and "How to Select Sunscreens." Find them at: <https://www.aad.org/public/public-health/flyers-posters>



Anybody home? When the Department of Health and Human Services cut its 82,000-member workforce by 25 percent last week, I decided to see if the front office information folks I speak with had been affected – or had been charged with putting a positive spin on behind-the-scene events. The results? At the National Institute for Aging (NIA), a polite voicemail promised a quick call back. (I'm still waiting) At the CDC, someone answered but insisted I was "media" and needed to email questions – and to expect a two-week wait for responses. At the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), a real person answered and told me printed materials are not currently available – and no one knows when the problem will be sorted – but I was welcome to call back and check anytime during business hours. Hmmm . . .






SUNDAY, APRIL 13
@11:45 AM

EGG HUNT & BRUNCH



**Bring your favorite
breakfast casserole,
quiche, fruit salad, or
lunch food to the potluck
brunch in the Great Hall**

Egg Hunt begins at 12:45 pm.
There will be games and activities for ALL ages
during the potluck and the egg hunt.





**FUN
FOR
ALL
AGES**
(PLAYERS &
SPECTATORS
NEEDED)

Kickball & Tailgate

Sunday, April 27
2:00 PM

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Tailgate with us
on the front lawn.
Bring a savory or
sweet snack/dessert
to share. Covenant
Fellowship will
provide popsicles,
lemonade, and
water!

Kickball will be on
the field across the
street. We will
gather with other
churches in the area
for fun & fellowship.
Be sure to bring a
chair and/or
blanket.

PARENTING & FAMILY

Come learn about how to help nurture our children's and youth's emotional and mental health, some practical tips for encouraging faith formation at home, and how we are already more equipped for this work than we think. Anyone can come to this class and learn how to be a church parent for all the church children.

Sundays,
April 27, May 4, 11, & 18
@ 9:30 am
Middle School Classroom



MORE INFO?

Contact Rae Watson
revrachelwatson@gmail.com

SUMMER

Dinner Groups Begin Soon

How do dinner groups work?

- Groups are made up of eight people (singles or couples); you don't have to be a church member to join a group.
- Each couple/single will take turns hosting either at home, in a restaurant, or another location.
- The group divides the work by bringing a dish; the host provides the main course.

DEADLINE TO SIGN UP IS APRIL 20

SPECIAL OFFERING ON APRIL 20

Repairing the breach

ISAIAH 58



Please give generously—
for when we all do a little,
it adds up to a lot.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

This Lenten season, please give generously to One Great Hour of Sharing.

WAYS TO GIVE —

- + Through your congregation
Make checks out to Covenant and designate "One Great Hour" on memo line
- + Online at pcusa.org/give-oghs
- + Text OGHS to 91999 to give

-or-







You can help sustain the important ministries and programs that are supported by One Great Hour of Sharing Offering by making an online gift at any time throughout the year. Checks may be sent Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); P.O. Box 643700; Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700.

Thanks to your heartfelt gifts, One Great Hour of Sharing currently supports projects in over 100 countries.

IF WE ALL DO A LITTLE, IT ADDS UP TO A LOT!

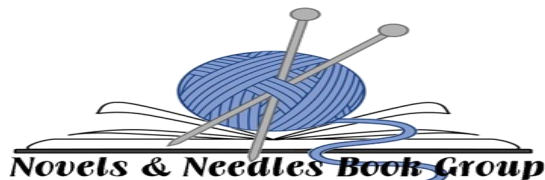
To learn more about how your gift to One Great Hour of Sharing makes a difference, visit pcusa.org/oghs

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	7 COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 5:30 PM Congregational Care Team 7:00 PM Facilities Team 7:15 PM Worship Team	8 9:30 AM PW Coordinating Team 10:30 AM Presbyterian Women 5:00 PM Preschool Team 7:00 PM Stewardship & Finance Team	9 9:30 AM Yoga Class 5:00 PM TOW Talks 6:00 PM Together on Wednesday (TOW) 7:00 PM Taizé Service	10 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	11 9:00 AM Executive Team 10:00 AM Novels & Needles Book Group	12
13 PALM SUNDAY 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM BRUNCH & EGG HUNT 4:00 PM Technology Committee via Zoom 7:00PM STATED SESSION MEETING	14 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study	15	16 9:30 AM Yoga Class	17 7:00 PM MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE 	18 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline 6:30 PM Middle School Manna 	19
20 EASTER 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM CareGivers Group	21 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 7:00 PM Personnel Team	22	23 9:30 AM Yoga Class	24 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	25	26
						



NEXT MEETING:
Tuesday,
April 8th,
10:30 AM in the
Breezeway
Facilitated by
June Shipplett

Somewhere, some time, Church World Service workers will engage with people who are experiencing a traumatic event. One of these workers will enfold someone who is afraid or cold in a blanket. You make that possible! Your generous Blanket Sunday Offering was \$2752 and that purchases blankets that provide comfort and warmth. Thank you for your gift and for your love of people whom you do not know, but who know that you care!



Novels & Needles Book Club
 will meet at 10:00 AM on
 Friday, April 11th
 in the Breezeway with
 Peggy Roberson, discussion leader.

The book being discussed is
The Lion Women of Tehran
 by Marjan Kamali

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!



CareGivers will
 meet immediately
 after the 10:30 service on
Sunday, April 27th
 in Room 5. Anyone caring for
 a loved one who would like
 to talk with others in similar
 situations is invited to come.

For more information,
 please contact Ruth Arnold.



Sunday, April 27th
at 11:45AM in Room 5.

We continue to explore ways to
 work through the emotions,
 experiences, and questions
 of grief in order to move forward.

We hope you can join us!

We meet on the 4th Sunday
 of each month immediately
 after the 10:30 service.

Please contact Eileen Cooper
 if you would like more information.

During the week of March 15-22, Covenant hosted a group of students from the University of Maryland during their Alternative Break Program. These students spent the week developing basic construction skills while helping Renewing Homes of Greater of Augusta.

Thank you so much for your grace, hospitality, and generosity. May God Bless you all!

- Victor

I am so grateful for your generosity and kindness. Staying at Covenant has been such a welcoming and fun experience for us all, and we all really do have you to thank for that. Getting to know the local community has also been very rewarding and I'm sure we will all remember the incredible memories we made here. I wish you all have a healthy and happy rest of the year!

-aarushi v



Ciarra!!

Dear Pastor John and the church family, thank you all so much for accommodating us during Spring Break!

Just a note to say

Thank you so much.

Waymon Duncan

Alina

Yuan &

Carolina

MARYLAND
TERRAPINS

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mailing Address:

PO Box 2948, Staunton, VA 24402

Physical Address:

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

Mitzi White

Developmental Preschool Director

Martha Pierce

Administrative Assistant

Debby Bibens

Financial Secretary

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.



PO Box 2948
Staunton, VA 24402

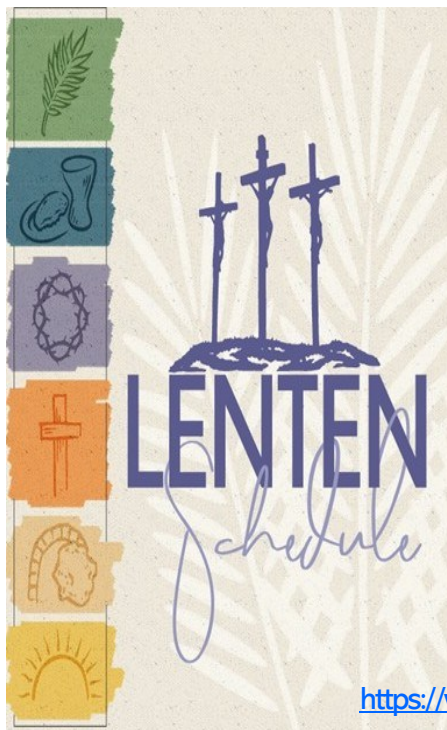
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MATTHEW 25

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



Lenten Taizé Service in the Sanctuary
(no live stream)
April 9 at 7:00 PM

Palm Sunday Services in the Sanctuary:
Sunday, April 13 at 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM
(live streamed)

Maundy Thursday Service in the Sanctuary
Thursday, April 17 at 7:00 PM
(live streamed)

Easter Services in Sanctuary:
Sunday, April 20 at 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM
(live streamed)

Live streams can be viewed at

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_2d6A2fCHNPM03MmXFFY5w/live