

FIRST COVENANT LAMPLIGHTER

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May 2023**



First Covenant Church
Virginia, Minnesota
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ASCENSION DAY

One of the earliest Christian festivals, Ascension Day marks the end of the Easter season. We commemorate Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven (as per Christian belief) by celebrating Ascension Day, which occurs on the Thursday, which is 40 (or 39) days after Easter. This year, it will take place on May 18. Known by multiple names — The Feast of the Ascension, The Ascension of Jesus, Ascension Thursday, Holy Thursday, or Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord — this is a Christian holiday that doubles as a public holiday in many countries like Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, and more.

As per the New Testament in the Bible, after Jesus Christ's crucifixion on Good Friday, he was resurrected from the dead in three days, on the day we know as Easter Sunday. For 40 days after this, he stayed with his Apostles (the primary disciples of Christ) to instruct them on how to carry out his teachings. As the Bible says, at the end of day 40, Jesus Christ and his disciples went to Mount Olivet (or the Mount of Olives), near Jerusalem. After asking them to stay, Christ then ascended to heaven to take his seat at the right hand of God, under the gaze of his disciples. To Christians, the ascension signifies that Christ completed his work on Earth and allowed him to prepare a place for his followers in heaven.

Here, forty days after experiencing the impossible, grappling with the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead, the disciples are again standing in awe. The fact is they had seen Jesus raise people from the dead, so his resurrection, while startling and amazing, wasn't without some precedence. But never had

they seen a person's body ascend into heaven. This was totally new, so new that they stood there gazing into heaven with such wonder that two men in white had to come and jolt them from their dumbfound gaze. The Ascension left the disciples with questions like when would Jesus return and where exactly did he go? But, the Ascension also called the early church to ministry and sent them forth into the world in a bold new way.

The Ascension, more than any other event, is about the witness of the church. It is about who we are called to be as a people filled with the Holy Spirit and sent to boldly declare to the world that Jesus is Lord. Luke tells the story of the Ascension not once, but twice, telling it both in the last chapter of his gospel and the first chapter of Acts. The event of Jesus' ascension is both the end of Jesus' embodied time on earth and the beginning of the church. Often we think of the church forming at Pentecost, but the church was already gathered at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. At Pentecost we see the early church empowered to move forward in the mission Jesus had given them at the Ascension; being witnesses to all the earth.

It was at the Ascension that the disciples are told to go and be witnesses to the ends of the earth, to wait for the Spirit and to go on with full knowledge that Jesus will come back again just as they saw him go. This is still the mission of the church today. The Feast of the Ascension reminds the Church who we are and what our primary mission is. It answers the questions, 'what is the church called to do' and 'who are we called to be?'

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:

May 7—Roger & Judy Linden
May 14—Mike & Kathy Hannay
May 21—Brian & Julie Hill
May 28—No worship service
Jun. 4—Wayne & Bernie Christiansen

Church caretakers for the week of . . .

May 7—Shirley Koski & Barb Knapper
May 14—Russ & Stephanie Carlson
May 21—Brian & Julie Hill
May 28—Jeffrey & Heather Jones
Jun. 4—Mike & Kathy Hannay

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT 3/1/23-3/31/23

Checking account balance as Mar. 1st: **\$33,939.70**

General Fund income for current period: **\$6,450.00**

Other income: **\$204.56**

Total expenses for current period: \$3,478.94

Checking account balance as of Mar. 31st:
\$37,110.76

COVENANT PARK BIBLE CAMP

Due to issues with reaching a quorum at the Camp Annual Meeting and consequently being unable to conduct official business in recent history, the Camp Board has taken on the task of revising the Constitution and Bylaws of CPBC to better reflect current organization and practice for the present and future health of camp. We believe the timeliness of moving these changes forward as new governing documents is critical. Therefore, the Camp Board has chosen to hold two special meetings to complete the presentation and voting process as outlined in the current constitution. We ask that you send 1 voting delegate (which may be a pastor or church member) to each of these meetings to allow camp to move forward. It is essential that we are able to adopt these changes, which will require delegates from the churches (no less than 1 person from 8 different churches) to be present to vote. On May 9, at 1pm at Covenant Park: changes to Constitution and Bylaws will be presented. On June 24, at 10:30am at Covenant Park we will vote on proposed changes to Constitution and Bylaws/

Please take action to ensure that 1 person from your church can be present at both of these meetings. Additional people may attend, but each church will be granted 1 vote. Bernie is able to attend the May 9th meeting but not the June 24th meeting. If no one from your church is able to attend please consider contacting James Walsh, District Ministerium Chairman to arrange a proxy vote (james@missioncovenantchurch.org).

Two work days are scheduled to prepare the camp for the upcoming season. The first one is very soon, Saturday May 6. The second is on May 20. We are in great need of any and all who can come and help get our camp ready for summer! There is much to be done from painting to cleaning to yard work to construction to getting the waterfront ready to gardening, etc. No special skills are necessary! Camp is a very important and unique place and needs much attention. We are excited for the campers that will be coming this summer and want to be ready!

SPRING CONCERT

The Choralaires, under the direction of Myron Cook, will present their annual Spring Concert at 7:00 PM on Friday, May 5th, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church and at 2:00 PM on Sunday, May 7th, at the Our Savior's Lutheran Church. The concert will feature a variety of sacred numbers, popular songs, and folk songs, including solos and small group selections. There is no admission charge, but a freewill offering will be received.

FAREWELL TO GOODMAN AUDITORIUM

As you know, the Virginia High School will be closed this summer as the Rock Ridge School District prepares to move into the new high school building in the fall. Performances will no longer be held in Goodman Auditorium but rather in the Performing Arts Center in the new school.

To commemorate this event, a special concert will be held in Goodman Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 20th. The concert will feature the premier performance of **Mesabi: The Sleeping Giant**, a major work composed for the occasion by Dr. René Clausen, retired conductor of the Concordia College Choir in Moorhead, Minnesota. The piece will be sung by a choir of about seventy-five members accompanied by the Mesabi Symphony Orchestra and the Rock Ridge High School orchestra,

There are 1300 tickets available for the concert, and they are selling fast. It is expected that there will not be any tickets available at the door. Tickets are \$20 and may be ordered on-line at mesabisymphony-orchestra.org.

VISIT TO THE AMPARO Y FORTALEZA COVENANT CHURCH

During our time in Oaxaca, Mexico, this past March, we took a cab to the Amparo y Fortaleza Covenant Church, where two mission teams from our church worked a few years ago. On our first time there we helped with the construction of the

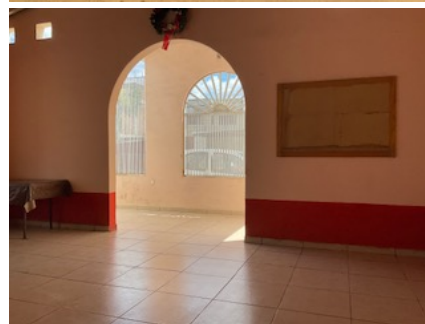
church foundation. During the second time, we painted two of the smaller rooms. Both times we were involved with a Bible school for church and neighborhood children.

It was good for us to attend the worship service at the church once again and to see Pastor Julio, his family, and the friends from the church. During the service I presented a greeting in Spanish from our church here in Virginia.

Since our last mission trip, the people of the church have completed the building, which is very attractive. Below are photos of the church and of Pastor Julio and his family.

Please remember the church in your prayers as they seek to be a witness to the community where they are located.

—Wayne & Bernie



MESABI RANGE YOUTH FOR CHRIST

For more than forty years, Mesabi Range Youth For Christ has been pursuing Christ-centered relationships with students and seeing Jesus transform lives on the Iron Range. Nearing the end of 2022, our board of directors began prayerfully seeking a new executive director, leading to Jake Grass pursuing the opportunity and beginning in January. At the same time, God was uniting three churches to purchase a facility in Hibbing. Less than a block away from Hibbing High School, this facility will be utilized as our ministry center beginning as soon as this summer. We are excited to see the expansion of MRYFC to the West Range, reaching Chisholm and Hibbing. God has been planting dreams in the hearts of our staff regarding the West Range for over a year, and He has been providing the means to see those dreams to come to fruition. With the new site in Hibbing and our current site in the Quad Cities, we desire to provide at each location:

- A safe space for 11 -19 year-olds to gather
- Being open after school until 6:00 p.m. multiple days a week
- Serving free hot meals
- Genuine Christ-centered discussions of social-emotional issues
- Planned activities to facilitate genuine connections and trust
- Christ-centered relationships between youth and trusted adults

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Roger Linden	1st
Sue Arvola	4th
Darrell Knapper	7th
Ken Pogorelec	8th
Sid Reindahl	17th
Carolyn Erickson	25th
Gunnar Carlson	31st



AMONG US

Audrey Branstrom spent several weeks visiting family in Chicago and Michigan.

BULLETIN, CALENDAR, AND NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Items for the June calendar need to be e-mailed to pogy56@gmail.com by Sunday, May 21st. Weekly bulletin items should be e-mailed to wbchris@q.com by the Wednesday before they are to appear.

Items for the June issue of the **Lamplighter** should be turned in by Sunday, May 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