



# 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: "Paying It Forward"**

A few years ago, a movie entitled "Pay It Forward" became an overnight sensation. Its plot is actually pretty simple: A 12-year-old schoolboy in Las Vegas, named Trevor, is given a class project to complete by his social studies teacher. His task is to come up with a plan that will change the world through direct action. On his way home from school later that day, Trevor notices a homeless man and decides to make a difference in Jerry's life. Trevor then comes up with the plan to "pay it forward" by doing a good deed for three people who must in turn each do good deeds for three other people, creating a charitable pyramid scheme, if you will. Trevor's plan is to help Jerry by feeding and housing him so he can "get on his feet." Of course, there are many twists and turns in some intriguing relationships in the movie in order for this to happen. The catchphrase in that movie was, "Why pay back when you can pay forward?"

And so, the expression "pay it forward" is now used to describe the concept of asking that a good turn be repaid by having it done to others instead. More specifically, the creditor offers the debtor the option of "paying" the debt forward by lending it to a third person instead of paying it back to the original creditor.

That makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? Because it's true that in our common practice, we instinctively want to repay someone's kind deeds, but why not paying it forward — to do something with a sense of delayed gratification — something that we may not see the result right away, but we know somehow down the road God is going to bless that kind deed, that special giving that you have intentionally set aside for the future of the church!

In John 21, we see a similar scenario: After Jesus' resurrection, he appeared to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias and cooked them breakfast. After which, Jesus asked Peter three times — not once, not twice, but three times — "Do you love me more than these?" Could this be a coincidence because Peter had denied Jesus three times after Jesus' arrest? Here Peter gave the same answer each time: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you?"

Right there and then, I'm sure Peter wished he could have done something more to prove to Jesus how truly sorry he was in denying him, except in this case Jesus didn't want or need anything done for him from Peter. Instead, he said to Peter, "Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs." Maybe this was Jesus' way of saying to Peter to "pay it forward."

In the same way, maybe our way of paying back all the goodness, all the blessings that we have received, is to pay it forward so that somehow, we can assure our future generations would have a place to worship and a ministry to our community.

*Continued on next page ...*

## SESSION

### **Class of 2024**

John Anderson  
David Beardsley  
Beverly Grady  
Mary Lee Mann

### **Class of 2025**

Mary Watford Armes  
Chris Larson  
Verona Lawson  
Deborah Maurer

### **Class of 2026**

Pat Arner  
Madeleine Doran  
Richard Shafer  
Rosemary Wallace

### **Rev. Bill Teng**

*Moderator / Interim Pastor*

## DIACONATE

### **Class of 2024**

Barbara O'Neil  
Dorothy Mae Wert  
Patricia Zimmerman,  
*Moderator*

### **Class of 2025**

Tamera Bilicic  
Jane Kaserman  
Carroll Negley  
Hank Sawyer

### **Class of 2026**

Allan Engler  
Beth Richter  
Karen Tasman  
Connie Willhite

## TRUSTEES

Beverly Beardsley (2024)  
Victor Arias (2025)  
Wilson Wheeler (2026)

## **COVENANT MATTERS!**

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cpcpublications@gmail.com

## **... From the Pastor's Heart, continued**

In the context of Covenant, as we sit in our comfortable, air-conditioned, stained-glass sanctuary, situated in a nice, lovely neighborhood on McGregor Boulevard, I can't even begin to entertain the thought for a moment that this is all a result of accident or chance — that something just happened to come together in the last 61 years — but that this is a result of many, many thousands of people, throughout these years, who have given of themselves intentionally and sacrificially to ensure that we have a place to worship on this day, that somehow we too be good stewards of our heritage to ensure future generations would also be guaranteed such a privilege to worship here.

And all thanks be to God that some anonymous donors in Our congregation, in knowing how much repair it would take to continue maintaining our aging church facilities, especially since hurricane Ian, have generously given \$250,000 for that very specific restricted purpose.

Again, we're not sitting here today by accident. As I have said in my Benediction at the end of every Communion service since I've been with you: I truly believe, in the best sense of Reformed and Presbyterian theology, that God has put you and me here in this place today for a purpose — that Christ who indwells us has something he wants to do through us where we are, so that God's kingdom can go on being the light and salt in this community and in the world! Are you willing to repay God's goodness and mercy to you by paying it forward in order to serve our Risen Lord, and to bless others in bringing them closer to God?

Yours in Christ,



## **Volunteer Appreciation Day – April 20**

“Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. It is clear to us, friends, that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something very special. *1 Thessalonians 1:2-3*

We would not be here without you!



## 2024 InAsMuch, Fort Myers — A BIG Success!

With joyful gratitude we want to thank Covenant Presbyterian Church for its generous support of our 12th Annual Inasmuch Event held March 2. We successfully filled 251 Tote Bags of Hope for Lee County Foster Children. Each bag was filled with 3 new outfits, pajamas, snuggle blanket, plush “lovey” toy, books, underwear, socks, and toiletries. All items were age-appropriate from newborn to size 10. Throughout the month of February, Covenant members brought clothing and personal toiletry items for our tote bags. With generous monetary gifts we were able to purchase all remaining necessary items. The week of February 26-March 1, hardworking volunteers sorted and prepared all items for bag packing. On Saturday, March 2, all 251 Bags of Hope were filled and delivered to Donate4kids to be distributed as needed.

Meanwhile on that same day, other Inasmuch volunteers fed \$2,500 worth of quarters into four different laundromats in low-income neighborhoods, to help families with this expense. Covenant provided \$500 worth of quarters for this part of the event. Other church partners participated with us in this event by making throw blankets for the Bags of Hope, packing blessing bags for persons experiencing homelessness, providing a free breakfast for all the volunteers on the morning of March 2, purchasing children’s clothing and in many other ways.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU to all! Your continued support of this mission project has helped us to grow and improve with every year. Truly a rewarding experience of sharing God’s Love for all participants and donors!



### April Birthdays

- 1 Karen Willock Stanton
- 3 Victor Arias
- 4 Jean Ann Gogerty
- 5 Ronald Baur  
Suzi Bunner
- 7 Caroline Evans
- 9 James Reilly
- 11 Anne Kearns
- 12 Kasey Hayward
- 13 John Anderson  
Sebastian Oliva  
Connie Willhite
- 14 Debbie Evans
- 16 Doreen Fraser  
Skip Laukemper  
Barbara Shafer
- 17 Yacelis Dotres
- 18 Ariana Arias  
Victor Arias, Jr.  
Stephanie Marantray
- 21 Grace Deters
- 22 Robert Burkert  
James S. Lewis
- 24 Betty Whitaker
- 25 Mary Lee Mann

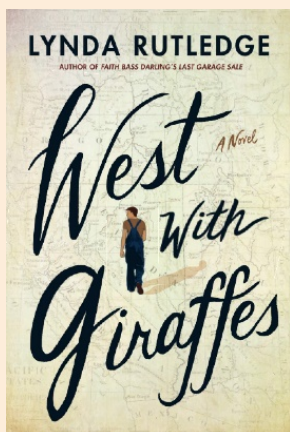


## The Potluck Is Back!

April 14, following  
worship, we will gather  
in Fellowship Hall.  
Please join us and bring  
your best dish to share.  
The fellowship is great!  
*All are welcome!*



"Check Out" the latest  
Best Sellers in our  
Library!



## Care for Creation



*"God took the Man and set him down  
in the Garden of Eden to work the ground  
and keep it in order."*

— Genesis 2:15

The earth is warming faster than ever before, leading to melting polar ice caps and rising sea levels. Extreme weather events have now become the norm, with multiple earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and snowstorms continuously rocking the planet. As sea levels rise, millions of persons will be displaced from their homes, increasing migration and resulting in conflict as people and nations adjust. Rising temperatures mean changing ecosystems, which wreak havoc on agriculture systems, leading to increased food insecurity. Most of the changes disproportionately impact the world's most vulnerable people.

Small consumer choices are only a tiny part of what our response to this crisis must be. We need big systemic changes in how we live, how we use our energy, and how we live with our global neighbors. *Care for Creation* is a spiritual practice that has far wider implications than pulling our recycling bin to the curb every week. How do we share a gospel of hope in the face of such despairing realities? Can the good news of Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide us a way forward? We will discuss four aspects of the practice. While these practices won't fix the problem, they do offer us a way of following Jesus, the one who taught us that God's love is more powerful even than death. Through these practices, we will receive a word of hope as we live out our calling as disciples.

April 7 – Appreciate God's Abundance – Genesis 1:1-2:3; Zoom – April 8

April 14 – Till - Genesis 2:4b – 25; Zoom – April 15

April 21 – Share the Planet – Leviticus 23:22; 1 Cor 12:14-26; Zoom – April 22

April 28 – Restore Creation – Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-7; Zoom – April 29

## "Leisure" Time Book Club

**Thursday, April 25 at 11am:** *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge (2021)

Covenant's 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](mailto:campbell.beverly@gmail.com)

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

- 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
- July 25: *Hello Beautiful: A Novel* by Ann Napolitano (2023) 400p
- *Book Club Takes a Vacation in August! See you in September!*

## A Great Day at Pine Manor

On Tuesday morning, March 19, seven members of Covenant volunteered for duty at the local Pine Manor Community Center. They spent the morning helping distribute canned goods, rice, beans, grapefruit, onions, bread, meat, milk, Norman Love chocolates, and more, at the mobile food pantry there. About 65 families were served as our volunteers helped community members select their items. We work in partnership with the Fort Myers based Community Cooperative, continuing in this effort on the third Tuesday of each month.



Thanks so much to faithful volunteers Steve, Linda, Ellen, Richard, Dorothy Mae, and Margaret. If you think you might like to help with the next outreach event, on Tuesday, April 16th, please call or email Chris Larson at [celarson582@gmail.com](mailto:celarson582@gmail.com), or 239-410-8950. We would be very happy to have you join us.

## Nazareth VBS Coming July 15-19

Please reserve July 15-19 to be a part of this amazing experience as we travel back in time to Jesus' hometown. All ages can attend together. Maybe you would like to be a shopkeeper, or lead games, be a part of the drama team, or lead a tribe. Yes, if we are lucky, all 12 tribes will be represented. We will gather in the evening this year. For more information, contact **Barb Sheets**.



## The Last Concert in 2023-24 Concert Series

Please join us for a free concert at Covenant on **Friday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m.** It's the **Presbybop Jazz Quartet** with **Mike Carbone** on saxophone, **Tony Marino** on bass, and **Ron Vincent** on drums, led by Presbyterian pastor **Bill Carter** on piano. The band will play some of their favorite tunes, redefine a few of your favorite tunes, and make a lot of joyful noise. And we will return to make more noise at the worship service in the church on **Sunday morning, April 14, at 10:00 a.m.**

## Prayer Shawl Group

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

All knitters and crocheters welcome! Yarn, needles, crochet hooks, and instructions are available. We are a friendly group enjoying fellowship with one another!



## Gifts of Women Sunday & Luncheon

March 10 was a wonderful day to celebrate the gifts of women, especially the women that attend Covenant. Thank you to all the women that participated in the worship service, ushers, readers, and the amazing Women's chorus. A special thanks to **Diane Means** who offered to give the sermon and inspired us with her message entitled "A New Wardrobe." After worship we were treated to a lovely luncheon with a tea party theme. **Susan Coffman**, again, created a delicious menu for our luncheon, including tea sandwiches, scones with lemon curd and jam, and ladies baked their best tea cookie recipes. Our speaker was our own **Margie Willis's** daughter, **Suzanne Willis** whose company "Mimi's Manners" provides etiquette lessons to young and old alike. She shared some fun stories of some of her clients, and we brushed up on current day etiquette, including cell phones and social media rules. Fellowship Hall was decorated beautifully with floral-filled tea pots and colorful dinnerware. Thank you to all the women that participated in making this such a special event.

Ellen Moore and Dorothy McDowell  
PW Moderator and Vice Moderator

### April Anniversaries

April 1  
Gus & Maria Bahruth

April 25  
Lawrence & Sandy  
Chapman

April 29  
Michael & Lori Graf



Anna Lee Fowler leading us in a floral arrangement lesson.



Margie Willis and daughter, Suzanne Willis, our speaker



Our servers, Kelsey and Karissa Sprung and Macy Costigan, with Chef Susan Coffman



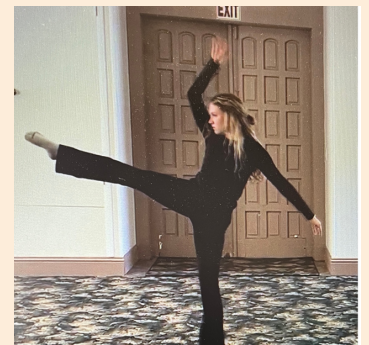
Suzanne Willis with PW Moderator, Ellen Moore

## Youth Talent Show

The youth talent show on Sunday, March 17, was a vibrant riot of talent, raw potential, creativity, and boundless enthusiasm. This event not only provided a platform for our youth to display their skills, but also served as motivation for their personal growth, confidence-building, and community spirit. Our youth with their performance brought tears of joy, excitement, laughter, and lots of applause from the audience.

From the first timid notes of a song performed by the rising generation (**Julian, Juliana, and Hilda**) or the confident strides of a marvelous dancer (**Kasey**) stepping onto the stage. The funny jokes and comments of **Tripp** and **Karson**, the ease and emotion of the magician (**Sebastian**) the powerful and rhythmic sound of the drums. Performers and public singing and drumming together, the youth playing guitar and singing. (**Atreyu, Sebastian, River, Hilda, Caroline, and Kelsie**) the hilarious act of the two boys acting as one in the "Little Nemo" skit.... All in all, the essence of our youth talent show was and will always bring joy to everyone involved. We'd like to acknowledge and give thanks to all the volunteers who helped us through the adventure, also to all those who donated money ... and a big thank you to our God.

*See y'all next time!*





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