

FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

First Covenant Church
Virginia, Minnesota
741-7117

www.firstcovenantvirginia.org

Volume XL - Number 11
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“Mary, Did You Know?”

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would someday walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy
has come to make you new?
The child that you delivered
will soon deliver you.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
will give sight to a blindman?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
will calm a storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy
has walked where angels trod?
When you kissed your little baby,
then you kissed the face of God.
The blind will see, the deaf will hear,
the dead will live again;
the lame will leap, the mute will speak
the praises of the Lamb.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy
is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding
is the great, the great “I Am!

—Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene

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.

CHRISTMAS AT FIRST COVENANT

Our annual candlelight Christmas Eve Vespers Service will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 24th. You and your family will want to be here for this special service of carols, Scripture readings, and a Christmas meditation.

We invite you to return at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, the 25th, for our Christmas Morning Worship Service. Please note the later time for the service. There will be no Sunday school or Christian education classes that day.



SERVING CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

Ushers:

Dec. 4—Mike & Kathy Hannay
Dec. 11—Brian & Julie Hill
Dec. 18—Ken & Linda Pogorelec
Dec. 24—Roger & Gail Johnston
Dec. 25—Shirley Koski & Darlene Reindahl
Jan 1—Linda Skogman
& Carolyn Erickson

Sound Technicians:

Dec. 4—Roger Johnston
Dec. 11—Mike Hannay
Dec 18—Roger Johnston
Dec. 24—Mike Hannay
Dec. 25—Roger Johnston
Jan. 1—Mike Hannay

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT 101/16-10/31/16

Checking account balance as Oct. 1st: **\$4385.18**

General Fund income for current period: **\$4488.00**

Other income: **\$457.40**

Rental income: **\$750.00**

Total expenses for current period: **\$5241.79**

Checking account balance as of Oct. 31st: **\$4827,39**

COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES

Ladies lunch will be held at 12:30 on **Tuesday, December 6**, at Ranger Rock in the Mt. Iron High School. All visitors to the school need to register and obtain a visitor badge. Plan to enjoy excellent food at a very reasonable price. We are always looking for new faces.

Project Day will not be meeting in December due to preparations for the smorgasbord.

Our annual Smorgasbord will be held at 6:00 on **Tuesday, December 13**. Please sign up if you can donate something on our food list. Women are asked to bring 2 dozen cookies for our cookie trays. Please make reservations by signing up on the sheet in the social hall or call Bernie at **749 1366**. It is important to report any changes as we have assigned seating. We will be having a program of local talent this year based on the Lucia story. We are also hoping for an appearance by Karlina and Ingalisa as well.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

We dropped off 14 well-filled shoeboxes at the new drop-off center at Emmanuel Baptist in Midway. Thanks for all who wrapped boxes, provided items or cash to purchase items and those who donated money for postage. We hope to hear later where our boxes were sent.

BENTLEYVILLE: A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR YOU AND THE COMMUNITY

Sunday afternoon, Dec. 18th, First Covenant Church is inviting you, your friends, family, and everyone who would like to go, to a trip to the Bentleyville Tour of Lights in Duluth. As you likely know, Bentleyville is a free display of seasonal lights in Duluth's Bayfront Park. Three hundred thousand people of all ages from all across the Upper Midwest are expected to view the four million lights and displays, stand around the campfires, drink some cocoa, have marshmallows, etc. and view the 127 foot tall artificial Christmas tree.

School buses with professional drivers will be at church for a 3 PM departure and drive you to the Bentleyville entrance. Depending on the weather (bring warm clothes!!), they will allow you to wander Bentleyville for a good amount of time, and then we will meet the buses and stop at Miller Hill Mall

for dinner (on your own) before returning to First Covenant around 8:30 PM.

Why should the church offer such an event??? For many reasons including:

1) It should be a lot of fun! It will be good to have fun with the extended church family - smile, laugh, converse as we travel, and share a unique travel/destination experience.

2) Bentleyville is a wonderful, all-ages event. It gives all of us as members and friends of the church, to invite our children, grandchildren, and other loved ones to a church-sponsored event that is totally "non-threatening". This is good will for Jesus, and shows your family that we as followers of Jesus can have a wonderful, fun evening.

3) It allows us to invite the Range community to a First Covenant Church event that is uplifting and positive. Our purpose is to not load the buses primarily with folks from other churches (certainly your family and friends are "more than fine"), but to invite people who don't have a church home. Posters, flyers, newspaper and radio announcements, and word of mouth will help develop a "buzz" where your personal invitation might really allow a non-church associated community member to say "yes" to you. As they travel with us and talk to us, they may change their image of what we are like. Sometimes Jesus followers are seen as "uptight", critical of others, etc. We may be able to start a friendship that will allow us to minister to them as they face their "everyday life." Many will learn where our church building is, meet some of "our" people, and share some fun with us. Others may just come, and remember that First Covenant did something "nice" for them.

Outreach to others is a multi-step process that begins with planting a seed. It may lie dormant for a time, some may never come to flower, but others may begin to grow. I would ask that you surround this event with your prayers, work for its success, and join us on a fun adventure.

In case you are asked about the Bentleyville Trip - Cocoa, marshmallows, the visit with Santa, etc. are all free.

The trails around Bentleyville are flat and "ice free", but it is winter. There are a limited number of wheelchairs available, but I would not count on being able to get one. Being able to walk a half mile to a mile might be a reasonable standard.

Bentleyville can be crowded. Hang on to young children.

Warm clothes are a must. If the wind is off the lake, it can be 'bitter'. On rare occasions the event closes because of weather. We will know before we go.

No pets are allowed.

We plan for about 45 minutes at Miller Hill Mall. Plan your meals accordingly. (The Pastor has a list of Mall eating places.....the food court will likely work best.) It's NOT a shopping trip.

Many, many thanks to Ed and Jean Pajunen for providing the buses and drivers for this fun event.

—Pastor Dick Gustafson

THE MUSIC OF CHRISTMAS

The Mesabi East High School choirs, under the direction of Greg Barnes, will present their Christmas concert at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 4th, in the high school auditorium.

A service of Lessons and Carols will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 4th, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Virginia. The service will feature Christmas music performed by local church musical groups interspersed with Scriptures foretelling and declaring Christ's birth. The proceeds of a freewill offering will be given to our local Food Shelf. Christmas cookies, coffee and conversation will follow the service.

The Choralaires, under the direction of Myron Cook, will present their Christmas concert at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, December 9th, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church. There is no admission charge, but there will be a freewill offering for local charities.

The Virginia High School senior high choirs, under the direction of Matt Krage, will present their Christmas concert at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 11th. Following the concert a spaghetti dinner will be served at the Holy Spirit social hall. Proceeds will benefit the a cappella choir,

Voices of Reason, under the direction of Roy Berg, will present Part One of Handel's **Messiah** at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 11th, at Blessed Scarament in Hibbing. There is no admission charge.

COVENANT WORLD RELIEF

Our church's world relief offering this year amounted to \$1625. Thanks to all who gave to help provide relief to the marginalized people of the world.

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Pastoral Search Committee has been formed. The members include: Wayne Christiansen, Julie Phaneuf-Hill, Jean Pajanen, Shirley Koski and Roger Linden. We will be meeting with Jon Kramka, Northwest Conference Director of Congregational Vitality, on Wednesday, December 14th. He will be instructing us regarding the process of our search and specifically directing us as to what needs to happen next. Look for updates in upcoming Newsletters.

– Roger Linden, Chair

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

A committee has been formed to meet periodically with the pastor for the purpose of sharing mutual concerns. Members of the committee are Julie Phaneuf-Hill (chair), Wayne Christiansen, Judy Linden, and Mike Hannay.

COVENANT CARES

Why not give a gift that really counts this year? Covenant Cares is your place to engage and connect with God's work in the world. The Evangelical Covenant Church is more than a network of churches—we are mission friends joining God in making things right in our broken world. We are made up of people like you who faithfully answer the call of Christ to partner together in shared mission.

If you receive the **Covenant Companion**, you also got a copy of the Covenant Cares catalog, which gives you the opportunity to give a gift to support the wholistic ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church around the world. Copies of the catalogue are also available on the table in the fellowship hall.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Virginia Salvation Army needs your help to fill nearly 2000 hours at its red kettles this Christmas. Bell ringers work two hour shifts. Volunteers are also needed to accept donations at the Thunderbird Mall, to sort and count donated toys, and to help with Adopt-a-Family. You may volunteer by calling 741-1889.

COVENANT KIDS CONGO

We have received the following from Bienvenue, the girl our church supports through Covenant Kids Congo:

“Thank you for your support in helping to improve my community so I can have a better life and future. I am 8 years old. Currently I am in grade 4 in primary school. I am learning to read and write. I like to play with dolls. When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. World vision community workers have repeatedly visited me to monitor my well-being. Currently my health is good.

“With your support, I had the freedom to celebrate and have fun with my friends and community. My family and I celebrated our cultural identity and strengthened our community. I was able to demonstrate Christ's love to my neighbors and community. I played sports, learned about teamwork, and developed my skills and health.”

THANK YOU NOTES

Covenant Women of 1st Covenant Church:
Thank you so much for the beautiful quilt for Nathan! That was so generous and thoughtful of you all.

Thanks again,
Matt, Leah, Andrew, and Nathan Hill

The Virginia Police Department would like to express our sincere thanks for financially supporting our child safety and drug prevention education program. We desperately need to reach our children with accurate and vital facts that will educate and help them grow as safe, happy, and responsible citizens. Because of your generous support, we are able to provide well-rounded child safety and drug prevention materials to the children of our community.

Nicole Mattson, Chief
Virginia Police Department

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Stephen Carlson	8th
Ruth Phaneuf	10th
Jim Branstrom	11th
Bob Arvola	18th
Jodie Phaneuf	20th
Barb Johnson	24th

BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Items for the January calendar need to be e-mailed or in the church office by Sunday, December 18th. 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 January issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, December 25th. Items may be submitted by e-mail to wbcchris@q.com. Remember that we are always looking for news of interest for the "Among Us" column.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

It was the day after Christmas at a downtown church in San Francisco. The pastor was out in front looking over the manger scene set up in the front lawn when he noticed that the Christ Child figure was missing,

Right on cue, he turned to see a little boy with a red wagon coming down the street, and in the wagon was the figure of the infant Jesus. So the pastor walked up to the boy and asked, "Well, young man, where did you pick up your passenger?"

"I got Him here, from the church."

"And why did you take Him?"

The little boy replied, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to the Little Lord Jesus, and I told Him if He would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give Him a ride around the block in it."