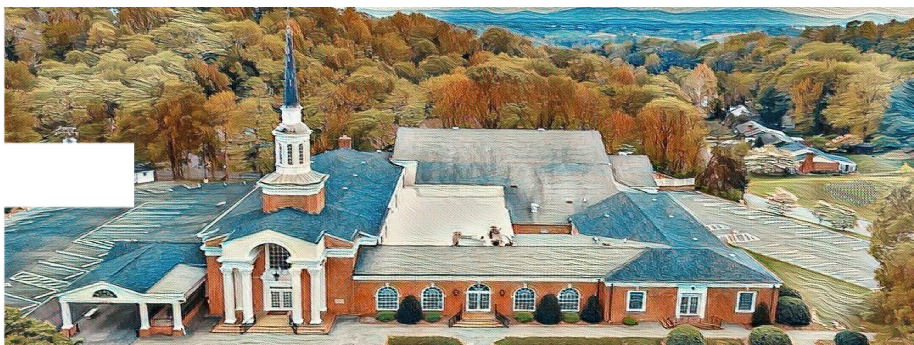


SEPTEMBER 22, 2025  
STAUNTON, VA



# COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



**BE LOVING IN  
EVERYTHING  
YOU DO!**

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## *From the Pastor's Desk*

The death of Charlie Kirk has sparked continuing vitriol and anger across the nation these days. To some he is a charismatic figure who inspired young people to embrace a conservative agenda and refused to back down from controversial stands. To others he was a firebrand whose racist, misogynistic, confrontational rhetoric fanned the flames of division across the country. In some corners he is a martyred saint, in others a bigoted sinner. No one should be celebrating his death, recklessly casting blame, or using his death for political purposes – yet there are echoes of all those divisive actions echoing across the country.

What is too easily lost in all the political rhetoric, rancor, and spurious allegations is a family grieving the loss of a husband and father. While Charlie loudly derided empathy as weakness, Jesus saw empathy as a virtue, and we who follow Jesus should empathize with his family in their loss – mourning with those who mourn – and holding them in our prayers. We should also seek to offer a faithful alternative to the violence and retribution which so many, including some leaders in our nation, are advocating.

Jesus asks of us some hard things, including loving our neighbors and enemies and praying for those who persecute us. He calls us to forgive rather than seek retribution or revenge. Yet the loudest voices in our nation are renouncing Jesus' "weak" way and vowing revenge. We are called to do

*(continued on page 3)*

VISIT US ONLINE AT  
[WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG](http://WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG)

*Serving*  
**GOD**  
*Together*



#### **GREETERS**

SEPTEMBER 28 -

8:30 AM....Cindy Bowman

10:30 AM....Sally Griffith

OCTOBER 5 -

8:30 AM....Becky & Chris Earhart

10:30 AM....Sally Griffith

#### **FLOWER COORDINATORS**

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

#### **CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING**

SEPTEMBER — Craig Whitacre

OCTOBER — TBD

**THANKS**  
*from the*  
**HEART**

Covenant Presbyterian Family:

You all were such a special part of my parents' years in Virginia and we are so grateful for you. It is an honor to have them remembered in your Memorial Garden. Many blessings, Christy (on behalf of the Richard Esther family)

#### **NOTE TO OUR VISITORS!**

If you have been visiting in person or online and are interested in learning more about Covenant, our ministries, or membership, please give John Peterson a call at 540-885-2138.



*Saturday, October 25th  
from 9:00 am to noon*



**Sanctuary**  
*flowers*  
**SIGN-UP**

Provide flowers in memory or in honor of someone, or just to decorate the sanctuary. Directions are given on the sign-up form. Please sign up at <https://bit.ly/3MD9wXO> at least two weeks before your desired date.

Questions? Contact Susan Polly or Christy Davis.

**Ushers/Greeters  
Needed**



Help is always needed!  
If you are available at the 8:30  
or 10:30 service, please sign-up at  
<http://bit.ly/3KPmamT>

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

better, to be better, and to follow the example Jesus offered us. In the current charged political environment, that can be a hard thing to do. Our Christian faith is under attack from the left among those who deny that it is relevant to our 21st century world and from the right among those who corrupt the Gospel to align with their political agenda (like Christian nationalists) and those who want to impose their judgmental brand of Christianity on the rest of us. Amid those dissonant voices, we are called to stand strong in our faith and in faithfulness – to resist the urge to retaliate, point accusatory fingers, or fan the flames of hate and division. We are called to love one another through and across the great divide which exists in our nation.

That does not mean that we should tolerate injustice; in the prophet Micah's words, we are to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." Those are not alternatives from which to select, but actions that are to be integrated so that we do justice **while** practicing kindness and walking humbly with God each step of the way. It is that path of just, kind, humble, loving action that will lead us through these turbulent days to better days ahead. May God grant us strength on that journey, and may God bless us so that in and through our lives we may be a blessing to one another, to our nation – and to God.



## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

At its stated meeting on September 21, the Session took the following actions:

- ♦ Elected Tom Bellamy and Cindy Bowman as commissioners to the November meeting of presbytery
- ♦ Approved preschool pictures with proceeds going to the Nancy Summers Scholarship Fund
- ♦ Received a preliminary "dream" budget for 2026 in the amount of \$715,000
- ♦ Approved a mission fundraiser with purchase of toys for needy families by youth
- ♦ Discussed the appropriate size and structure of the Session moving forward and decided to continue with 21 elders in 3 classes of 7

### Nancy Summers Scholarship Fund

Through scholarships, our preschool supports children who could not otherwise afford to attend here. This year the needs are greater than the scholarship funds provided by Outreach in the annual budget. The Nancy Summers Scholarship Fund provides additional assistance to meet these needs, but it too is being depleted. If you would like to help provide scholarship assistance for such children, please make a contribution to the Nancy Summers Scholarship Fund; gifts can be made online or through checks payable to Covenant with "preschool scholarship" in the line item. Thank you! — The Preschool Team

Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, October 3rd.**

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







# CHRISTIAN FORMATION

**RACHEL WATSON** • (540) 885-2138  
[revrachelwatson@gmail.com](mailto:revrachelwatson@gmail.com)

There is a place for everyone!  
Come grow in faith with us!

Christian Formation Links are at the Covenant website:

[www.covenantpresstaunton.org/christian-formation-opportunities/](http://www.covenantpresstaunton.org/christian-formation-opportunities/)

## A Note from Rachel –

Our Christian Formation ministries are off and running! On Rally Day, we celebrated baptismal milestones with 4 second graders, 5 sixth graders, and 13 new confirmands! After church, we played in the water with a slip and slide and water games! Now, our classes are settling in for a year of study.

Our elementary classes will be studying the stories of relationships in the Bible and the way they help us understand how we should (and should not) live in community with each other. Our new class, Up Next, is a bridge class from elementary to youth with our fifth and sixth graders. This year, they are diving into worship, asking why we do the things we do and how they can be an active participant in the worship of God. Our youth are working through a curriculum called Holy Disruptions that's engaging them in big questions through the lens of scripture and theology. Their first unit is exploring what it means to be holy.

Adults now have two options for Christian formation. The Follow Me class is back in session and having way too much fun in the Fellowship Hall as they explore communion and celebration in the church. Upstairs, adults can explore a bunch of different topics over the course of the year. First up is Spiritual Gifts with Teri Summers-Minette. Come discover the many ways we have been gifted and how those gifts can bloom and produce fruit in the church and world. And, as always, coffee and conversation are flowing freely in the breezeway...if you're looking for a quiet space to collect your thoughts, come join us there.

Acts 2:42 tells us that the earliest church community devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to prayer. This thing we do, growing as disciples of Christ, is multifaceted. We worship, we learn, we serve, we gather together, and we pray. This year, I encourage you to find a place within the Christian formation ministries where you are fed, watered, and encouraged to bloom and grow in faith.

### CHILDREN & YOUTH SUNDAY CHRISTIAN FORMATION

**Nursery** | Birth – Age 3 | Nursery |  
9:30-11:45AM

**Growing Together** | Age 3-Grade 4 |  
Preschool Wing | 9:30-10:15AM

**Up Next** | Grade 5-6 | Education Wing |  
9:30-10:15AM

**Holy Disruptions** | Grades 7-12 |  
Youth Room | 9:30-10:15AM

### CHILDREN & YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

**Faith Explorers** | Grades 3-5 |  
Fellowship Hall | Second Fridays |  
6:30-8:00PM

**Middle School Manna** | Grades 6-8 |  
Fellowship Hall | Third Fridays | 6:30-  
8:00PM

**High School Mini-Missions** |  
Grades 9-12 | Great Hall | Typically  
Third Saturdays | 9:30-11:00am

### ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

**Follow Me: Discipleship Study** |  
Fellowship Hall | Sundays | 9:30-  
10:15AM

**Faith and Life** | Room 5 | Sundays |  
9:30-10:15AM

**Monday Morning Bible Study** |  
Room 6 | Mondays | 10:30-11:30AM

**Presbyterian Women** | Breezeway |  
Second Tuesdays | 10:30-11:30AM

**Act III Older Adult Ministry** | Chapel |  
Fridays | 10:30-11:30AM



## HOST, HELPERS & DESSERTS NEEDED

**October 8 - December 3  
6:00 - 7:00PM**

**For each TOW, we need one  
host and two helpers to  
assist with clean up.**

Each week, we need one person (or a team) to host the dinner. You may choose to cook the meal or arrange catering and be reimbursed for the costs. The hosts come a little early to ensure everything is set up, the food is prepared, and to make a salad.

Also needed are two people to assist with clean-up.

We also need people to sign up to bring desserts.

If you have any questions, contact Seth Ward.

Sign up at:

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

or call the church office  
(540-885-2138).



**Wednesdays at 6:00 pm  
in the Great Hall**

**October 8 - December 3**

(no TOW on November 26)

**Menu is Host's Choice**

Make a reservation by noon on the Monday before the TOW you plan to attend so we know how many to prepare to feed.

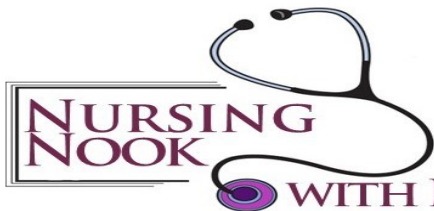
Sign up online at

<https://bit.ly/45WuRps>

OR sign the Friendship Pad on Sunday

OR contact the church office  
at 540-885-2138.





Kathy Henderson, RN • (540) 290-6396

[covenantnurse@gmail.com](mailto:covenantnurse@gmail.com)  
Contact Kathy with medical questions or  
for a blood pressure check.

WITH KATHY HENDERSON, RN

**Does food affect adolescents' mental health?** Oh yes, both parents and scientists say. "Between crazy schedules that inhibit shared family meals and encourage fast food and all the energy drinks (adolescents) are sure they need, it's rough (and) I definitely think it affects mental health. (We see) signs of moodiness when (they don't eat well) for several meals," one parent said. And. . . "Yes, (food) affects their mood, and it's almost immediate. The obvious ones: high sugar and red dye (which) cause hyper activity and low impulse control. . . (leading to) a crash/burnout," said another. More than a decade ago, the American Journal of Public Health suggested "a significant, cross-sectional relationship between unhealthy dietary patterns and poorer mental health in children and adolescents." And then. . . little more was said until last year. The prefrontal cortex and hippocampus in adolescents' brains — the areas that influence impulse control, learning and memory — "are especially vulnerable to environmental insults, such as a poor-quality diet," according to a study published in a recent issue of *Neuropharmacology*. "Habitual feeding behaviors developed throughout adolescence may impose lasting changes in brain circuitry, which impact (mental) health throughout the lifespan." The culprits? Junk (and other ultra-processed) foods that contain high fructose corn syrup, various dyes, high levels of fat or sugar. Given that an estimated 63 percent of 11-20 year old Americans admit to eating large quantities of fast/junk food, this is a scary conclusion. For more information, read "Adolescent nutritional influences on the brain: implications for eating behaviors," available in print, on my office desk. Or try the easy-to-understand recap of current research into the connection between food and adolescent mental health, in the blog section of Colorado therapist Michael Vallejo's website.  
<https://mentalhealthcenterkids.com/>

**Absolutely worth spending a day in class: MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID and YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**, from Valley Community Services Board (VCSB).

**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID:** 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Thursday, Oct. 9 — offered (and well-attended) here several years ago -- lives up to its promise that it will help "individuals. . . recognize and provide initial help to (adults) experiencing mental health of substance abuse challenges." The presentation/class uses role play, humor, and empathy to demonstrate appropriate responses to mental health crises.

**YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID:** 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Thursday, Dec. 11 is for any adult who spends time with young people. It "focuses on identifying and supporting young people in non-crisis and crisis situations." (Note to grandparents: This is a great way learn more about what's going on in the lives of your beloved young ones.)

Both classes will be at Embrace Community Center (932 Fir St Waynesboro); must be 18 or older to attend. Preregistration is required. Participants must attend a two-hour pre-session virtual class. To register online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/K58Y5S6>  
You also may call or email VCSB Prevention Services Supervisor Erin Botkin. Tel: 540-213-7599, or email [ebotkin@vcsb.org](mailto:ebotkin@vcsb.org).

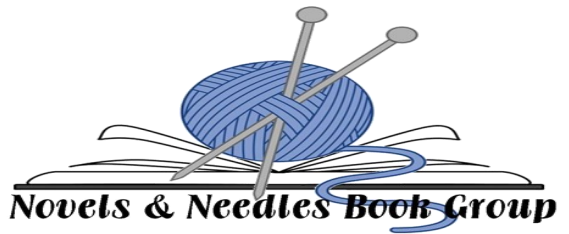
SEPTEMBER				OCTOBER			
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
 <b>First Day of Autumn</b> <b>SEPTEMBER 22</b>	<b>22</b> Covenant Connection Published 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study  7:00 PM Planning Meeting for Presbytery	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 9:30 AM Yoga Class	<b>25</b> 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	
<b>26</b> 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Fellowship Team 11:45 AM Grief Support Group	<b>29</b> 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 	<b>30</b>	<b>OCTOBER 1</b> 9:30 AM Yoga Class	<b>2</b> 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>3</b> 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline	<b>4</b>	
<b>5</b> PEANUT BUTTER SUNDAY PRESBYTERIAN COFFEE PROJECT GLOBAL OFFERING 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Outreach Team	<b>6</b> 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	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 9:30 AM Yoga Class 5:00 PM Flu Shot Clinic 6:00 PM TOW—Together on Wednesday 7:00 PM Bible Study	<b>9</b> 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>10</b> 10:00 AM Novels & Needles Book Group 6:30 PM Faith Explorers (Grades 3-5) 	<b>11</b>	





**NEXT MEETING:**  
**Tuesday,**  
**October 14,**  
**10:30 AM in the**  
**Breezeway**

The fellowship of Presbyterian Women will gather on Tuesday, October 14th at 10:30AM in the Breezeway. All women are invited to participate. Please come and celebrate the **PW Thank Offering with a light lunch** following the installation of officers and the lesson! Our new study book is **Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ** by Rhashell D. Hunter. Jerry Lynn Shipplett is facilitating the conversation about *Finding Resilience: Mary "of a Certain Village."* Moving to the Book of Luke, we will study a more passive Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus. The scripture for Lesson 2 is Luke 10:38-42. Study books (\$14) may be purchased from Frances Craig or at the meeting.



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

The book being discussed is  
***The Great Gatsby***  
 by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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!



The next  
**Equal Exchange**  
 Sale is **Sunday,**  
**October 5**

Available are:

- ♦ regular coffee for \$9
- ♦ decaf coffee for \$10
- ♦ tea for \$4
- ♦ dark chocolate for \$4

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  
 contacting 540-290-1089 or  
[bettyandcliff@gmail.com](mailto:bettyandcliff@gmail.com).



Join us  
 Mondays  
 at 10:30 AM  
 IN ROOM 6  
 OR VIA  
 ZOOM

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.

A link to the Zoom meeting is sent  
 out via opt-ins each Sunday.





## Special Offering - Sunday, October 5

The Peace & Global Witness Offering enables the church to promote the Peace of Christ by addressing systems of conflict and injustice across the world. Through the Peace & Global Witness Offering, congregations are encouraged and equipped to find and address the anxiety and discord that is prevalent throughout this broken and sinful world.

- 25% retained by congregations to support peacemaking efforts in their local communities.
- 25% retained by mid councils to support peacemaking efforts at the regional level.
- 50% supports peacemaking, reconciliation and global witness.

### WAYS TO GIVE:

- Through Covenant — make your checks payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church and designate "Peace Offering" on the memo line
- Text PCUSAPEACE to 41444
- Give online at <https://pcusa.org/donate/pg999999-peace-global-witness-offering>

**JESUS IS NOT GOD**  
SCRIPTURE SAYS...  
**JESUS DID NOT PRE-EXIST IN HEAVEN**

## Fall Bible Study

**Wednesdays, October 8, 15, 22 @ 7:00 pm**  
**in Fellowship Hall led by John Peterson**

Once again this fall we will offer a Bible study in October following TOW (Together on Wednesday). A sign along Route 11 north of Staunton declares: "Jesus is not God." Together we will explore our response to that statement by considering a biblical and theological perspective on three questions:

Who is God? Is Jesus God?

What/Who/Where/Why is the Holy Spirit?

Join us for a time of study, reflection, and conversation about how we understand the God who we affirm to be one in three.

### Martha's Meals on Wheels

(Meals on Wheels of Staunton, Inc.)



### ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

--Helping those who are unable to prepare their own meals --

Join Us for Drive-Thru Spaghetti and Salad Dinner

Sunday, October 12, 2025

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Verona Moose Lodge

1510 Commerce Road (Rt. 11), Verona/Staunton

*On the Hill Behind Eye One*

Reserved meals available by calling 540-886-1219

(Cash or Check made out to MMOW)

\$15 adults/12 and up; \$5 children

Meals will be brought to your car

(a limited number of meals will be available for purchase on the day of the event)



## ONGOING OUTREACH

### Peanut Butter Sunday

First Sunday of Each Month

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

**Fun Fact:** On average Covenant donates 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 BUCKETS** located in  
the vestibule just outside  
the church office or in  
the Narthex.



### PLASTIC BAG COLLECTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

**THANK YOU, COVENANT!** We have kept over **3673 pounds** of plastic out of the landfills. **AND** we've provided benches to the Boys and Girls Club and Covenant Preschool. **We are now working towards a sixth bench!** 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)

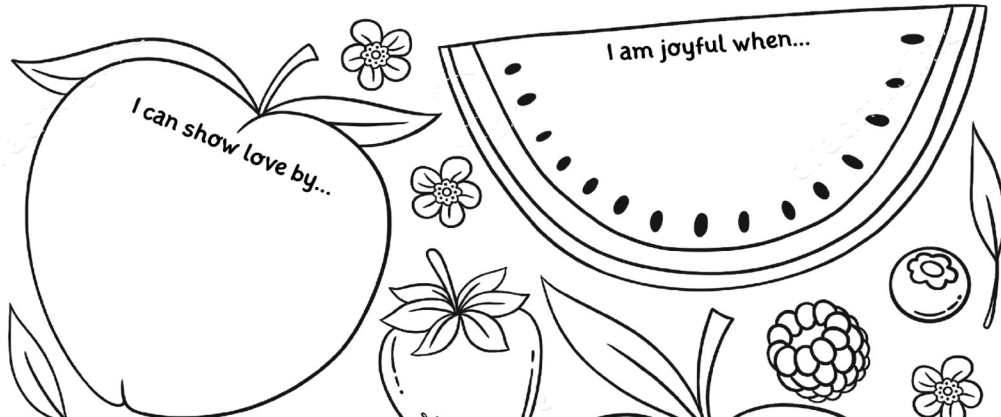
**WANT TO HELP?** Volunteers are always needed to do the weekly weigh-in and take bags to Food Lion. Sign up at <https://bit.ly/3CzoJTW>  
**Questions?** Contact Robyn Sommerfield at [robynsommerfield@gmail.com](mailto:robynsommerfield@gmail.com)



**LET'S  
RESTOCK  
THE PANTRY**

Can you believe that we're already a month into the new school year?! While all donations are always welcome, the Shelburne Pantry is currently running low on items specifically for girls -- deodorant, hygiene products, shampoo, lotion, body wash, etc. If we can make those things a focus for our September giving, that would be a great help in assuring the pantry can provide for those needs. We have our usual labeled boxes outside the church office and in the narthex for your generous contributions.

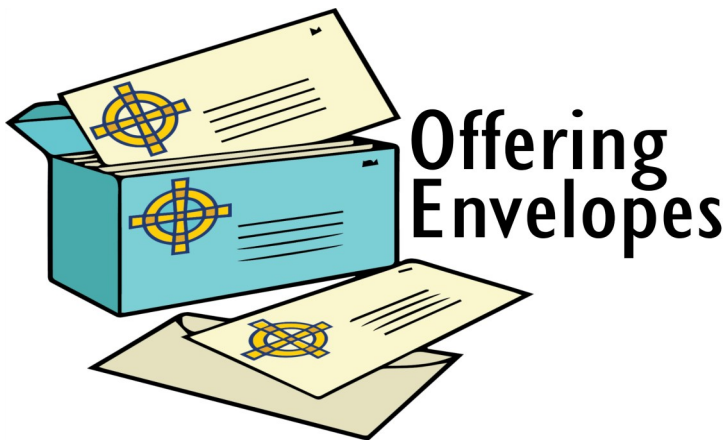
*THANK YOU for supporting our community through this Outreach program!*



Box 9290, Canton, OH 44711 | [ChildrensBulletins.com](http://ChildrensBulletins.com)

# Children's Corner





# Offering Envelopes

Over the years, giving patterns in the church have changed. No longer does everyone put a check or a few bills in an envelope and drop it in the offering plate. Now, folks often contribute electronically, make gifts of stock, or have checks mailed to the church directly from their account. That is why we no longer pass the plates in worship, though the plates are still there in the aisles for those who use them and want to contribute in that tangible way.

Over these last years, we have been able to significantly reduce the number (and cost) of offering envelopes by no longer ordering them for those who do not use them. If you are currently not using the envelopes and do not need them, please contact Dave Metz ([dmetz@ntelos.net](mailto:dmetz@ntelos.net)) so that he can take you off the list for next year's envelopes. You will still have a record of your giving and a number attributed to your gifts, but the number may be different from your current number, and you will no longer receive the paper envelopes. If your number is near and dear to your heart and you want to keep using the paper envelopes, we are happy for you to do so. These changes are all part of our good stewardship of God's gifts. If you have any questions, please email Dave or give him a call at 540-292-8864.

## 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](http://www.covenantpresstaunton.org).





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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



MATTHEW 25

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



GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD. FOR HE IS GOOD.  
FOR HIS MERCY IS EVERLASTING.

PSALM 107:1. NASB