



March 2025

# 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:

Once again, it seems like Lent sneaked up on us - starting in just a few days. However, if you haven't chosen a Lenten disciple yet, it's not too late! I want to challenge you to really consider how to live out your Christian lives more fully during Lent.

There are two common ways that most people adopt a Lenten discipline. The first is the most well-known and it is characterized by giving something up. People will select something to refrain from - not eating, drinking, doing, or saying that "something" until Easter Sunday. The second way to adopt a discipline is to take something on or add a spiritual practice each day during Lent. This is often something like setting aside time to read the Bible each day, using the Lenten resources provided by the church, or joining in the Lenten Study on Wednesdays.

What can sometimes be missed in selecting one of these options, though, is the *purpose* behind these things. **The goal of withholding or adding something to our daily lives during this season is to bring us closer to God.** So, as you contemplate how you are going to participate in Lenten disciplines, take time to really ask yourself, "Is this going to bring me closer to God?"

If you give up soda or chocolate, have a plan as to how giving that up is going to change and nourish your spiritual life. If you can't come up with that purpose, perhaps it would be best to think about a different discipline for this season. (I'm not saying that either of those things are wrong and I have known people who have successfully used both as a Lenten discipline, but it does take effort to do so in a way that brings you closer to God.) If you are simply taking a couple minutes to rush through a Lenten devotional, then maybe that is not the right resource for you this year.

Although, giving things up seems more popular, sometimes taking on a spiritual disciple can be much more meaningful. On the next page, I will describe a few spiritual disciplines that are not difficult to incorporate into your day. You could choose one of these or perhaps they will simply serve as a starting point for your contemplation of what to do during Lent this year.

Remember, however, no matter what you choose to do or choose not to do, the most important part of Lent is that each person examines his or her relationship with God and tries to strengthen the areas in which it might be lacking. We start Lent with the phrase, "From dust you came and to dust you shall return," and end with, "Christ has risen! Christ has risen indeed!" This is how we should try to frame our spiritual life during this season as well. Picture moving from what is true when we are honest with ourselves - that our spiritual lives are not perfect but can be improved, to moving to what is amazing - through Christ's resurrection, we are forever reconciled to God.

Grace and Peace,

*Pastor Becky*

## March Birthdays

01 Charlie Edwards  
02 Jim McDowell  
03 Anna Siemen  
Courtney Ducharme  
04 Judy Froeschle  
Patricia Zimmerman  
07 Monie Lazenby  
08 Betsy Mondora  
09 Anna Lee Fowler  
11 Dale Rambo  
14 Chris Blue  
17 Paul Douglass  
20 Pat Arner  
23 Amy Warden  
24 Kent Sheets  
25 Lindsey Lewis  
27 Maggi Lewis  
Sue Parsons  
30 Richard Kline  
31 Pete Burkert



## From the Pastor's Heart continued:

### Ideas for Spiritual Practices During Lent

Below you will find a few ideas that you could adopt or adapt to examine your spiritual life as we await and prepare for the resurrection of Christ. I will give a basic outline of some practices, but there is not necessarily a right or wrong way to do these things. Starting from the basic ideas, you can add or remove parts that will make these things more meaningful for you personally. If none of these sparks an idea, please come see me. I have a wonderful book called *50 Ways to Pray* and it contains a plethora of spiritual practices that are perfect for Lent.

1. Practice of Examen – With this practice the basic premise is to set aside time each evening to reflect on the day. The two main questions of this practice are: 1) Where have I seen/felt/noticed God's presence in my life today? 2) Where have I NOT seen/felt/noticed God's presence, or where have I not allowed God into my life today? Another way to do this practice is to phrase your two questions in this way: 1) What am I most thankful for today? 2) What am I least thankful for today? The goal is to gain awareness of God in our lives and identify ways in which we are not open or don't recognize God's presence so we can take steps to allow God into those spaces/situations – knowing of course, that God is always present and with us even when we don't feel like that is true.

2. Praying In Color – Do you find your mind wandering when you pray? Or you can't seem to sit still? Or do you feel like your prayers need more substance? Why not try praying in color. It is a combination of praying and doodling; engaging your mind and body in focusing your thoughts, needs, and joys in conversation with God. I have a book you are welcome to borrow, or you can visit the Praying in Color website: <https://prayingincolor.com>

3. Intercessory Prayer – With this, practice time spent in prayer is very specifically for another person or group. It is a time to focus your prayer *outward*, away from yourself. It can be done in the quiet of your home or as you go about your daily life. First, take a couple deep breaths to signal that this is different, that you are moving to a time of prayer. Then, spoken or unspoken, ask that God's desire and purpose for the person/group you are praying for to be fulfilled. One way this has made an impact for me is what I do when I come across an accident, a car stranded on the side of the road, or even hitchhikers. In your practice, perhaps it can be someone who calls or emails, maybe someone you see at work or even someone you just pass each day on your way somewhere. The only purpose is to focus outward to others in need of God's presence – keep yourself out of these intercessory prayers by saving your thanks and requests for a different time. Often this practice is the most meaningful when done for strangers.

## LENTEN STUDY

Jesus' final days were full of risk. Every move he made was filled with anticipation, danger, and the potential for great loss or great reward.

Author, Amy-Jill Levine takes us through the Bible stories of how Jesus risked his reputation when he entered Jerusalem in a victory parade. How he risked his life when he dared to teach in the Temple. Jesus' followers risked everything when they left behind their homes or anointed him with costly perfume. We take risks as we read and re-read these stories, finding new meanings and new challenges.

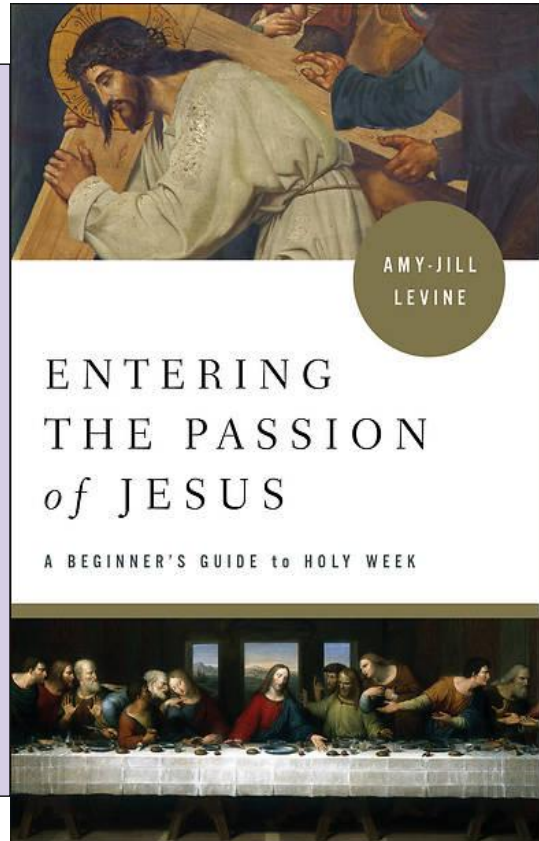
Join Pastor Becky in exploring these risks and the Passion story of Jesus for a six week study.

**Starting: Every Wednesday, beginning March 12**

**When: 9:30 – 10:30AM OR 7:00 – 8:00PM**

**Where: F201 in the morning; the library in the evening**

Books will be available for a \$10.00 donation.



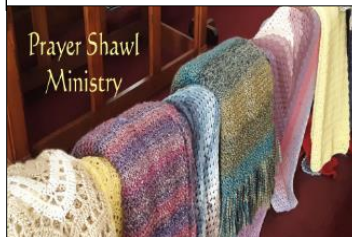
**PASTOR BECKY**  
requests that you please  
wear your name tag  
so that she can put  
a name with a face.

## NEEDED!



*If anyone has an extra smartphone lying around, the church could use one so that we can access Wi-Fi. Please speak to Pastor Becky.*

The Prayer Shawl meeting will be Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 10AM in room F207. We encourage any knitters or crocheters to join us. We look forward to seeing you.



## Gathering In His Name

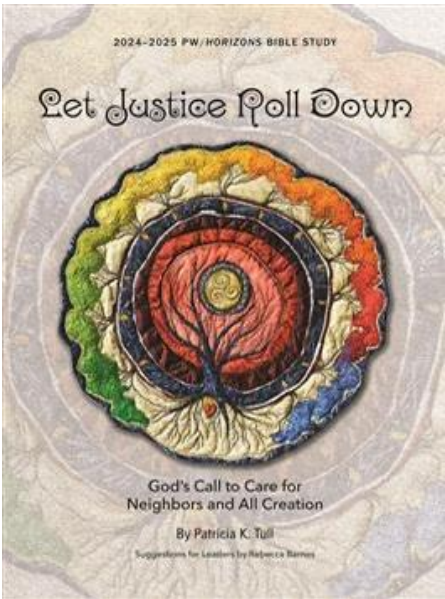
It will start back up in March. The groups gather at various homes for dinner.

Interested? Sign up to be a host or a guest. The sign-up sheet will be located at the Welcome Center on Sunday mornings. It's a great way to get to know other people that attend the same church as you do. For more information, see Linda Nelson.



**Celebration of Women Sunday – March 16<sup>th</sup>**

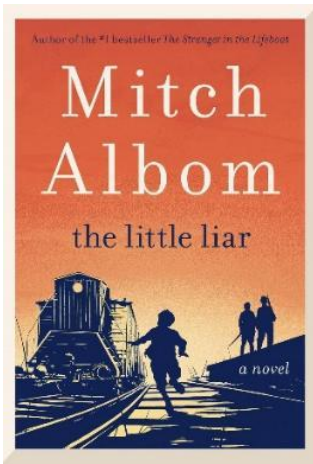
We will be having a wonderful day of Celebration of Women on Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. Women of the church will be taking part in the worship service; reading scripture, leading prayer, ushering, and a Women’s chorus will be singing for us that day. *After Worship, we will be hosting a luncheon open to all (yes, even MEN!)* This year we will be highlighting the awesome Bible Study that we have been enjoying this year in Deborah and Naomi Circles. The study called, “*Let Justice Roll Down*” by Patricia K. Tull has truly been a learning experience for all of us involved. Each month we are learning more about our natural resources and how to protect them for the future. Some of the topics have been: Land Justice, Food Justice, Water Justice, Air Quality, and Climate Change. We will be sharing some of our thoughts on these lessons with those that attend. In addition, a presentation will be introduced on “How to Become an Earth Care Congregation,” an initiative presented by the PC(USA) Environmental Ministries. Donations will be taken for the Presbyterian Women’s Birthday Offering. Please join us for a delicious meal and an informative program. All are invited, including men!



**Our church office kitchen is in need of a new or gently used refrigerator. We use this refrigerator for staff and the many volunteers that work around the church, as well as for the receptions and activities held in the courtyard. If you would like to donate a new (or gently used) refrigerator, please speak to Pastor Becky Schwandt.**

Save  
the  
Date!!

March 15	Concert ~ Juan Pablo & Friends
March 28	Spring Concert
March 30	Youth Lunch/Talent Show Fundraiser
April 13	Palm Sunday
April 20	Easter
June 23-27	VBS
July 26-8/2	Montreat Youth Conference



March 20, 2025

## Covenant's "Leisure" Time Book Club Now Meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday:

**Next meeting is:  
March 20, 2025 at 11AM**

Beloved author, Mitch Albom, latest work is *The Little Liar*. It is a work of historic fiction that explores themes of survival, forgiveness, and redemption. The book begins in Salonika, Greece, with Nico Krispis, an 11-year-old boy who has never lied, as he is separated from his family by the Nazis and forced to lie. We always have a copy of our book club selections in our library! Please join us March 20th at 11AM for our discussion of "The Little Liar."

We are looking for book suggestions for September to April. Please see Beverly Campbell with your ideas.

### Upcoming books and meeting dates:

- Thursday, April 17, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.: **"James: A Novel"** by Percival Everett (2024) 320 pp.
- Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.: **"Five Star Weekend"** by Elin Hilderbrand (2023) OR **"Swan Song"** by Elin Hilderbrand (2024)
- June, July, and August: No Book Club Meetings during the summer months.

### LIBRARY NEWS

We still need volunteers to help check out books and puzzles in our library before and after the worship service on Sunday mornings. Sign up for just one Sunday each month. Bookworms are hired on the spot!

-Beverly Campbell  
campbell.beverly@gmail.com

**DEBT-FOR-NATURE.** The Bahamas will refinance \$300 million dollars of it's external debt to free up \$124 million dollars for marine conservation projects and climate change mitigation for the next 15 years. It is the fifth such debt-for-nature swap in the world. The Bahamian government is signing their deal with The Nature Conservancy, the Inter-American Development Bank and others. This project will not only be supporting the biodiversity and climate objectives of the country but also the economy and jobs of many people. AP







## **MISSION OPPORTUNITY ~**

So exciting to have new volunteers at the mission. What a great and fast team we had in February. Take a bow!

Members of Covenant Presbyterian Church volunteer at Mision Peniel in Immokalee on the fourth Friday of each month from 11a.m. to 1p.m. Some of the members of the group carpool from the church parking lot at 10a.m. If you are interested, please contact:

Chris Larson at [celarson582@gmail.com](mailto:celarson582@gmail.com) or

Linda Nelson at [chipswessner@yahoo.com](mailto:chipswessner@yahoo.com)



## **A Great Day at Pine Manor**

On Tuesday morning, February 18th, ten members of Covenant volunteered for duty at the local Pine Manor Community Center. They spent the morning helping distribute canned goods, rice, beans, potatoes, onions, bread, chicken, milk, and more, at the mobile food pantry there. More than 80 families were served. 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 Tom and Caroline, Linda, Ellen, Richard, Dorothy Mae, Barb, Karen and Dave, and our newest volunteer, Pastor Becky!

If you think you might like to help with the next outreach event on Tuesday, March 18th, please call or email Chris Larson at [celarson582@gmail.com](mailto:celarson582@gmail.com) or 239-410-8950.





*Inasmuch as you did it for the least of these, you did it for me- Jesus*

InAsMuch Fort Myers is a part of the world-wide ministry of Operation InAsMuch, a Compassion Revolution focusing on a faith-based day of service for those in need in the Fort Myers area. Our Inasmuch 2025 event consists of 4 religious partner churches/faiths working together to help others. Anna Lee Fowler and her team, Ellen Moore, Beth Thompson and Darci Hillyer were hard at work throughout February to prepare for the InAsMuch Event on March 1st. They met weekly to gather and sort children's clothing and other items for very special Foster Kids bags. This year the goal was to fill 275 bags with all new items needed by children who are placed in foster care. (This number is 25 more bags than were prepared last year, with the goal of having more bags available and appropriate for older children and teens). Each bag was filled with new items, including two sets of play clothes, one outfit for a court appearance, 3-5 books, a plush toy, a snuggle blanket and hygiene products. Other InAsMuch projects undertaken by Covenant members this year included the collection of quarters to be used to help families using local laundromats in low-income neighborhoods.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

### **Volunteer for the Prayer Mission!**

The Deacons have a Prayer Mission where members of the congregation may participate in special prayers for those named on Prayer Request Cards and in the Sunday Bulletin. Each participant will select a two week period when they will offer up these special prayers. For more information and to sign up to join this powerful mission please contact Deacon Beth Richter: talk to, text or call (leave a message) (941)676-0917.



### **WE NEED YOU!**

Work is under way to renovate the space which is becoming our new nursery. Welcoming new families is vital to the life of our church. In order to serve the children, it requires folks to be with the children during worship. We are looking for volunteers to take turns once a month in this new space. If you, or someone you know, would like to help us and the children in this way, please contact the office. Training would be provided to all so that we will all be on the same page. Please consider this ministry!





# Montreat, here we come!



The Montreat Youth Conference, July 27-August 2, is a week-long event where our youth worship, play and interact with youth from all over the country. This year's theme is "LIGHT MY PATH". We look forward to enjoying this time in God's beautiful creation.

## MONTREAT YOUTH CONFERENCE FUNDRAISERS



**March 9 and 16** - Envelopes will be on the board in the courtyard with dollar amounts for you to take. It is very simple ~ just take what you want to give.

**March 30** - The youth will serve lunch and entertain you with the talents that God has given them. No tickets for this event; just a donation from you in appreciation for the entertainment and meal.



# UPCOMING CONCERTS PRESENTED BY THE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CONCERT SERIES

## Juan Pablo & Friends

Mark your calendars!



Saturday, March 15, 2025 3:30PM, in the Courtyard  
Covenant Presbyterian Church – 2439 McGregor Blvd. Ft. Myers, FL 33901  
Free Admission – Freewill offering

## Concert Series

## Concert Series Spring Concert

Friday, March 28, 2025  
7:30 p.m. - Sanctuary

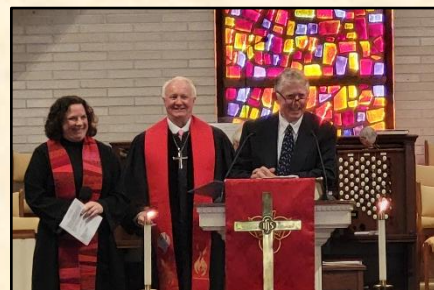
Free Admission



Featuring the Chancel Choir, Jubilate Ringers, and Instrumentalists

Covenant Presbyterian Church 2439 McGregor Blvd. Ft. Myers, FL 33901

# SERVICE OF INSTALLATION & RECEPTION FOR PASTOR BECKY SCHWANDT



Summer camp is available for 1<sup>st</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Plus, there are adult camps.

Need more information?

Please contact Cedarkirk

with any questions at:

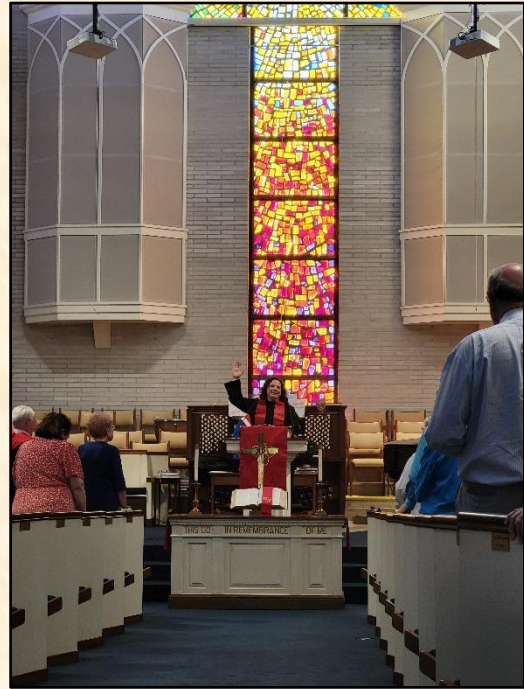
[camps@cedarkirk.org](mailto:camps@cedarkirk.org) or 813-685-4224 x2



## SAVE THE DATE

EGYPT, Joseph's journey from prison to palace, this year's marketplace VBS will be held June 23-27. Please mark your calendar and plan to volunteer. There are opportunities for everyone.







May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
the rains fall soft upon your fields,  
and until we meet again,  
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.



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