



COVENANT MATTERS!

The Newsletter of the Saints at Covenant Presbyterian Church

Please remember CPC in your estate planning!

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From the Pastor's Heart:

"Old & New"

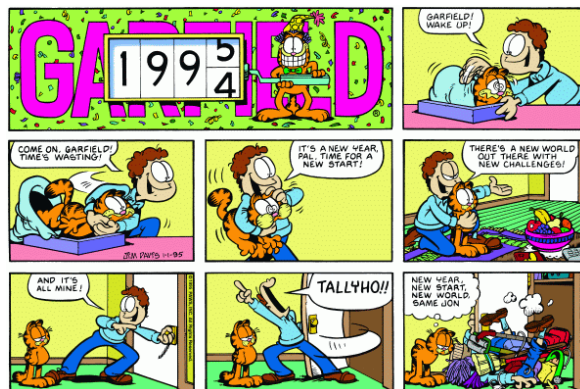
In his book, *Praying for a Whole New World*, my good friend Bill Carter, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit, PA (who, by the way, will bring his Jazz group, PresbyBop, to Covenant for an April 12 concert and lead worship on April 14), tells the story of a priest in a certain Midwestern city who wanted to help inner-city children see something more than their own situations. So he put them on a bus and took them to see some things of great beauty. Children went to the art museum and saw paintings by the masters. They went to a symphony matinee and heard beautiful music. They went for a walk through a neighborhood of homes that were done over by a creative team of architects. That young priest showed those children the best and brightest things he knew.

Then the kids climbed back on the bus and went home. That night, one of those young boys set his apartment house on fire. His neighbors and family members were rescued, but the place burned down. The priest was in tears when he visited the boy in a detention cell. "Why did you do it?" he asked.

"I saw all those beautiful things," said the boy, "and then I came home and saw how ugly my world was, and I hated the ugliness, so I wanted to burn it down."

Carter then writes, "Shine some light in a dark place and there's no telling what will happen. When all you have ever seen is darkness, that is all you know. And when light comes, it makes for a contrast. Darkness remains a choice. In fact, it is possible for light to come into the world, and for somebody to say, "Turn out the lights!" It is possible for the Light of the world to shine on people and for those people to not accept it" [Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing, 2000].

And sometimes too, even if we really wanted to live into the reality of the new, our old selves often get in the way. One of my favorite Garfield comic strips is this one on how excited Jon is about the new year:



Continued on next page ...

SESSION

Class of 2023

Pat Arner
Jef Farlow
Dick Negley
Barbara Shafer

Class of 2024

John Anderson
David Beardsley
Beverly Grady
Mary Lee Mann

Class of 2025

Mary Watford Armes
Chris Larson
Verona Lawson
Deborah Maurer

Rev. Bill Teng

Moderator / Interim Pastor

Barbara Heflin

Clerk of Session

DIACONATE

Class of 2023

Ellen Moore
Darci Hillyer
Sandy Roberts
Rosemary Wallace

Class of 2024

Jeff Coffman
Barbara O'Neil
Dorothy Mae Wert
Patricia Zimmerman,
Moderator

Class of 2025

Tamera Bilicic
Jane Kaserman
Carroll Negley
Hank Sawyer

TRUSTEES

Wilson Wheeler (2023)
Beverly Beardsley (2024)
Richard Shafer (2025)

COVENANT MATTERS!

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... From the Pastor's Heart, continued

Old and new: As Christian believers, we do live in a new world but it's a new world not yet fully realized — there are still many fears and hang-ups that we have to deal with in the old reality — disappointments, diseases, pains and sorrows, the threat of a failed economy, the winds of war along with acts of terrorism by rogue states, of a disintegrating social existence, with increasing uncivilized public behaviors.

But does it mean then we should despair over them, or just be in denial, or to withdraw from the world altogether? No, we need to face it fully and then to decide that the light has more truth than the darkness.

As we become the children of God, "the Father of glory" (Ephesians 1:17-19) begins to move in on our old world: In this moment of special communication, the light dawns, not just on our ears by the spoken word, but also begins to open our imaginations — The grip of the old rhetoric, and of the fearful ideology that traps us, begins to loosen — the Child has been born, the Light has shown, we are already new children of God and the eyes of our hearts have been enlightened!

As we begin tentatively to live in the new world, let's trust the hope that has been given to us, let it help us begin to live in new ways, especially in this new year, seeing "beyond the tears and pains and sorrows" and see and experience how God is able to help us overcome these old fears.

Let us turn loose our resentful world and live anew — the Epiphany is not necessarily a cognitive event, but it is deeply transformative of our common life. Christmas doesn't just celebrate the babe of Bethlehem, it also celebrates the eternal Word, as close as breathing, and as powerful as the very breath of God.

Yours in Christ,



All Church Retreat



Save the Date! April 12-14

Fun, friends, and God's beautiful creation! What more could we ask for? We will be joining at Cedarkirk, Peace River Presbytery's Camp and Conference Center. Activities for all ages and stages are available; maybe you just want to sit on the porch and watch the action. The entire congregation is invited.

December Session Highlights

The Session met on Monday, December 18, 2023, with Interim Pastor, Rev. Bill Teng, moderating the meeting, and 9 elders participating. Others present were Pastor of Visitation, Rev. Winston Lawson; Barbara Heflin, Clerk of Session; Gary Brothers, Business Manager; Jane Kaserman, Deacon representative.

- Sustained the examination of the newly elected elders and deacons. They will be **ordained/installed during the worship service on Sunday, January 14.**
- Approved the following dates for youth events: January 3 - Lock-in on campus; January 6 - trip to Tampa Aquarium; January 15 - trip to Snow Cat Ridge.
- Approved a **New Member/Inquirer Class for Saturday, January 20, 9:30am-12noon.**
- Received first reading of 2024 Operating Budget from Finance Committee.
- Approved moving the Session meeting in January to **Monday, January 22, 6:00pm.**
- Mark your calendars for the **Fred Moyer Piano Concert on January 12, 7:30pm** and the **Brass Music Elements Big Band, January 26, 7:30pm.** These concerts are part of the Friends of the Concert Series.

Chili Cookout, January 21

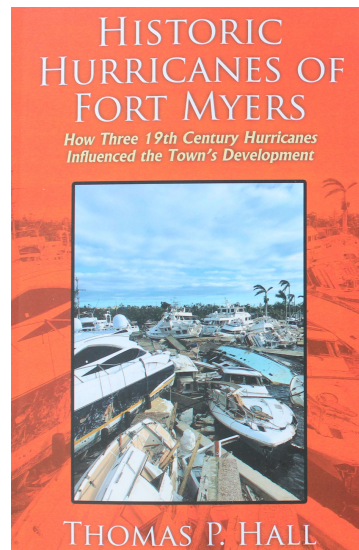


It's not really a competition; just bring your favorite chili to share. We will provide PB&J for those who may not want chili. This is our monthly gathering, and we invite all to join us after worship in Fellowship Hall.

WML: Historic Hurricanes of Fort Myers

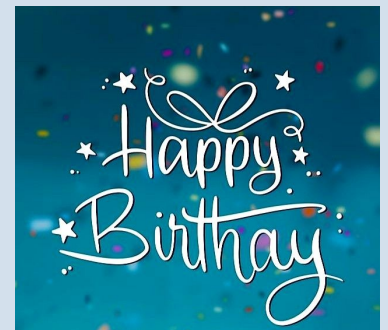
This year Covenant will hold one event for the Wednesday Morning Live program featuring Tom Hall and his book, *Historic Hurricanes of Fort Myers*, on **Wednesday, February 21.** Continental breakfast begins at 9:30am and the program will run from 10-11am.

Thomas P. Hall is an art journalist, arts advocate, and local historian. He has authored three books. In his new book, *Historic Hurricanes of Fort Myers*, Tom Hall offers a history of severe storms that have impacted southwest Florida dating all the way back to 1841, but he also provides a dire warning about this area's severe risk from hurricanes and storm surge in general.



January Birthdays

- 2 Marti Francis
- 3 Nancy Apple
Don Scherzer
- 4 Megan Sprung
Charles Tebbetts
Laurie Ward
- 5 DeAnne Sawyer
- 6 Helen King
- 7 Joan Cady
- 8 Winston Lawson
- 9 Connie Burkert
Joan Halpern
- 11 Don Berglund
Crispin Bishop
Preston Bishop
- 13 Charlene Staton
- 14 Haley Sprung
Mary Callaway
Clayton Lambing
- 18 Dorothy Campbell
- 19 Frank Mann, Jr.
- 20 Barbara Sheets
- 25 Sara Hamilton
- 27 Chelsea Carter
Steve Callaway
Susan Jones
- 29 Ian Mann



January Anniversaries

January 3
Scott and Deborah
Maurer

January 4
Wilson and Rosalind
Wheeler

January 20
Charles and Sass
Edwards



Worship God

"We are gathered around the same book, the same cup and loaf, the same baptismal waters, all speaking of the mercy of God for the life of the world" (see John 6:51).

"Worship God" is our focus this month. The following is from the discussion:

Worship is adoration of our creator through silence, words, gestures, and songs in which we express our gratitude to God for all of God's gifts to us. Worship is joy; worship is praise; worship is the acknowledgement that we believe in something-someone-greater than ourselves. Scholar Marva Davis has said, "To worship the Lord is-in the world's eyes-a waste of time. It is, indeed, a royal waste of time, but a waste nonetheless. By engaging in it, we don't accomplish anything useful in our society's terms."

In a culture focused on consuming and getting things done, worship seems silly. There is nothing to be earned or won in worship, except perhaps an enlightening of the soul or a renewed sense of purpose. God does not give out gold stars for perfect worship attendance. At its heart, worship is not a transaction between us and God, but a strengthening of the relationship we have with God. Worship aligns us rightly with God. Worship reminds us of our place in God's heart.

The worship actions we do together, week after week, shape us to be people following Jesus in the world. Sunday worship is the source for how we make choices about our lives and our behaviors, how we treat neighbor and stranger, how we care for resources of land and sea, how we learn and grow into our baptismal identity as Christ's body in world.

Scattered throughout the Bible are many hints as to what worship looked like in both the Old and New Testaments. Among the many aspects and dimensions of worshipping God, we will look at four in this unit. They are:

Gather – Jan 7 – Luke 24:13-35; Zoom Jan 8

Participate – Jan 14 – Nehemiah 8:1-5, 5-12; Zoom Jan 15

Be Changed – Jan 21 – Luke 9:28-36; Zoom Jan 22

Bless God – Jan 28 – Psalm 104; Zoom Jan 29



Livestream Worship

Did you know you can livestream our Sunday morning worship services, as well as other special services and concerts on our website? Videos are also added to our website for you to view later. Go to www.covpcfm.com. The livestream link and the most recent video are on the homepage. Under the Worship tab at the top, click "Sermons/Services" to see more!

Youth News

On December 3, our youth group with the worship band went to sing Christmas carols, which has become a sweet tradition for us this time of the year. We went to Springwood Court, a senior living community, some of them even remembered us from last times, and one said: I've lived here for 5 years and have seen these kids grow up ... our enthusiastic Maria and her husband Gus organized everything. As usual. We arrived and handed them some songbooks and shakers, they loved singing along, and we loved singing for them. Oh, there were some tears, perhaps were the emotions, perhaps the memories brought to mind by those songs they sang as children, or us thinking on our own grandparents who knows? And smiles, there are always a lot of smiles ... We all had a great time, it's so good to share joy, not just the joy of Christmas.

Our youth group had some other activities: lessons about "Peace" "Hope" games in the youth room and outside ... and a lot of planning for the upcoming days and activities.



Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) Needs Your Help

As you are aware, Covenant's Pastor Nominating Committee has been hard at work for more than seven months, seeking to find the pastor that God has in mind for our church. It is important that we find someone who feels God is calling them to be here with us, and that we feel the strength of that connection as well.

We could use the help of every Covenant member as we continue in this important work for the future of our church. Each of us has connections to others in the Kingdom of God. We attend churches while we are "up north" as snowbirds, or while we are away throughout the country for vacations, business travel, conferences, or retreats. We have opportunities to meet various pastors, to hear them preach, and to talk with friends and family about pastors that have strengthened their faith journey. We need you to share these connections and experiences with your PNC. We would encourage each member to prayerfully consider how they could help, and to share their suggestions about possible candidates for our church. Searching for a pastor is not just the work of the PNC, but of all our church family. And above all, please continue to pray for this process. Thank you!

Prayer Shawl Group

The next Prayer Shawl meeting is **Tuesday, January 23, at 10am** in F207.

All knitters and crocheters welcome!



“Leisure” Time Book Club

Start Off the New Year with a Great Book!

“Leisure” Time Book Club Selection for January 25 is *River Sing Me Home* by Eleanor Shearer (2023).

January’s book is a debut historical fiction novel about an emancipated slave named Rachel who runs to begin a desperate search to find her children—the five who survived birth and were sold. Are any of them still alive? Rachel needs to know. The grueling, dangerous journey takes her from Barbados then, by river, deep into the forest of British Guiana and finally across the sea to Trinidad. Join us on **Thursday, January 25 at 11am to discuss *River Sing Me Home* by Eleanor Shearer (2023)**. We hope that you can join the discussion on a book that has had rave reviews from our Library staff and patrons!

Our December book discussion had to be postponed because the church campus was closed for the holiday week. (This Librarian had her nose in another best seller and was oblivious to the closing.) For safety and to adhere to the church campus calendar, we had to postpone the December 28 book club, *A Land Remembered* by Patrick D. Smith (1984) to **March 28**. We hope this delay gives more people a chance to read this excellent historical fiction about the early settlers of Fort Myers.

Our Book Club meets once-a-month on the 4th Thursday at 11am in the Church Library. If you cannot get to our Library, you are invited to join us by Zoom. Please contact Beverly Campbell to receive the monthly Book Club reminder that includes the recurring zoom link: campbell.beverly@gmail.com.

Upcoming 2024 Book Selections: (All books can be found in Covenant’s library)

- February 22: *Someone Else’s Shoes* by JoJo Moyes (2023), 448p
- March 28: *A Land Remembered* by Patrick D. Smith (1984)
- April 25: *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge (2021), 371p
- May 23: *The Secret Keeper of Jaipur* by Alka Joshi (Book 2 of 3, The Jaipur Trilogy, 2021), 384p
- June 27: *Violeta* by Isabel Allende (2023), 368p



Covenant’s Annual Book Sale



**Saturday January 28
Sunday, January 29
Sunday, February 4
9am-12noon**

Please bring book donations to the church office during office hours (M-TH 9am – 12noon) or to our Library on Sunday or Wednesday mornings by January 17, 2024.

What Are Star Words?

We have some new members since last year, so it may need to be explained for those new to the practice.

The use of star words, also called “star gifts” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year. The idea is that intention words, or guiding words, are printed on paper stars.

Typically, participants are encouraged to trust the word they have drawn. Individuals are also encouraged to place their star word somewhere that they will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God has moved through, around, or in connection to that word.

Those who are in worship will receive them there. If you are not in worship and would like to receive a star word, please contact **Barb Sheets** and one will be sent to you.

Whatever you do with this word, whether it guide you daily or you look at it a few times, receive it as a gift!



Concert Series

There are still five concerts remaining in Covenant’s 43rd annual Concert Series. All concerts are at 7:30pm in the sanctuary. There is no charge to attend, although a free-will offering will be taken to support our concert series.

Fred Moyer, classical piano

January 12, 2024

Brass Music Elements Big Band

January 26, 2024

Washington Saxophone Quartet

February 16, 2024

Spring Concert

March 15, 2024

Presbybop Music

April 12, 2024



Sunday, January 28
immediately
following worship

*All interested
are welcome!*



Fred Moyer



Washington Saxophone Quartet

Dear saints at Covenant:

We knew the day would come soon, when we heard from Ruth that our beloved Pastor Jeff DeYoe was in hospice care at home. The doctors had determined in the fall that the medical treatment was not slowing down the growth of the tumor in his brain. So after the family celebration of Thanksgiving in their new home, it was understood that "comfort-care" would be the order of the day. Pastor Jeff died very peacefully on Tuesday December 12, saying to Ruth and Aaron by his side "I love you!" His Lord said the same to him: "Jeff, my son, enter into the joy of heaven!"



Please lift up Ruth and family in your prayers.

A Service of Witness to the Resurrection will be held at **1:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 3, at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Palm Coast, Florida.** In order to facilitate for more of our people to attend the service, the deacons have arranged for a very comfortable 40-passenger bus to/from Palm Coast, leaving at 7:00 a.m. and returning in the evening, at a subsidized cost of **\$50/person**. If you are interested in riding on the bus, please contact Deacon Moderator, **Patricia Zimmerman** at patriciazimmerman@icloud.com or text her at 503-336-4151. You may also sign up before or after Sunday worship services on January 7 and 14.

Jeff's full obituary can be viewed here:

<https://obituaries.neptunesociety.com/obituaries/golden-valley-mn/jeffrey-deyoe-11574675>



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