

FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

First Covenant Church
Virginia, Minnesota
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www.firstcovenantvirginia.org

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A Valentine for Grandma

It was just a harmless prank, that's all it was. And it wasn't as if Old Lady Hayes didn't deserve it. The way she used to scream at us for "borrowing" a few of her precious raspberries each summer, like we were stealing gold out of Fort Knox... well, she had it coming.

At least, that's the way we saw it as George finished tying the string to the red, heart-shaped box. We giggled as Ron added the final touch: two plastic red roses, glued to the lid. "I wonder what will surprise her most," I asked as George practiced jerking the box out of reach by yanking on the string. "Seeing a box of candy on her step, or watching it fly away when she tries to pick it up?"

We laughed as we watched George make Albert chase the box around the garage. For a chubby 10-year-old, Albert did a good imitation of Mrs. Hayes's hunched hobble and her seemingly permanent scowl. And we howled when he picked up a broom and pretended to ride it through the midwinter air while shouting, "I'm Old Lady Hayes, the driedest-up old prune in the West!"

Ron was first to notice my dad in the doorway. Within seconds, Ron's anxiety was shared by all but Albert, who continued to swoop around the garage until he came face-to-belt-buckle with our silent observer. For a moment the only movement in the room came from the little puffs of steam escaping our mouths. Dad broke the stillness by walking slowly to the empty candy box lying on the floor. He picked it up and dangled it by the string, watching it swing back

and forth. Then he looked into the eyes of the frightened boys. And, as was his custom, he looked into their hearts as well.

"It doesn't seem so long ago that I was pulling Valentine's Day pranks," he said as he laid the box on a workbench. "One year my cousins and I decided to pull one on our Grandma Walker even though we loved her -- she was the sweetest grandma a boy could have. We were just feeling devilish and decided to have some fun at her expense.

"Early in the evening we snuck up to her doorstep with a can of red paint. Grandma was hard of hearing, so we didn't have to worry about being very quiet. Which was a good thing, because every time we thought about how funny it was going to be to see Grandma try to pick up a valentine that was just painted on her doorstep, we couldn't keep from laughing.

"It didn't take long, and it wasn't very artistic. But for an old woman with bad eyes, it would do. We kicked the door and hid behind bushes. When Grandma finally appeared she stood in the doorway, her gray hair pulled back tightly into her usual bun, wiping her hands on her usual apron. She must have heard the commotion in the bushes because she looked in our direction and spoke loudly enough for us to hear: 'Who could be knocking at my door?' Then she looked down. Even from 15 feet away we could see the joy in her eyes when she spotted a splash of red at her feet.

"A valentine for Grandma!" she exclaimed. "And I thought I'd be forgotten again this year!"

"She tried to retrieve her prize. This was the moment we had been waiting for, but somehow it wasn't as much fun as we expected. Grandma groped at the fresh paint for a moment. Slowly, she figured out our prank. She tried to smile. Then, with as much dignity as she could muster, she turned and walked back into her house, absently wiping red paint on her clean, white apron."

Dad paused, and for the first time I noticed that his eyes were moist. He took a deep breath. "Grandma died later that year," he said. "I never had another chance to give her a real valentine." He took the box from the bench and handed it to me. Then he turned and left the garage.

Later that night a red, heart-shaped box with two plastic roses on it was placed on Mrs. Hayes's front doorstep by six giggling boys. We hid behind snow-covered bushes to see how she would react to receiving a full pound of candy and nuts.

With no strings attached.

—Joseph Walker

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.**

SERVING CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

Ushers:

Feb. 7—Roger & Judy Linden
Feb. 14—Lloyd & Muriel Stanaway
Feb. 21—Mike Hannay & Carolyn Erickson
Feb. 28—Brian & Julie Hill
Mar. 6—Ken & Linda Pogorelec

Nursery Attendants:

Feb. 7—Jodie Phaneuf
Feb. 14—Gail Johnston
Feb. 21—Julie Hill
Feb. 28—Darlene Reindahl
Mar. 6—Marjean Johnson

Sound Technicians:

Feb. 7—Mike Hannay
Feb. 14—Roger Johnston
Feb. 21—Mike Hannay
Feb. 28—Roger Johnston
Mar. 6—Mike Hannay

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT 12/1/15-12/31/15

Checking account balance as Dec. 1st: **\$314.96**
General Fund income for current period: **\$5815.15**
Average General Fund income to meet annual
budget: **\$6417.58**
Other income: **\$138.00**
Rental income: **\$125.00**
Transfers due to shortage: \$2000.00
Total expenses for current period: **\$6790.19**
Checking account balance as of Dec. 31st: **\$1464.92**

COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES

We have had another successful pasty fundraiser. We are grateful for an excellent crew—47 people were involved. Thanks to all who helped one or both of the days and to all who bought and sold. A special thanks to Barb and family for all their expertise, time, and effort put into making the fundraiser a great success.

COVENANT PARK BIBLE CAMP

The brochures should be available very soon for those wanting to attend Covenant Park this summer. Once again the church is willing to help defray the cost paying 1/2 of the early bird fee for those involved in our Sunday School or grandchildren of those attending our church. Forms need to be filled out and either put in the Covenant Women box at church or mailed to Bernie at 602 South Fifth Avenue, Virginia, no later than [February 29th](#).

MESABI RANGE YOUTH FOR CHRIST

Many of us here in Northern Minnesota really love our coffee. Coffee to us means more than just waking up: it reminds us of warmth, cozy mornings, long conversations, family. So I know that asking you to switch your brew may seem like a long-shot... Here is why it is worth it:

Mesabi Range Youth for Christ is partnering with another non-profit called Singing Rooster Coffee. This organization partners with coffee farmers in Haiti. Singing Rooster works with the farmers by roasting all the coffee, handling marketing, and coaching the farmers in growing a sustainable business. A big part of what Singing Rooster does is open up new markets for delicious Haitian coffee, and what better market for coffee than the cold north!? So your local YFC Chapter is going to begin an on-going coffee sale project.

We buy the coffee from Singing Rooster at a wholesale price, and then we are able to sell it to you as a

fundraiser. We currently have a stand set up at the Youth for Christ Office: 212 S 5th Ave. Virginia.

Each bag of coffee costs \$10 for you to buy. For perspective a bag of Starbucks coffee costs \$9. When you buy our Singing Rooster coffee you know exactly where your money is going: \$7 of the proceeds go to Singing Rooster and the Haitian farmers, and \$3 goes to Mesabi Range YFC! As an added bonus Haitian coffee is the most delicious coffee I have ever tasted.

So here is what we are asking you: Will you try switching to buying your morning coffee from us? By making the simple decision to switch you will be giving more local students a chance to hear about Jesus, and you will be supporting a global effort to better the quality of life for Haiti. Maybe then coffee will also remind you of the love of our Savior.

Stop by and get your bag [today](#)! Our first shipment of coffee is already at the office. We have multiple roast options including medium, French, and decaf. We also have K-cups!

Singing Rooster works directly with the farmers ensuring that more money goes to them! Join us as we unite Mesabi Range YFC and Singing Rooster to open up a new market for these farmers and create a sustainable ministry on the Iron Range.

COVENANT KIDS CONGO

We have received word from World Vision that Louise, the child our church has been sponsoring with Covenant Kids Congo has moved with her family to another area of Congo, where there are more economic opportunities for them. Therefore we have been assigned a new child, a girl named Bienvenue, whose name means “Welcome” in French. Take a look at her picture on the Covenant Kids Congo bulletin board in the fellowship hall, and therein take a minute to sign the Fun Facts card on the table. We will mail the card to World Visoin, and they will forward it to Bienvenue.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Karla Sturdy	13th
Roger Johnston	16th
Steve Skogman	16th
Stephanie Carlson	25th
Lois Johnson	25th

AMONG US

Special wishes go out to Lois Johnson on her birthday on the 25th.

Wayne and Bernie Christiansen spent a week in Reno, Nevada, with Elizabeth and Efraín and Soren and Laila. While there they helped the twins celebrate an early ninth birthday.

BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Items for the March calendar need to be e-mailed or in the church office by Sunday, February 21st. 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 March issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, February 28th. 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.