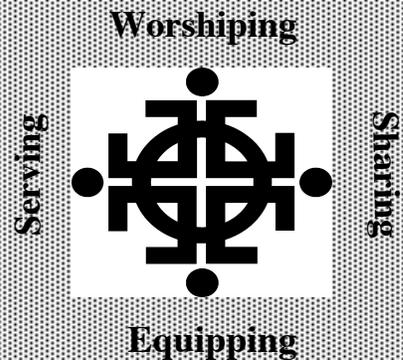


First Covenant Lamplighter

Volume XXXIX - Number 4
April 2015



FIRST COVENANT CHURCH
Virginia, Minnesota
741-7117
www.firstcovenantvirginia.org

Your Presence Is More Than Requested-- It Is Needed!

As a congregation we have been following what the Evangelical Covenant Church calls the “path to vitality.” This has included the Veritas seminar, meeting with the Northwest conference vitality staff person for conversations about his assessment of our congregation, and participation in the Epic seminar, which led to the writing and adoption of a Behavioral Covenant for our church.

Having done these steps on the vitality pathway, we hit a bump in the road, and our progress stalled for about two years. In the last two years a renewed Veritas team has been working again to prepare the way for the next event on the vitality pathway, which is the Pulse Survey. As you might conclude the purpose of this survey is to take the pulse of the congregation. Much like a doctor takes your pulse to help assess your health status, this survey has as its purpose to help assess the health of a congregation. Our application to participate in a Pulse Survey has been submitted to the denomination, and we await their response.

Our last step before the Pulse Survey can be taken is to have a Service of Consecration to the Lord's Future. This service prepares the congregation to receive the survey report and recommendations for the direction and the future of the church. This special service is scheduled for Sunday morning, April 19th. The Veritas team has worked very hard to put the pieces of this service together. They began by reading through multiple samples of such a service provided by the Vitality

Office of the Covenant. The team prayed, discussed, and wrote their own words for our service.

The service, as it has been written, is organized around four biblical principles. Each principle will be examined as our Veritas team members lead us in worship that morning. It is our prayer that this service will be a time when God works to prepare both individual hearts and the congregation as a whole for the future He has in mind for this congregation. This service is the beginning of the process for discerning of God's will. The Veritas team after much study and prayer, has included in this service several acts of confession. These times of confession are both personal and corporate. While specific corporate statements of confession will be spoken, when it is time for personal confession, you will be offered a means to express your heart without being asked to speak. Having said that, the Veritas team prays that should God so move in your heart during the service, that you will later seek out an opportunity to speak personally with anyone whom you need to seek forgiveness.

We hope that every member and friend of First Covenant Church will be present on April 19th to participate in this service. We believe that God will use this service to prepare each person to participate in the Pulse Survey and receive what God's plans are for the church. Please encourage one another to be present that morning and begin praying now, asking God to prepare your heart for that special time of worship.

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH PURPOSE STATEMENT

The mission of First Covenant Church is
to worship God,
equip people to live in faith
share God's love,
and serve the community around us.



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT FIRST COVENANT

Maundy Thursday Service
Thursday, April 2nd, 6:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday - April 5th
9:15 a. m. - Breakfast
10:00 a. m. - Worship Service

QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETING

The church business meeting for the third quarter of this year will be held during the Sunday school hour on April 27th. Members and friends of the church are encouraged to be present as reports are presented and decisions are made regarding our future ministry.



SERVING CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

Ushers:

Apr. 5--Brian & Julie Hill
Apr. 12--Ken & Linda Pogorelec
Apr. 19--Roger & Gail Johnston
Apr. 26--Shirley Koski & Darlene Reindahl
May 3--Marjean Johnson & Linda Skogman

Nursery Attendants:

Apr. 5--Darlene Reindahl
Apr. 12--Marjean Johnson
Apr. 19--Linda Pogorelec
Apr. 26--Shirley Koski
May 3--Jodie Phaneuf

Sound Technicians

Apr. 5--Roger Johnston
Apr. 12--Mike Hannay
Apr. 19--Roger Johnston
Apr. 26--Mike Hannay
May 3--Roger Johnston

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

2/1/15 - 2/28/15

Checking account balance as of Feb.1st: **\$94.00**

General Fund income for current period: **\$4222.00**

Average General Fund income needed to meet annual budget: **\$6417.58**

Other income: **\$208.00**

Rental income: **\$300.00**

Transfers due to shortage: **\$1500.00**

Total expenditures for current period: **\$5994.42**

Checking account balance as of Feb. 28th: **\$27.58**

COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES

Our annual CW Supper will be held at 6:00 on Thursday, April 30th. Jane Harvey, pastor's wife from Biwabik, will be our guest speaker. Her topic is "The Journey." Guests are welcome. Please reserve no later than Sunday, April 26, and sign-up to help with the food.

COVENANT PARK BIBLE CAMP

Our next deadline for lower rates at Covenant Park is May 1st. Please have registration forms and check in by April 26th

MESABI RANGE YOUTH FOR CHRIST

Thank you for your continued support of Mesabi Range Youth For Christ. Your support is enabling us to live out the YFC vision and helping us to spread the love of Jesus to the teens of our area. Right now we are reaching teens through the following and many other connecting/relationship-building opportunities.

- Monday evenings: Campus Life in Virginia for Iron Range teens in grades 9-12
- Tuesday evenings: Student-led "Amplify" in Hibbing for teens in grades 7-12
- Wednesday mornings: "Mornings with Matt" coffee and bagel time with teens at the Virginia High School from 7:00 to 8:00 a. m.
- Wednesdays after school: "Fill Up" in Virginia - Campus Life student leader-led Bible study/ discipleship small group for new Christian teens
- Thursday evenings: Guys Movie Night in Virginia for teen guys in grades 9-12

Mark your calendar! Our annual banquet will be held on Thursday, May 7th. We look forward to sharing with you what has happened in our ministry over the past year.

SPRING MUSIC

The Mesabi East High School choirs, under the direction of Greg Barnes, will present their annual spring concert at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 12th, in the high school auditorium.

A Range of Voices (formerly The East Range Society) will present its spring concert "Gather at the River"--spirituals, sacred pieces, and popular numbers-- at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, April 17th, at the Chisholm Baptist Church and at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 19th, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Virginia. In addition to selections by the full chorus, the concert will feature choir's women's ensemble and jazz singers. Refreshments will be served following the concert. Admission is \$5.00, with tickets available at the door.

The Choralaires will present their annual spring concert at 7:00 on Friday evening, May 1st, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Virginia. There will be a freewill offering for area charities.

COVENANT KIDS CONGO

We visited a group of women who are in a World Vision, Covenant Kids Congo sponsored Agricultural Group. The project was stunning. When we arrived they sang a song and acted out with garden tools the story of how they had come to support each other in this great venture to grow better gardens to feed and support their families. They acted out how they had learned to do better tilling, planting, and better care for the young plants. Then they sang, "We are going to feed our children, we are going to send our children to school, we are going to feed our husbands, we are going to heal our village with vegetables!"

The transparent joy and sense of empowerment they radiated in their presentation was absolutely wonderful. They had also become a women's savings group, learning to save their money in order to provide one another with loans to grow small businesses. It was truly a ministry of profound empowerment, and it was so clear that these women had found new hope and meaning through this Covenant Kids Congo project. It was also clear that as followers of Jesus they were sharing their good fortune and blessing with others.

--Donn Engebretson, CKC Project Leader

PAUL CARLSON PARTNERSHIP

Training Surgeons in Congo

The latest PCP Medical Ambassadors training team has returned from Congo! The stories of their experiences are overwhelming. The doctors worked together to conduct surgical training, to present a 15 hour course for 25 doctors and nurses on emergency care of trauma patients which included learning station practicums, to meet with two nursing schools' faculty and students, and to visit clinics to discuss emergency trauma care and transport systems.

At Karawa, the team performed 12 cleft lip surgeries and 2 prostate surgeries, all with the purpose of teaching Congolese doctors and nurses. Many other families came to Karawa in hope of being seen by the team for cleft lip treatment, and there are countless numbers of other children needing the operation.

UPDATE FROM RANDY BEVIS

"Full Nets, Changed Lives"

As of January 1, 2015, I have started a new role where I will be traveling to many countries to give technical aid and mentor others in the area of my expertise: "aquaculture" or "fish farming." My first official trip in this role took place in January and brought me back to Thailand, Malaysia, and Laos. I worked with 4 different ministries in four different contexts all doing fish farming with a ministry focus. It was a great trip and confirmed to me that this is a time for me to be working in this way. I also felt a bit overwhelmed by the needs in just these 4 organizations as they all have their challenges and areas that we need to work on to improve their farms.

In two days I am off to Congo for my first trip to Africa. I am very excited to see both the needs and the opportunities our brothers and sisters are facing there. I had 7 shots in my arm to update my vaccines. so I think I am covered on that front. I have been reading up on the Congo River Basin--it is an amazing resource that makes a large "U" up and through the Democratic Republic of Congo. There are more than 650 species of fish in the Congo River Basin. (Google "Giant Tiger Fish Congo" if you want to see a scary looking fish!) In

one place the river was marked at over 750 feet deep. I'll be traveling with Covenant missionary Paul Noren and visiting several fish farming groups as well as the Covenant Kids Congo project and some of the fish farming that is being done through that project. Please pray for wisdom and a clear direction for ways to partner with our Congolese brothers and sisters.

We are thankful for the ongoing support that is enabling me to truly "Serve Globally" and hopefully be of help to our brothers and sisters around the world in the area of Food Production and Kingdom Businesses. While Cheryl is not on the Covenant support any longer, my increased travel for this new role still keeps the support need close to our former level as a couple. I have the year pretty booked with about one trip each month somewhere in the world making about 130 days of travel. I would appreciate your prayers for us as a family as we make adjustments.

Our nets feel very full but by God's grace they are still holding.

COVENANT MOSAICS PROJECT-- BELGIUM

Having lived in several different countries both in Africa and now in Europe, I've learned how to get around using money from these lands. US Dollars are always green and the same-size bills. There is no money value engraved on US coins (check out the change in your wallet - it's true!) So you have to learn, in the US dollar system, how much a penny is worth, or a nickel, dime or quarter.

Quarters are numbers that I still use regularly even here in Belgium, though it has nothing to do with the Euro currency that pays our bills! With the Euro, you have: 1 cent, 2 cents, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cent coins and then 1 euro & 2 euro coins. The quarters that I'm talking about are: quarterly financial reports, end of quarter expenses, 4th quarter balance sheets, etc. It is with great thankful to God, and to you, faithful supporters, that we say. "Cool, all of my 2014 missionary support needs were met." I never cease being amazed at how God brings together all the resources that I need. It's such affirmation and confirmation that this is indeed the ministry that God has called me to and equipped me for throughout my life. So, huge thanks for sharing all your quarters!

During the first days of February, I had the great joy of joining with 50 workers across Europe who gathered for the Refugee Highway Partnership (RHP) roundtable. Perhaps the highlight of these days together with

people who care for refugees across Europe was the day trip to Ceuta. I had asked God to break my heart with compassion and passion for refugees, that I might have a heart like that of Jesus toward those who have fled home in order to find a safe space. In fact, God did break my heart and I wept many tears as we met with young African men who had crossed the sea in unsafe boats, enduring hardship and fear, in order to reach Ceuta, Spain, and by extension the European continent. It's a kind of ministry that is totally different from what we do: caring for food, housing and clothing needs before anything else, whereas in Belgium all the material needs are taken care of, and we're addressing the emotional and spiritual needs that surface as one seeks a safe place and a new community and homeland. I shall never forget the empty, vague and lost long stares of those dark brown eyes. It is something that I'm seeing more regularly in my Belgium world as well, the empty, vague, lost long starts of dark eyes that are finding their way to Belgium from many war zones scattered across the globe.

Thanks for loving us, praying for us, caring for us, and supporting me through Covenant World Mission. Your faithfulness in your world encourages me in my ministry world here!

Blessings,
Barb Swanson

COVENANT TRUST COMPANY

Understanding Revocable Living Trusts

A Revocable Living Trust is a trust designed to provide for yourself and others. You fund a trust with your assets and establish for whom the trust will provide, to what extent, and for how long. But what exactly is a revocable living trust, and how do they work? To better understand a revocable living trust, let's look at a few key concepts first.

Grantor: A grantor is the person who creates a trust, i.e., the person who owns the assets in the trust. There may be more than one grantor of a trust: a husband and wife, for example. In the trust document, the grantor instructs how the assets of the trust should be managed and distributed.

Trustee: The trustee is the person or institution who carries out the provisions (the instructions) of the trust.

Trust: A trust is a legal agreement in which a grantor transfers assets to a trustee, who then manages those assets as instructed by the grantor.

As grantor, when you create a revocable living trust, you are essentially telling your trustee to: manage certain assets per your direction; make payments to you as directed; take care of the financial needs of you and your family should you become unable to do so; and after your death, either manage the assets for your family or distribute the assets as instructed in the trust agreement.

While trusts are often considered a financial tool for the wealthy, they can be a valid option for anyone, regardless of the size of their estate. They have many benefits: for example, they provide financial management if and when it's needed, and provisions can be added to the trust to reduce estate taxes and avoid the costs and delay of probate.

If you would like to learn more about the benefits of revocable living trusts, contact Steve Allison, our Financial Services Representative at 877-768-1766 or email him at srallison@covenanttrust.com. Steve would be happy to answer your questions and help you determine if a revocable living trust is right for you.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Jerri Lynn Carron	2
Mary Ann Robinson	4
Barb Knapper	14
Rachael Branstrom	15
Dorothy Schuknect	18

AMONG US

We extend Christian sympathy to **Audrey Branstrom** and her family on the death of her brother, Howard Tournell, who died at age 89 on March 9th. His memorial service was held at the First Covenant Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, on March 16th.

Lloyd and Muriel Stanaway and **Gail Johnston** were interviewed on the Channel 10 program "This Week in Mining," which dealt with U.S. Steel buying houses in the Parkville area.

Calendar items for the next month need to be e-mailed or in the church office by the third Sunday of the previous month. Weekly bulletin items must be e-mailed or brought to the church office by 9:00 a. m. Wednesdays. E-mailed items need to have either "calendar" or "bulletin" in the subject line.

Items for the May issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by **Sunday, April 26th**. Items may be submitted by e-mail to wbc@q.com.