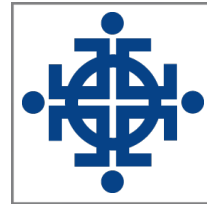


# FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

Volume XLVI - Number 2  
February 2022



*First Covenant Church*  
*Virginia, Minnesota*  
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## PASTOR'S PEN

### Experiencing Jesus

Mark's Gospel gives a wonderful account of Jesus being transfigured while in conversation with two Old Testament characters, Moses and Elijah. Just prior to this transfiguration experience Jesus began to tell his disciples about his approaching death. He told them that after three days he would rise again. His disciples didn't want to hear about such things. After these difficult teachings, the disciples must have felt confused and depressed by all that Jesus was trying to tell them. Humanly speaking, they just couldn't grasp it.



About a week later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to the mountain to pray.

As the night advanced, as the disciples might have been dozing off, something happened. The very appearance of Jesus started to change right before their eyes. They knew that it was really Jesus. Previously dressed in a dull, dusty robe from the day, he was now wearing a GLISTENING WHITE ROBE that "became DAZZLING white--whiter than any bleach could make it." His face shone with the glory of the

Lord. Luke's account says that His clothes "became as bright as a flash of lightning." It is hard for us to imagine such an experience as this. Scripture says it was a good experience, but it was also a frightening one.

This experience revealed to them another side of their Master, the DIVINE side. The disciples could not be powerful witnesses until they had grasped this truth, and neither can we. We have to know that Jesus has ALL power and ALL authority or else our prayers and witness are weak. The disciples had to see with their own eyes this divine side of Him. The transfiguration that took place in His appearance showed them that he was no mere man. The change took place GRADUALLY before their very eyes and it started from the INSIDE outward. Matthew Henry comments that "the light shone not UPON Him but from WITHIN him. He was illumined with heavenly glory and it was HIMSELF glorified--not just His CLOTHES. Jesus said, "I AM the light of the world (John 8:12).

When he changed GRADUALLY, the disciples knew it was Jesus. I John 1:1,2 gives us another reason for this experience. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard and seen with OUR EYES, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared and we have seen it and testify to it and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the father and has appeared to us."

It was Peter, James, and John who were eyewitnesses to bear record of Jesus to the world. They could say, "I saw it with my own eyes. I saw the one who came from heaven. I know what I am talking about." John says this in his gospel, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld HIS GLORY and the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."

And Peter in his second letter: (II Peter 1:16-18). "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus--BUT WE WERE EYEWITNESSES."

We can say, "Yes, this has happened to me. It is so real! And it has changed me from the inside out!" You see, when we experience the presence of Christ in our life, something happens, we become new creatures because of the work that Christ does in our lives. "If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation." Scripture continues to say "...we are being changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of God." We can tell people, "I KNOW WHO JESUS IS because I have experienced the transformation that the Lord brings."

When someone asks you who this Jesus is, what kind of answer can you give? Is it an answer that you were taught as a child in Sunday School that you continue to hold so you might be able to rattle off a credible answer to such a question? Or can you give an answer, which speaks, from your own personal experience of Christ? What things have you EXPERIENCED in your life that has changed you from the inside out; things that you knew had to be a work of the Lord and not of yourselves?

Now people don't have transfiguration experience on a regular basis, but our Lord does reveal himself to anyone who would be opened to receive. We can know through experience of his love, and kindness, and righteousness, and wisdom, and power, and so much more.

## 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. 6 — Roger & Judy Linden  
Feb. 13 — Brian & Julie Hill  
Feb. 20 — Roger & Gail Johnston  
Feb. 27 — Wayne & Bernie Christiansen  
Mar.. 6 — Shirley Koski

### Church caretakers for the week of . . .

Feb. 7 — Roger & Judy Linden  
Feb 14 — Lucas & Cassie Hill  
Feb. 21 — Pastor Dennis & Mary Anders  
Feb. 28 — Roger & Gail Johnston  
Mar. 7 — Wayne & Bernie Christiansen  
& Audrey Branstrom

## MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT 12/1/21-12/31/21



Checking account balance as  
Dec.. 1st: **\$31,755.45**

General Fund income for  
current period: **\$6903.00**

Other income: **\$84.60**

Steam conversion donation: **\$275.00**

Total expenses for current period: **\$5,096.50**

Checking account balance as of Dec.31st:  
**\$33,861.95**



Our church will observe Ash Wednesday with a service on March 2nd.

## COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES



When our church council recently zoomed with Evens Paul, Covenant missionary in Haiti, he was asked if there was a need for dresses. When the answer was “yes,” we decided to resume making dresses. We extended our time from 9:30 to 2:00. With 5 ladies busy sewing, pressing, and threading elastic, 16 dresses were completed. In February we will meet on Saturday, February 12, from 9:30-3:00 and also on our regular day, February 15. We will also start making simple shorts for boys.

The Spring Renewal event for Women of the Northwest Conference will be held at Alexandria Covenant Church on March 25-26. The theme is “Revive and Rejoice” with Kristina Lunde as speaker. You may register on line at [www.wmnlwc.org](http://www.wmnlwc.org) or forms will be available at church. Deadline for registering is March 12. We hope to have a number of women attend.

We were given \$500.00 for our Triennial Fund in our memory of Donna Fleetwood. This is especially appreciated as we are no longer doing an annual pasty sale to add to that fund.



We have found out that some of our boxes were sent to Paraguay and others went to a hard-to-reach area. We are encouraged to continue to pray for the children who received these boxes.



## BILL'S HOUSE

Thank you for your generously donating to Thanksgiving dinner for Bill's House! On Tuesday, November 23, we were able to deliver a turkey dinner with all the fixings for the residents—not just a dinner but the ingredients for several meals with the leftovers. There was enough money to provide fruit, cider, coffee, relishes, and with the remaining \$10 a 1/2 pound of turtles from Canelake's. A card was enclosed from all of us at First Covenant. Special thanks to Barb Knapper for coordinating this outreach ministry.



Mrs. Epiya's twins are no longer malnourished. Community health workers, trained through the CKC partnership, taught her and other caregivers how to prepare locally available foods to prevent childhood malnutrition.

“Today, my family is protected from malnutrition,” says Mrs. Epiya. “My sincere thanks to God and the community health workers' team for a commendable job.”

### Other important highlights include:

- A total of **57,234 people** in Gemena, DR Congo have gained access to clean water.

- **44,967 mothers and caregivers** have attended nutritional training on best cooking practices.
- 75 community-based organizations and partners have been trained in organizational capacity building, and 300 organizations and partners have been trained in business processes.
- **5,155 children** have participated in Bible studies and Bible camp. Local churches guided parents to recognize the value of these activities, which dramatically increased participation.

These are amazing achievements made with our partners in DR Congo! And yet, serious challenges remain. Malnutrition is on the rise in the northwest region, especially in increasingly difficult economic times. **We ask for your prayers for children who are malnourished or lack access to clean water.**

Thank you so much for continuing to support this partnership – your prayers and generosity are deeply needed!

## CONVERSATIONS FOR CONGO

This past week was to have been the Pastor and Spouse Conference of the CEUM, but by December 16 it was becoming evident that a new COVID wave was hitting Congo and, for the first time ever, affecting North and South Ubangi in a significant way.

That day I spoke to President Duale and much of our discussion revolved around COVID.

The week of Christmas I spoke to him again. He told me that COVID had finally touched the central CEUM hospital at Karawa with a dozen cases and two deaths. Furthermore, the CEUM had decided to postpone the conference until March and I canceled my flight to Kinshasa accordingly. The hospital is taking this outbreak seriously. As a result, there have been no additional cases since January 14.

This past month I have been busy translating year-end reports, helping to work out scheduling in light of COVID, advising others who are preparing to

travel to Congo, and preparing documentation for a FOWM project to strengthen CEUM administrative capacity.

Thank you for caring about Congo and about my personal ministry journey. I will write again as soon as my adjusted schedule is finalized.

—Craig Wickstrom



Julio has been admitted to **Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) in Oxford, England as a part-time research scholar** and will begin the OCMS PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH INDUCTION in September 2022. This is the first of three phases in completing their Research Programme for PhD. That's right, after prayer and discernment, God has led us to take this step towards pursuing a PhD. (Julio will be studying, Katie and the kids supporting him in the process).

OCMS, in a collaborative partnership with Middlesex University, offers a Doctor of Philosophy for researchers, mainly in Asia, Africa and Latin America who are engaged in mission and ministry **to remain in their ministries while pursuing their research degree.**

Julio will begin online in September 2022 with research induction and then will spend the month of October in Oxford, meeting with his advisers and will develop a research portfolio including a research proposal. The OCMS program is part-time and allows him to continue living and serving in Colombia, while engaging online. Each year he will go to Oxford for 4-6 weeks. It is our hope and prayer that in 2022 Katie and the boys will be able to join him.

Currently, the focus of Julio's research is to explore a biblical approach to peacebuilding, measuring the wholistic impact that it produces when it is put into



practice in a region where socioeconomic and environmental conflict exists. He will be focusing research in El Bagre (Colombia) and the Be Peace Make Peace program. Through this PHD, Julio will have new tools to contribute to churches, seminaries, and Christian ministries who are equipping people in contexts with conflict. This program is an asset to his ministry in Colombia, as he serves in the areas of peacebuilding and equipping leaders through theological education. Julio's passion has always been about applying scholarship in ways that make it accessible to lay people in practical ways. This PhD. program will allow him to do this.

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



<b>Roger Johnston</b>	16th
<b>Steve Skogman</b>	16th
<b>Bill King</b>	22nd
<b>Stephanie Carlson</b>	25th
<b>Leo Hill</b>	25th

## THANK YOU NOTES



Mary and I wish to thank you for the monetary gift on Christmas Eve. It has been a wonderful year in serving you as pastor and look forward to what God has yet in store for us.

— — Pastor and Mary

On behalf of the VHS Class of 2022 All Night Graduation Party Committee, thanks you for your support! Thanks for your donation!

The Virginia Police Department would like to express our sincere thanks for financially supporting our child safety and drug education program. You have recognized that we need to reach our children, parents, and senior citizens with accurate facts and information. Thank you again from the Virginia Police Department and all those who benefit from the program.

—Nicole Mattson, Chief of Police



**Mike and Kathy Hannay** are spending some time in the warm climes of Alabama.

We extend our Christian sympathy to **Darlene Reindahl** and family on the death of her

sister Delphi Hallfors, who died on December 27th at the age of 87.

## BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES



Items for the March calendar need to be e-mailed to Linda Pogorelec ([pogy56@q.com](mailto:pogy56@q.com)) by Sunday, February 20th. Weekly bulletin items should be e-mailed or brought to the church office by 9:00 a.m. Wednesday.

Items for the March issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, February 20th. 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