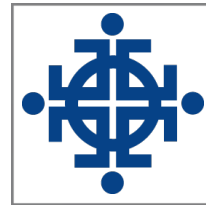


FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

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First Covenant Church
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PASTOR'S PEN

To Dance With God

One time my family was visiting our in-laws, and I was given permission to take whatever books my mother-in-law had on her bookshelves. One of the many books I was able to glean was Gertrude Mueller's To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration.



She begins her very first chapter with this story:

“Some years ago, I spent an afternoon caught up in a piece of sewing I was doing. The waste basket near my sewing machine was filled with scraps of fabric cut away from my project. This basket of discards was a fascination to my daughter Annika, who, at the time, was not yet four years old. She rooted through the scraps searching out the long bright strips, collected them to herself, and went off. When I took a moment to check on her, I tracked her whereabouts to the back garden where I found her sitting in the grass with a long pole. She was affixing the scraps to the top of the pole with great sticky wads of tape. “I’m making a banner for a procession,” she said. “I need a procession so that God will come down and dance with us.” With that she solemnly lifted her banner to flutter in the wind and slowly she began to dance.”

I think we all want to dance with God. I think that is why we take the time to reflect where we are in life. We long to experience God's presence moving and flowing and dancing in our lives. The difficulty is that when we dance with God, we want to choose the music, the dance step, and we want to lead. That's one of the reasons why Lent is sometimes such a hard sell for anyone. We're all glad to dance to the music of the angels at the birth of the baby Jesus. We like to skip down the streets of Bethlehem with the shepherds. We love to rock the baby to sleep with a lullaby. But dancing with God for Lent is a different thing.

The thing is that we don't choose God's Lenten music. Lent is a time to listen and follow. If we listen carefully, we will hear the music of our souls, for God has recorded within us extraordinary music, which is in harmony with all of God's good creation.

One of the Holy Habits we can always cultivate in any season, but especially in Lent is the habit of prayer. Prayer is a hard thing to do. Among other things, we can get hung up about whether we are doing it right. Here's some good news: the only way you can pray wrong is to not pray at all. We are surrounded with God's goodness and grace. The Holy Spirit takes our feeble, sometimes silly, sometimes selfish prayers and turns them into prayers worthy of God. If you don't believe me just look in your Bible in Romans 8:26 which says, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with

sighs too deep for words.” So remember you can’t go wrong by praying. Just set a time and talk to God and then listen how God might speak to you.

Another thing that bothers most people is that when they pray, they seem to get distracted. That is especially true when we are trying to listen for God’s word. There is an old story about St. Bernard—not the dog but a writer and teacher of the church in the 12th Century, who once had a friend who told him he never had any distractions. Bernard confessed to having trouble with them. The two were out horseback riding when St. Bernard said, “I will give you this horse, if you can say the Lord’s Prayer without being distracted. Now get off your horse and let me hear you begin.” His friend dismounted and got as far as the words, “Give us this day our daily bread,” when he looked at Bernard and asked, “Can I have the saddle, too?”

We’re all like that. We get distracted. It’s not a new problem. And there is a simple remedy. Let go of that distraction and calmly return to being attentive in your prayers, whether it be in the speaking or the listening. Most distractions do come and go. So... just let them go and allow your prayers to proceed.

As we take the journey of Lent, may we find ourselves examining our lives and discovering new ways to be drawn closer to God, yield more fully to him, and serve God and others better. Amen.

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:

Mar. 6—Shirley Koski
Mar. 13—Wayne & Bernie Christiansen
Mar. 20—Brian & Julie Hill
Mar. 27—Roger & Gail Johnston
Apr. 3—Roger & Judy Linden

Church caretakers for the week of . . .

Mar. 7—Wayne & Bernie Christiansen
& Audrey Branstrom
Mar. 14—Shirley Koski & Barb Knapper
Mar. 21—Russ & Stephanie Carlson
Mar. 28—Brian & Julie Hill
Apr. 4—Jeffrey & Heather Jones



MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

1/1/22-1/31/22

Checking account balance as
Jan. 1st: **\$33,861.95**

General Fund income for cur-
rent period: **\$7,467.00**

Other income: **\$193.86**

Steam Conversion Donations: **\$275.00**

Total expenses for current period: **\$9,840.12**

Checking account balance as of Jan. 31st: **\$31,908.83**



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Daylight Saving Time begins
on Sunday, March 13th. Re-
member to set your clocks
a h e a d one hour so
you’re not late for church!

FOOD SHELF MONTH



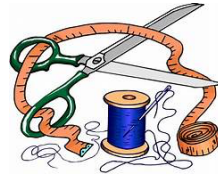
The Quad City Food Shelf invites us to help them raise money and collect food during the Minnesota Food Share March Campaign. During this campaign the Food Shelf receives a partial match for any food or cash donated. The number of families they serve has grown to an average of 500 per month. Eligible families receive a five-day supplement of food. Often times this is the little extra help needed to make spending decisions easier when high winter utility bills, unexpected repairs, and medical expenses may also be vying for dollars from a household's food budget. This year the need is greater than usual because of families dealing with the pandemic.

Food items most needed at the food shelf are canned meats, soups, stews, chili, canned fruit and vegetables, cereal, pasta, and crackers. Paper products such as toilet tissue, paper towels, disposable diapers, and personal hygiene products are always appreciated.

Cash donations are primarily used to purchase food from Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank. Their network connects with manufacturers, distributors, grocers, farmers, and restaurateurs in order to rescue surplus food. As a result, some of the products are distributed to the food shelf at minimal cost.

Each year our church participates in the Food Shelf March Campaign. During the month you may leave your donations in the box in the front entryway. Checks should be made out to the Quad City Food Shelf. As you consider making a donation, know that it truly makes a difference in the lives of Northland individuals and families.

COVENANT WOMEN MINISTRIES



We had two very productive project days in February, allowing us to complete many shorts for boys and dresses for girls. We will be sending them to Haiti for use by the Pauls, Covenant missionaries. We received over \$200 worth of fabric from the owners of Material Girl, as the store is closing this week. The material given was extra wide, making it excellent for dresses for older girls. We will take a break in March and resume in April on our regular 3rd Tuesday.

Spring Renewal will be held March 25-26 in Alexandria. Talk to Shirley if you are interested in attending.

COVENANT PARK BIBLE CAMP

Registrations are now open for summer camps. Our church will again cover half the cost for campers. Scholarship money is also available. Talk to Bernie if you know of a potential camper.



On behalf of Covenant World Relief and development (CWRD), thank you for your ongoing commitment to our humanitarian ministry partners around the world. We are thankful for your gift in-2021!

Your donation helped us provide \$1.74 million grants between July 2020 and June 2021. These grants were awarded to 38 partner organizations in 45 countries, including \$634,000 in COVID-19 relief grants. Since June we have approved another 13 projects for a total of \$444,609. In addition to the transformative work of community development, CWRD has responded through our partners to disas-

ters in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Haiti, Myanmar, Israel/Palestine, India, Nepal, and Thailand.

As a ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church, CWRD raises 100% of its budget through designated gifts from individuals and churches. Your support makes it possible for us to minister through global partners who are engaged in live-changing ministries, including clean water projects, peacemaking, and refugee care. This kind of ministry impact is only possible because of faithful donors and churches like First Covenant Church.

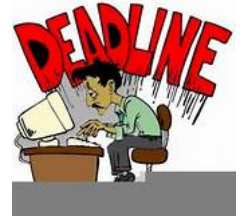
Thank you for helping Covenant World Relief and Development as we continue partnering with God to stand with vulnerable and marginalized communities for holistic transformation and justice.

In partnership
Adam Edgerly, CWRD Director

Audrey Branstrom is spending time with family in Michigan and Illinois.

BULLETIN AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

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



Items for the April issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in or emailed to Wayne (wbchris@q.com) by Sunday, March 20th.. Remember that we are always looking for news of interest for the “Among Us” column.

MARCH BIRTHDAY

Russ Carlson 8th



AMONG US

Paul and JD Johnston were part of a Lakeview Christian Academy mission trip in Reynosa, Mexico.



Grace Koski, Shirley’s granddaughter and the daughter of Brian and Tricia Koski of Elk River, has joined the Air National Guard based in Duluth

and is in basic training in Texas at this time. She is also a freshman at UMD.

Shirley Koski traveled to Utah to visit daughter Lynette and family.

