

# FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

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*First Covenant Church  
Virginia, Minnesota  
741-7117*

[www.firstcovenantvirginia.org](http://www.firstcovenantvirginia.org)

## Choosing a Good Minister

One of the toughest tasks a church faces is choosing a good minister. A member of an official board undergoing this painful process finally lost patience. He'd just witnessed the pastoral relations committee reject applicant after applicant for some minor fault, real or imagined. It was time for a bit of soul-searching on the part of the committee. So he stood up and read this letter purported to be from an applicant:

"Gentlemen: Understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for this position. I have many qualifications. I've been a preacher with much success and also have had some successes as a writer. Some say I'm a good organizer. I've been a leader in most places where I've been.

"I'm over 50 years of age and have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places I have left town after my work caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing.

"My health is not too good, though I still accomplish a great deal. The churches I have preached in have been small though located in large cities.

"I've not gotten along well with religious leaders in towns where I have preached. In fact, some have threatened me and even attacked me physically. I am

not too good at keeping records. I have been known to forget whom I have baptized,

"However, if you can use me, I promise to do my best for you."

The board member turned to the committee and said, "Well, what do you think? Shall we call him?"

The good church folks were appalled! Consider a sickly, troublemaking, absent-minded ex-jailbird? Was the board member crazy? Who signed the application? Who had such colossal nerve?

The board member eyed them all keenly before he replied. "It's signed 'The Apostle Paul'"

—From "Dear Abby"

## 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:

Oct. 2—Mike Hannay & Carolyn Erickson  
Oct. 9—Brian & Julie Hill  
Oct. 16—Ken & Linda Pogorelec  
Oct. 23—Roger & Gail Johnston  
Oct. 30—Shirley Koski  
& Darlene Reindahl

### Nursery Attendants:

Oct. 2—Darlene Reindahl  
Oct. 9—Linda Pogorelec  
Oct. 16—Shirley Koski  
Oct. 23—Jodie Phaneuf  
Oct. 30—Gail Johnston

### Sound Technicians:

Oct. 2--Mike Hannay  
Oct. 9--Roger Johnston  
Oct. 16--Mike Hannay  
Oct. 23--Roger Johnston  
Oct. 30—Mike Hannay

## MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT 8/1/15-8/31/16

Checking account balance as Aug. 1st: **\$539.56**

General Fund income for current period: **\$4246.00**

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

Other income: **\$78.09**

Rental Income: **\$400.00**

Total expenses for current period: **\$2239.07**

Checking account balance as of Aug. 31st: **\$3046.49**

## SCHOOL DAYS, SCHOOL DAZE . . .

Kids have been back in school just over two weeks (staff somewhat longer) as I write this and I realize I still miss the excitement of fall on the school campus. For me as a teacher, it was getting organized for the year, meeting my students and discovering their lives, and efforts to make the coming year the "best yet." Students met teachers, reacquainted themselves with their friends, and many started their fall schedule of athletics, music, and other extra-curricular activities. Football games, Homecoming, and the newness of it all made it a great time of year.

I wonder how many of you realize how hard it is for our Christian students, faculty, and staff to live their Christian faith in the public schools of the 21st Century in the USA. While Jesus Christ encourages us to live the Christian life 24/7, a false interpretation of tradition and law in this country, suggests that a wall of separation exists when a Christian enters a school building. Every teacher and every student beyond maybe 5th or 6th grade, has heard the phrase "separation of church and state." It suggests to some that you cannot talk about, write about, or even mention one's faith in the context of your classroom. How can one explain a life philosophy or deal with many of the issues of the day without mentioning one's faith??? How do you teach American history dealing with those who came here to found new communities based on their faith, or the moral issues of slavery (I know there are other reasons for the Civil War, too, but the moral issue was a part of it), or the Civil Rights movement which comes out of the Black church and is led by Christian pastors (the Southern Christian Leadership Conference). Numerous other examples exist. We cheat our students of their rightful heritage, if we ignore or change the role of the Christian faith in the formation and developmental issues of this country.

In addition, it falsely gives the Christian student the idea that their Christian faith can only be talked about, and acted upon, within the walls of a church and that they are alone and isolated if they profess a living faith in Jesus Christ. How very sad!!

What can we do??? 1) Pray for those in school - students, teachers, and staff. The schools are a "foreign" mission field where spiritual darkness (or outright opposition) tends to dominate. Pray that they

might be "strong and courageous" (First Cov. sermon 9/18/2016 from Joshua 1) for Christ in a manner that is kind and loving. 2) Teach the truth. This is a nation founded on Godly principles, much influenced by the teachings of Christ and the Word of God. Your students might even object, but hearing the truth from a trusted source will have a big influence on your child/grandchild. (See the influence of a godly grandparent in II Timothy 1:5.) 3) Understand that the idea/philosophy of Christianity can stand-up against the ungodly philosophies that circulate in our schools and colleges. (See: Acts 17:16-34) If you know your faith, you can present it in a manner that will be desirable even to the skeptic. In addition, as others see your faith, it will be a profound influence for good.

—Pastor Dick Gustafson

## **COMMUNITY BIBLE EXPERIENCE**

All adults are encouraged to be part of the Community Bible Experience at 11:00 a.m. each Sunday. We are reading the New Testament in story form and discussing our weekly reading in a book club format.

## **QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETING**

We will hold our 3rd quarter business meeting during the Sunday school hour on October 23rd. All members and friends of the church are encouraged to attend.

## **MISSION EVENTS**

Plan now to be at church on Sunday afternoon, October 9th, for a mission event with Steve and Barb Swanson. Barb has been serving under Covenant World Mission in Antwerp, Belgium. working with immigrants and refugees. Steve has served as pastor of the International Protestant Church in Antwerp.

They are now on home assignment as they both prepare to serve under Covenant World Mission in Malmö, Sweden, working with refugees in that city.

At 4:00 p.m. on the 9th, they will tell us about their work in Belgium and what they are looking forward to doing in Sweden. Following their presentation we will have supper together. The Biwabik and Cook Churches have been invited to join us, but that is the afternoon for the Cook Church's Harvest Festival. We hope to see you there!

We have been asked to provide lodging for the Swansons on Sunday night, the 9th. If you are able to help out with that, please let Wayne know.

On Saturday, October 29th, we are invited to Biwabik Covenant for a mission event with Karl and Sue Peterson, Covenant missionaries to Mexico. We will have supper together at 6:00 p.m. (baked potatoes and all the trimmings) followed by a presentation by the Petersons. Mark on the date on your calendar and plan to attend.

## **COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES**

On Tuesday, October 4, Ladies Lunch will begin meeting at Ranger Rock in the MI-B High School. The time will change to 12:30 as the restaurant is closed over the student lunch hour. Those attending need to sign in at the window in the entrance to the school.

Project Day is also changing the day to the second Tuesday of each month. We will still begin at 9:30 We have work for those who sew and those who don't so please plan on joining us.

Don't forget that we are saving cans for Congo. Proceeds are sent to help women and girls. Bring cans to church and place in the steam room.

## WOMEN'S RETREAT

The Covenant Women Fall Retreat was held on [September 16-18th](#) at Covenant Park Bible Camp. The speaker, Kathy Schwanke shared her Message "Fit for a Crown-the Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown." Sharing her stories from her own life experience and scripture we discovered more about how Jesus enables us to live our lives here as daughters of the King of Kings. The retreat was attended by 115 women with 7 from our church. We also enjoyed a Coffee Bar ,which raised \$300.00, and the Silent Auction raising \$1200.00. All proceeds were donated to Covenant Park. We had time to relax, work on crafts, sit by the lake, visit with old and new friends. We even learned how to play Bunko! It was a wonderful, uplifting weekend.

## VIRGINIA SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army will hold a Harvest Carnival and Silent Auction on Saturday, October 1st, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at their facility, 507 12th Ave. W.. Stop by for fun games, delicious food, and great prizes. All proceeds will benefit the Virginia Salvation Army.

The local Salvation Army has been serving Iron Range Communities since 1907. Their Worship and Service Center currently serves over 25 ZIP codes in our area providing food, youth programs, spiritual care, and other critical services to nearly 1900 households. 19,000 hot meals are served per year.

## VOICES OF VIRGINIA

This year's Voices of Virginia concert will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 30th, at Goodman Auditorium. The concert will feature music by the Virginia High School A Cappella choir directed by Matt Krage, A Range of Voices directed by Ann Marie Lubovich, and the Chorales directed by Myron Cook. It will conclude with two massed choir numbers directed by guest conductor/clinician,

former Brainerd High School and Concordia College director Michael Smith. Admission is \$5.00 at the door, with proceeds going to the Virginia A Cappella choir.

## UPDATE FROM JOSH JONES

Thank you for supporting me on my Ecuador mission trip. It was a fun and enriching experience. I learned a lot throughout the trip. One thing I was kind of nervous about for the trip was having to greet everyone whenever I entered a room. But pretty much once I stepped off the plane it seemed almost natural to say hello to everyone because the people there are all so happy and content with their lives. I almost wanted to wave at people as I was riding in a taxi down the street.

When we first arrived at the school, they gave us an amazing welcoming ceremony with lots of singing and dancing. I had a great host family. My host dad, Pablo, could speak fluent English, German, and Spanish, which I thought was pretty cool. My host mom, Maxis, could hardly speak any English, but we could communicate surprisingly well. The family had two kids—Elizabeth, age 9, and Pablo, age 10. They were very fun to connect with.

Throughout the week our church group did a variety of activities. We taught some English by just trying to have simple conversations with the kids. We were always nervous to meet new people, but it got easier and easier as the week went on.

Another thing our group did was to take a trip to Salina beach with the youth group at the church in Guayaquil. It was fun two-hour drive, and we each chose one kid from the youth group to sit by. We were all good friends by the end of the day trip. During the trip we went to other small churches called obras. We would play games and just have fellowship with the kids. Also I helped lead worship services, and it was great chance to see how much the students were passionately devoted to God.

Overall it was a great mission trip that I would definitely do again. Thank you again for your support!

## **RANDY BEVIS**

### **SPECIAL PROJECTS MISSIONARY**

#### **DR Congo**

Randy made a trip to DR Congo after visiting Kenya in February. He traveled with Sheldon Gilmer and Peter Corey of World Hope Canada. It was a good trip and we were able to review the impact of the Fish for Hope Project that World Hope Canada has been running in DR Congo for the last 4 years and see what areas we can further help fish farmers and the CEUM (Covenant Church of DR Congo). We agreed that farmers need a good source of quality tilapia fingerlings at a fair price and so we moved forward with developing the 4 ponds to create a hatchery at the CEUM's IPOC site in Gemena. New breeder fingerlings were brought up from a fisheries professor in Kinshasa. They are growing now and the plan is to start breeding them at this site in the next few months when they reach maturity.

#### **Haiti**

The projects in Haiti are moving forward. Randy visited in March and it was great to see the Taino Aqua Farm processing plant up and running and giving jobs to Haitians and putting fish back into markets. Since the fish were so large they have begun selling fish in pieces for \$1/piece to make it affordable to Haitians as well as selling whole gutted fish and even some fillets to restaurants. Haiti has 70% unemployment and this project is now employing 50 people.

Raphael, the manager of the processing plant, said people are singing while they work and so thankful to have employment.

#### **Thailand**

April found Randy in Thailand with a team from Covenant Heights Bible Camp to help work towards finishing the meeting hall. The fish hatchery in Chiang Mai supports this camp. Randy is putting together another trip to start building cabins November 26th-December 12th.

Prayers are appreciated as northern Thailand went through a 60-year drought this past year and set a all time record for heat in the hot season. This wasn't good for the tilapia breeders and also for fish farmers

who didn't have water to put in their ponds. Pray that the rains would fully recharge the water tables this monsoon (May-Oct) and that the Lord would sustain the fish hatchery during this time.

#### **Kenya**

In June Randy made his second trip to Kenya to help teach breeder selection and bring equipment for the hatchery. This small hatchery is called Big Fish and is one of the only tilapia hatcheries in the area of Western Kenya that is hoping to help provide fingerlings to many small fish farmers in the region.

It is located quite close to Lake Victoria, and Randy got to see the lake where tilapia occur in the wild. The wild fisheries in Lake Victoria is struggling. Over-fishing is an issue but also the the release of Nile Perch, which are very carnivorous and eat tilapia. We saw a boat of these being loaded for a 17 hour trip to a processing plant in Uganda for fillets to Europe. We bought one and it was very good eating! Fisherman we talked to said they are also having trouble making a living catching the Nile perch as their numbers have decreased as well as size. They used to catch some as big as 150 pounds.

### **OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS**

<b>Delphi Hallfors</b>	3
<b>Darlene Reindahl</b>	8
<b>Tim Johnston</b>	18
<b>Julie Hill</b>	25

### **BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES**

Items for the November calendar need to be e-mailed or in the church office by Sunday, October 16th. 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 November issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, October 23rd. Items may be submitted by e-mail to [wbchris@q.com](mailto:wbchris@q.com). Remember that we are always looking for news of interest for the “Among Us” column.

## AMONG US

We as a church are pleased to welcome **Pastor Dick Gustafson**. Pastor Gustafson served the Covenant Churches in Crookston, Minnesota, and Essex, Iowa. He also served as director of Covenant Park Bible Camp and has been a public school teacher. We appreciate so much his willingness to minister in our church during this time of transition.

**Wayne and Bernie Christiansen** together with their friends Tim and Norma Olmscheid spent a week in Springfield, Illinois, attending a Road Scholar program on the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln and the women of that period. They heard excellent presentations and performances as well as visiting the sites in that area. associated with Lincoln.

## ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

A deeply religious man was perched on the roof of his house while floodwaters licked at his feet. His pastor came by in a boat and said, “Get in!” The religious man replied, “No, I’m up here praying, and I know God will grant me a miracle.”

Later the water was up to his waist, and another boat floated by. That rescuer yelled for him to get in. The pray-er responded that God would answer his prayers and give him a miracle.

With the water chin high, a helicopter threw down a rope ladder and told the man to climb to safety. He again turned down the offer, saying “My prayers will be answered.”

He finally gulped his last breath and found himself at the gates of heaven. With broken faith he cried to St. Peter, “I thought God would grant me a miracle. He let me down.”

“I don’t know why you’re complaining,” St. Peter chuckled. “We sent you two boats and a helicopter.”