

FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

First Covenant Church
Virginia, Minnesota
741-7117

www.firstcovenantvirginia.org

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A SERVANT'S MEMORY

Another cold night, isn't it. I'm really glad the High Priest lets us have these fires out here on these cold nights. It seems like we all spend some time here every cold night. What's that? Oh, YES! I was here last week! I wouldn't have missed it for the world! Yeah, that was when the Temple leaders held court to convict the rabbi from Galilee. I've never seen them hold court that late at night. It was really weird! I was right here at the fire...it was cold like it is tonight...and all of a sudden the guards and the Pharisees rushed in with the rabbi...Jesus was his name. —and had his hands tied. We scattered, but I was able to see that it was him.

How did I know it was him? Well, I DO go to Temple, you know!!! I was in the outer court the other day when Jesus was teaching. I saw animals and people running and this guy tearing up the place; it was him. I thought he was a terrorist or at least a crazy man, so I left! I had work to do, anyhow.

You want to know about the trial? Well, I only heard yelling and arguing coming from inside. You know how men can be when it comes to legal stuff! Something interesting did happen out here, though; one of Jesus' disciples sneaked in behind the guards. At first, I thought he was just one of the crowd trying to get a better look, but he was acting so strange. What was he doing? (looks off in the distance, thinking) Well, he was—I don't know.—looking around like he was hiding something; like a guilty person. I don't know why people do that; it makes them so obvious! Everytime I would look at him, he would

turn his face away from me. That just made me more curious.

Then, it dawned on me; he had been one of the men with Jesus in the Temple. I was sure of it! So. I got up and walked behind him and said, 'Didn't I see you with the rabbi at the Temple?' Well, he jumped up and grumbled something like, “I don't know what you are talking about,” and walked over the gate out of the firelight. I was sure it was him. I asked the others at the fire if they recognized him, and one of the other girls there said yes, she had seen him with the rabbi.

Well, he heard that, and came back to the fire. Well, I got scared because I thought he was going to start a fight. He was very angry and said loudly that he didn't know Jesus. One of the men servants there that night stood up to protect us in case the man started something, got up and confronted the man. The man servant said that he too believed the stranger was one of Jesus' followers, because all Jesus' followers had a 'country' drawl in their voices, and so did this man.

Well, the next thing I heard was a string of profanity like I hadn't heard in a long time! He said again he didn't know him, he never met him, and didn't care what happened to him. Just as he finished his tirade, the rooster crowed. Now, I probably wouldn't remember this, except what happened to the stranger when he heard it. He fell back against the wall of courtyard like he had been kicked by a horse! Yes, he did! Just like he had been kicked! Then to top it off, they brought Jesus out and as they took him through the courtyard, he just stared at the stranger. At this,

the man just started crying like a baby, and ran out into the night.

Well, that's about it. What a strange night! Of course, you did know that the Romans executed Jesus the next day, right? I thought that was extreme for what he did, but they don't ask me about these things! But, you know, I have heard a rumor that his body was missing from the tomb this weekend. I heard the priests talking about it, and they said the disciples had stolen the body. What would anybody want with a corpse? But the strangest thing I have heard is that he rose from the dead. Who'd ever believe a thing like that? Would you? —Fred Lane

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

Thursday, March 24th, 6:30 p.m.
Maundy Thursday /Service

Friday, March 25th, 12:00 p.m.
Ecumenical Good Friday Service
Peace United Methodist Church

Sunday, March 27th
9:15 a.m.
Easter Breakfast
10:00 a.m.
Easter Worship Service

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 13th. Remember to set your clocks **ahead** one hour so you're not late for church!

SERVING CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

Ushers:

Mar. 6—Ken & Linda Pogorelec
Mar. 13—Roger & Gail Johnston
Mar. 20—Shirley Koski & Darlene Reindahl
Mar. 27—Marjean Johnson
Linda Skogman

Nursery Attendants:

Mar. 6—Marjean Johnson
Mar. 13—Linda Pogorelec
Mar. 20—Shirley Koski
Mar. 27—Jodie Phaneuf

Sound Technicians:

Mar. 6—Roger Johnston
Mar. 13—Mike Hannay
Mar. 20—Roger Johnston
Mar. 27—Mike Hannay

BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Items for the April calendar need to be e-mailed or in the church office by Sunday, March 20th Weekly bulletin items must be e-mailed or brought to the church office by 9:00 a.m. Wednesday. E-mailed items need to have either "calendar" or "bulletin" in the subject line.

Items for the April issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, March 20th Items may be submitted by e-mail to wbchris@q.com. Remember that we are always looking for news of interest for the "Among Us" column.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

1/1/16-1/31/16

Checking account balance as Jan. 1st: **\$1404.74**

General Fund income for current period: **\$5882.00**

Average General Fund income to meet annual budget: **\$4851.54**

Other income: **\$175.51**

Rental income: **\$100.00**

Total expenses for current period: **\$5578.21**

Checking account balance as of Jan. 31st: **\$2103.53**

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Each Wednesday from 4:00 to 7:00 a group from our church assists with projects for Habitat for Humanity. We would appreciate volunteers willing to provide a light supper for the group. If you can help in this way, please sign up on the sheet in the fellowship hall.

FOOD SHELF MONTH

Each March our church conducts a drive for Quad Cities Food Shelf. which serves residents of Virginia, Eveleth, Mt. Iron, Gilbert, Cotton, and the surrounding area. It serves an average of 500 families each month. A five-day supply of food is given to each eligible family. In January of this year alone it served 564 families with over 38,200 pounds of food.

Food items currently needed at the food shelf are canned meats, soups, one-dish meals, canned fruit and vegetables, cereal, pasta, and crackers. Paper products such as toilet tissue, paper towels, disposable diapers, and personal hygiene products are always needed.

This month each dollar and every pound of food donated to the food shelf will be partially matched. Cash donations are spent buying food from the food bank.

On the four Sundays of March, there will be a box in the front entry of the church for you to leave donations. Checks should be made out to the Quad Cities Food Shelf.

MUSIC IN MARCH

A 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 7th, the Virginias High School choirs, under the direction of Matt Krage, will present their annual pops concert in Goodman Auditorium. There is no admission charge.

At the end of the month, Virginia High school will present Elton John and Tim Rice's award-winning musical AIDA, under the direction of Matt Krage and Jennifer Bremmer. Performances will be in Goodman Auditorium on Thursday March 31st, Friday April 1st, and Saturday, April 2nd, at 7:00 p. m.. and Sunday, April 3rd, at 2:00 p. m.. Tickets are \$10 for adults, and \$7 for seniors (60+) and students (17 and under). All seating is general admission. To reserve tickets, call the box office at 218-749-5437 ex. 1249 and leave a message with the requested information. You can also reserve tickets by going online at staff.vmps.org/mkrage and complete the online form. All tickets will be held at the Will Call table and can be picked up and paid for the night of the show.

OAXACAN ODYSSEY

During the month of February, Bernie and I escaped our northeast Minnesota winter and headed to Oaxaca, Mexico, for our biennial sojourn, which gave us the opportunity to experience warm weather, rich culture, and delicious food.

We stayed at a pleasant bread and breakfast, where we got acquainted with an interesting group of other Americans.

The U.S. dollar was the strongest against the Mexican peso that we have ever experienced, which is good for Americans but not for the Mexicans.

For the first two weeks, Bernie attended classes at a Spanish language school, and during the last half of the month worked on Spanish on her own and took advantage of more free time to do cross-stitching and embroidery.

I spent the month volunteering full-time at Oaxaca Christian school, where I have volunteered on six previous times in Oaxaca. This time my responsibilities included working with a first-grade boy, team-teaching third and fourth-grade science, substituting for the third and fourth-grade teacher, inventorying children's library books, working at the front desk in the office, and correcting papers for the fifth and sixth-grade teacher.

Oaxaca Christian is an American school for children of missionaries serving under a number of mission organizations, including Covenant World Mission. Parents pay a nominal tuition fee for their children to attend the school. Enrollment varies from year to year, partially depending on how many families are on home assignment. This year there are forty-six students. Teachers are not paid by the school but rather by their supporting mission organizations. Classes are taught in English, with the high school classes designed to prepare the students for college in the United States.

Music is an important aspect of the Oaxacan culture, and during the month we were fortunate to be able to attend two band concerts, two organ concerts, and a symphony concert.

While in Oaxaca we had a chance to get together with Covenant missionaries Lisandro and Patricia Restrepo. We also saw retired Covenant missionary Jo Ellen Reaves, who was spending six weeks in Oaxaca; missionary Nils Clauson, who is currently on home assignment but was attending a conference in Oaxaca on holistic ministries; and Covenanters in Mission Greg and Mary Ellen Schrock and Roy and Julie Eberhart, both couples serving in Oaxaca with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

On one of the [Sunday](#) we went with Jo Ellen and Nils to the service at the Amparo y Fortaleza

Covenant Church, where our last two mission teams had worked. It was good to see Pastor Julio and his family and the good folks there, and we enjoyed lunch together following the worship service. Incidentally, Pastor Julio will receive his master's degree in theology in April; he is the first Mexican Covenant pastor to achieve that academic level.

Mary Ellen Schrock is the art teacher at Oaxacan Christian School, and this year Greg has been teaching apologetics to the juniors and seniors. You may recall that three years ago their son Aaron, a fifth-grader at the school, was diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer, one of the deadliest forms of cancer. After going through a year of difficult interferon treatments, Aaron was pronounced cancer-free, and he has remained so for the last two years. Because of the intense [sun](#) rays in Oaxaca, which could cause melanoma, and since many of the students are fair-skinned and susceptible, Oaxaca Christian School felt it important to build a cover for the school basketball court. This they did last summer at the expense of some \$10,000. They put out an appeal for financial support for this project. Since there was some money left over after our mission trip, the mission team felt this to be a worthy cause and made a donation towards the project.

It was difficult to leave the relaxed Oaxacan lifestyle to return to winter weather, regular responsibilities, and phone calls; but all good things must come to an end. We look forward to returning to Oaxaca in February of 2018.

--Wayne & Bernie Christiansen

COVENANT TRUST COMPANY

After serving as one of our Financial Services Representatives for eight years, Lavern Holdeman retired at the end of January. Before he left, he reflected on his time with Covenant Trust Company and the 50-plus years he spent in the workforce. Lavern made several career changes during that time: he started as an attorney after finishing school, then followed God's call to be ordained; then, eight years ago, he felt another call, this time to join CTC as an FSR.

Lavern regretted not saving for retirement earlier in life. He first started working when he landed a paper route at

the age of 12 and more or less worked until he retired earlier this year. He didn't realize he needed to save for retirement until he was in his 30's, and now recognizes that he missed out on years of investment growth.

Lavern also shared his plans for retirement. He wants to travel and see his children and grandkids more often. He is going to spend more time with his wife and hopes to do some skiing and biking. Lavern also plans on continuing his ministry in finance by volunteering to teach immigrants about money.

Are you already retired? If so, are your finances keeping you from enjoying retirement the way you thought you would? Not knowing what you can afford in retirement can have a negative impact on your retirement, but so too can the effort of managing your finances, even if you have enough money.

If you're still working, are you thinking about retirement? Lavern didn't start saving for retirement until he was in his 30's, but in retrospect, he realizes he should have started earlier. So are you planning, saving, and investing for retirement yet? Do you know what you want your retirement to look like? Even if retirement is 30-plus years away, it's never too early to start preparing for it.

Whether you're still working and in need of a retirement plan, or if you could use help managing your money in retirement, contact Steve Allison, your local Financial Services Representative at [218-297-7701](tel:218-297-7701) or email him at sralison@covenanttrust.com. Steve can talk about your retirement planning needs and discuss how Covenant Trust Company can help you.

If you would like to hear more about Lavern's story, check out his podcast on our blog: www.covtrustblog.com.

COVENANT PARK BIBLE CAMP

The first Early Bird deadline has past but there is still time to take advantage of the discounted rate by [May 1st](#). The theme this year is "All In," focussing on going all in for Jesus, because He went all in for us on the cross. We hope many will take the opportunity to attend.

COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES

The pasties have all sold, and the money has all been turned in. We cleared \$5031. We have sent in \$503 of that to the Northwest Conference Women Ministries for Raise the Flag. That money will go towards bringing Rhonda Egging, missionary to Sweden and Russia, and her guest from Sweden to Triennial. Many thanks again to all who helped in any way.

WM NWC Renewal Conference will be held at Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park on [March 11th](#) and [12th](#). Registrations are open until [Monday](#), so we encourage you to register now. We have a number already registered.

Ladies Lunch will be held on Tuesday, [March 8th](#), a week later than usual, at Country Kitchen. Please join us.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Russ Carlson	8th
Eva Roark	24th
Lucille Stoltz	29th

AMONG US

Special congratulations to **Lucille Stoltz** on her birthday on the 29th of this month.

We extend Christian sympathy to the family of one of our members, **Cleo Cass**, who died on February 24th. At her request there was no funeral service, but a visitation was held on February 27th at the funeral home in Gilbert.

Former member of our church, **Loren Nelson**, also died last month.

Kate Barnes has learned that the Make A Wish Foundation has granted her wish to go to Green Bay, Wisconsin, to meet Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers and other Packers team members. Congratulations, Kate!

Congratulations to **Frank Roark** on his being named Virginia Fire Department's EMT Paramedic of the Year.