

Dear Friends,

What a year this has been. So many twists and turns, gains and losses, changes and challenges.

When I consider all that has transpired, and all that is waiting to unfold in 2021, these words from the scripture are a welcomed source of inspiration grounded in God's providence:

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

The many seasons of 2020 have been telling and tragic. So much sickness, so much dying, so much hardship, so much national and global unrest. Yet, those seasons have also been blessed by great acts of love, noble deeds of kindness, and heroic feats of faith.

With their coming and going, we were forced to stock of our lives, to reassess what was truly important to us, and to discover anew the age-old truth that our relationships with God, with family, with friends . . . and our doing good to help others in Christ's name . . . are what ultimately give life its deepest purpose and meaning.

Letting go of the year that was, and beginning the new one that lies ahead, may the "God of All" be with us.

Kyle



"God of All"

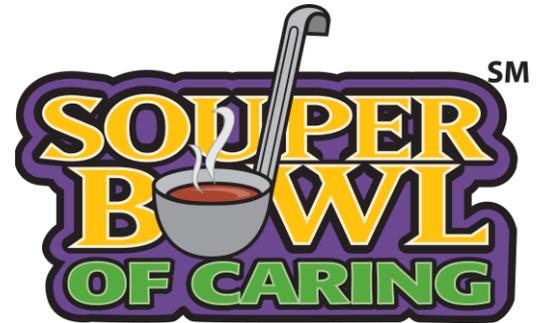
(Tune: "As with Gladness Men of Old")

By Kyle Allen

As the old year fades away, we look up for brighter days.
Life and health with new vaccines, Unto us, a blessing brings.
God of All, we sing your praise, and with love our voices raise.

As our grief has been so real, testing heart, and mind, and will.
Grant to all who seek your face, loving care, sustaining grace.
Make of us one family, as we give ourselves to Thee.

As we look to this New Year, rid our world of strife and fear.
Offer us the faith we need, serving you in word and deed.
Let our lives reflect your love, giving thanks to God above.



Has your favorite football team canceled or rescheduled a few games this fall? Or played without a full first string, thanks to COVID-19? It's been an unpredictable season – Denver even played a game without any of their quarterbacks!

One thing that you can count on, though, is that Covenant is NOT canceling the annual **Souper Bowl of Caring**. No matter what else happens, we plan to collect soup for our hungry neighbors on Big Game Day – **Sunday, February 7, 2021!** So, gear up (i.e., start watching for soup sales) and stay tuned for more details coming soon!

Save these Dates!

Sunday, January 10

Baptism of the Lord

Hunger Offering

Sunday School resumes for all ages

Thursday, January 14

10 AM – 4 PM

Red Cross Blood Drive @ Covenant

Sunday, January 24

Congregational Meeting following Worship

Sunday, January 31

Ordination & Installation of New Officers

Sunday, February 7

Souper Bow of Caring

Wednesday, February 17

Ash Wednesday

Food for the Soul

My Fascination with The Story of the Magi

Judi Barnes

The story of the Magi has always fascinated me. Coming from the East, they followed a star to Jerusalem looking for the Baby Jesus. After a visit with King Herod, who asked them to return and report Baby Jesus' location so he could also worship the baby, they headed to Bethlehem. After visiting the baby, God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod, **they took a different route home**. The Magi chose to turn their backs on worldly power, as embodied in Herod, and they chose a different route.

Wouldn't you love to know more? I would! I can't know for sure why the writer stopped the story here, but perhaps because this story was intended to provide an opening for my own reflection and ask myself, "What worldly 'thing' is God asking me to turn my back on in 2021 and turn my face toward differently?"

And what about you?

*God directs you quite differently
than your own thoughts.*

*This is why you always have
to fold the wings of your intellect
and open the door of your heart.*

*This is why you always have
to listen, and listen well,
to the voice of God.*

– Strannik –

(Russian for "pilgrim")



Let Us Pray . . .

For Church Members –

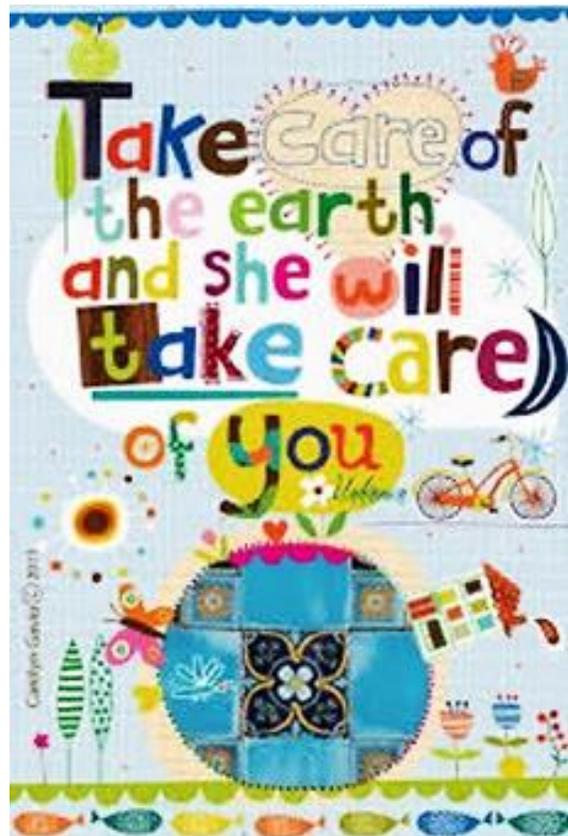
Christine Beck, the Dickenson Family, Cindy Eades (Maggie Moen), Mary Jane Fisher, Alice Garrett, Carol Gentry, Lynnemarie Hancock, Suellen Hodges, Lindsey Nanz, the Patterson Family, Ann Cecil Renick, June and Forrest Smith, Jo and Wayne Wilson, caregivers, military service members and families.

For Family and Friends – Geraldine Barnes (Jerry Barnes' sister), Jim Barnette (Tom Floyd's friend), Lowell Bashlor, Jr. (Audrey Bashlor's son), Kenneth Benner (Lynnemarie Hancock's brother), Josh Birch, Rachel Erb Birch, Ann Caddell (Anne Currin's mother), Kevin Carter (Cheryl Floyd's brother), Patrick Dooley (Lynnemarie Hancock's friend), Dickie Hinchee (Leigh Singh's grandmother), Grant Holder (Angie Miller's brother), Rob Kidder's brother, Wayne Maloney (Sherry Moran's friend), Barry Martin (Ray Martin's brother), Will McVey (Melissa Cranwell's brother), Brian Mesko (Tom Floyd's friend), Bill Miller (Mike Miller's brother), Mike Overacker (Mark Overacker's brother), PCUSA Mission Workers Tyler and Rochelle Holm and Jim and Jodi McGill, Denise Pillow (Presbytery of the Peaks), Shirley Robertson (Barbara Robertson's mother), Mair Rubin (friend of Pranav Singh), Joe Slack and Family, Dr. Martha Sommers, Tim (Lynnemarie Hancock's friend), Geraldine Webb (Mandy Culley's mother), Norma Webb (Jeff Webb's mother), David Wiley (Mary Glenn Aydtlett's nephew), Daniel Woodbury (Lynnemarie Hancock's cousin), Linda Woods (Joyce Woods' daughter-in-law).

Special Prayers – Hospital staffs and families, patients and families, residents of assisted living facilities and those in nursing home care; Dakota Hurst (16-year-old with osteosarcoma).

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. – Philippians 4:6

Please send requests for the prayer list to gails@covroanoke.org or call the church office. Requests will be shared with the pastor and the Congregational Care Team. Requests will be shared with the pastor and the Congregational Care Team.





Blood Drive

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Fellowship Hall
1831 Deyerle Road
Roanoke, VA 24018

Thursday, January 14, 2021
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Red Cross Blood Drive @ Covenant

Thursday, January 14

10 AM – 4 PM

We collected 47 units in September, which was fabulous – let's see if we can do that again! Schedule your appointment now, online or by phone! Go to redcrossblood.org and enter "COVENANT" in the search box, or call 1-800-RED-CROSS.

Spread the word to your neighbors, family, and friends!



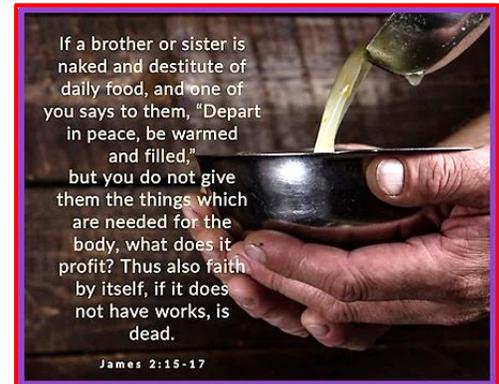
Valentine's Day Care Packages for our College Students

A tradition continues in 2021 with a different twist. Your Missions Team is asking you to "Adopt a College Student!" The care packages that have been enjoyed by past and present college students will be mailed off the week of February 7 – in time for Valentine's Day. Watch for instructions and guidelines in the January weekly announcements. If you have any questions, please contact Steve Anama by email (steveaddsdad@gmail.com) or call/text at 540-529-6907.

2020 "Sparkling" Christmas "Spirit of Giving" – It's Not Too Late for That Last Minute "Alternative" Gift!

What do you give to "someone who has everything"?

You can still give a meaningful gift to Covenant's mission outreach programs in Malawi, Guatemala, and mission co-workers! Gift cards are available in Heritage Hall for you to send to those you wish to honor with a special mission gift. Please make checks payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church, noting your gift choice in the memo line, and return your check to the church office. Find more details in our weekly emails and on our Facebook page. Thank you from all those in need of the hope that the birth of Christ brings!



If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,"

but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:15-17



The Women's Bible Study group celebrated Christmas by sharing music, readings, and stories via Zoom. On Monday, January 11th and Monday, January 25th, the group will meet on Zoom at 10:30 AM for video lessons and discussion.

For more information or to get the Zoom meeting link, please contact Sharon Nanz at slnanz@aol.com. All women are welcome!

Circle of Friends will meet on Tuesday, January 12th at 7:00 PM on Zoom. Please contact Carol Gentry for more details (carolg5@cox.net).

The Men's Bible Study plans to meet on Saturday, January 16 at 8:00 AM. Please contact John McMillen for more information (mcmilljd@gmail.com).



Connection / Adventure / Fellowship / Education

Yes – Covenant CAFE will be back in February with more music and interesting programs for your Wednesday evening enjoyment. Watch for the new schedule coming soon!



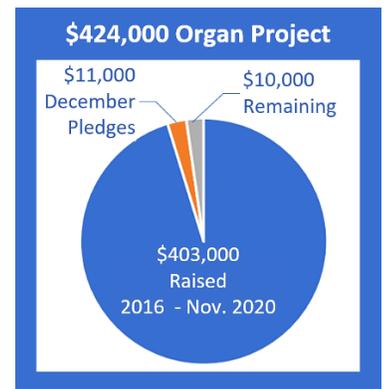
Altar Flowers to honor or remember your special family members and friend – another way to beautify our Sanctuary on Sunday mornings! Please call or email the church office with the date of your choice and your flower dedication. The cost is \$45, payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church. After the worship service, bring the flowers home to enjoy or make someone's day by sharing them!

Loving God, loving people, making disciples

Organ Brings Sparks of Light and Joy in a Difficult Year

The end of 2020 is at hand and we've nearly fulfilled our 5-year commitment to fully fund the organ which has blessed us and the community during this most difficult year.

We began the year hoping to raise the remaining \$63,600 in pledges and new contributions to complete a 5-year, 0% interest payment plan generously offered by our organ builders, Grooms & Payne (aka Kelly and George). By God's grace and the faithful generosity of so many, we have nearly realized that goal. Despite the obvious difficulties so many have faced, by the end of November that amount was reduced to under \$21,000 – a reduction of \$42,600! With \$11,000 already pledged for December, all that remains to finalize this project are new contributions of about \$10,000 (about 2% of the total)!



Meanwhile, touched by the hands, feet and heart of **Ronn Lowe**, Covenant's organ blesses our congregation and the wider community. Throughout this period of stress and anxiety for many, Ronn's inspirational worship music and special live-streamed programs with excellent musical guests continue to calm our hearts with moments of beauty, peace, and some sense of much desired normalcy.

As we look forward to better times when the virus is eventually under control, we thank God for music and the musicians who share these sparks of light and joy in the fading darkness.

Questions? Please contact John McMillen (mcmilljd@gmail.com) or Jerry Barnes (gbarnes57@aol.com).

Gratefully,
John McMillen - Organ Committee Chair

Session Highlights

November 22, 2020 Stated Meeting:

- Approved a motion at the recommendation of the Reopening Task Force Sub-group to conduct an outdoor Christmas Eve Nativity / Candlelight Service to be held on-site Thursday, December 24th at 4:30 PM with all outdoor service safety protocols under Covenant's Phase 3 Guidelines being followed.
- Approved a motion at the recommendation of the Reopening Task Force Sub-group to conduct the traditional 8:00 PM Christmas Eve service as a virtual event with worship leaders only in attendance. All indoor service protocols under Covenant's Phase 4 Guidelines will be followed.
- Approved distribution of \$5,000 of the remaining \$10,000 general fund monies set aside for special benevolences to the Local Office on Aging (LOA) for Meals on Wheels.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Meg Munton, Clerk of Session, at munton.clerk@gmail.com

With Thanks

Mark and Deborah Patterson send their appreciation for all of the congregation's prayers for Deborah's uncle, Dan Ledbetter, during his illness.

Jerry and Claire Blake want to thank their wonderful Covenant family for all the prayers, cards, calls, food, and social distancing visits during Claire's recent surgeries and illness. We appreciate them all and can't imagine what we would have done without your support. Thank you all so very much!

A sincere and grateful thank you to our Covenant family for all the wonderful cards full of good wishes on our 50th wedding anniversary in December.

Brian and Kathy Slack

Adult Sunday School: A Survey of World Religions

Do you ever wonder what other faith traditions believe, or why they seem to worship as they do? Barbara Brown Taylor states, "Religions are treasure chests of stories, songs rituals and ways of life that have been handed down for millennia – not covered in dust, but evolving all the way – so that each new generation has something to choose from when it is time to ask the big questions about life. *Where did we come from? Why do bad things happen to good people? Who is my neighbor? Where do we go from here?*"



Join us to explore how others experience God in different faith traditions. In doing so, you might find that your own faith deepens and grows!

- **Sunday, January 10:** Introduction to World Religions
- **Sunday, January 17:** Hinduism
- **Sunday, January 24:** Islam
- **Sunday, January 31:** Judaism
- **Sunday, February 7:** SPARK SUNDAY *Stay tuned for more details in the February Newsletter!*
- **Sunday, February 14:** Bahai

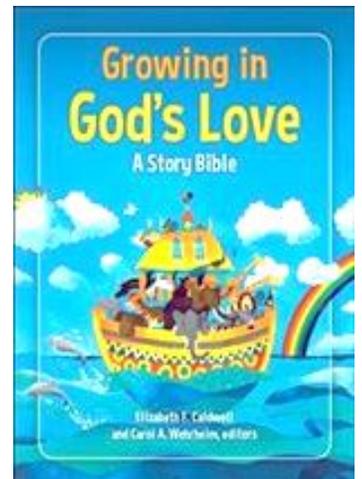
The study will continue with more religions and guest speakers from each religion following Lent.

An Adult Sunday School Lenten study will begin on Sunday, February 21st. More details will follow in the February *Covenant Connections* newsletter!

Children's Sunday School will continue to explore the *Growing in God's Love* curriculum, along with some curricula authored by our own Susan Foard. Children will engage in prayer, movement and music, Bible stories, and an application activity each week – and God's love shines through in every Bible story! Join in at 10:30 AM via Zoom! The link will be in your weekly email from Covenant.

- **Sunday, January 10:** Epiphany
- **Sunday, January 17:** The Sower
- **Sunday, January 24:** The Good Neighbor
- **Sunday, January 31:** Something Big from Something Small
- **Sunday, February 7:** The Pearl
- **Sunday, February 14:** The Generous Land Owner

A special Lenten study will begin on Sunday, February 21st.



Youth Sunday School

For the first months of 2021, Youth Sunday School will hand-select stories from both Old and New Testaments guaranteed to kindle learning, questions, and discussion. Brain Teasers are provided but donuts are still bring-your-own.

See you on Zoom, Sundays at 11 AM!

Loving God, loving people, making disciples

The Covenant Nominating Committee is seeking your nominations for the following offices:



- Deacon Class of 2022 (to fill Joanne McElmurray's unexpired term)
- Deacon Class of 2023
- Elder Class of 2023

All active members of Covenant may make nominations. All nominees must be active members of the congregation. **Please submit your nominations to the church office by January 15, 2021**, via email (office@covroanoke.org) or by regular mail (Attn: Gail Schuler). Self-nominations welcome! For each nominee, please provide the Nominations Committee with the following information:

- How is the nominee currently active in Covenant's ministry?
- What qualities about the nominee make the nominee fit for service?
- Have you asked the nominee if they are willing to serve in this capacity?
- Name of person making this nomination (your name)

Nominations will be forwarded to the Chair of the Nominating Committee for consideration by the Committee.

New Contribution Envelopes may be picked up in Heritage Hall. The new envelopes do not have numbers so please be sure to write your name on the envelope. Contributions may also be made online at covenantroanoke.org.

Thank you to everyone who supported our Barbecue Fundraiser on November 21st! \$720 was raised, to be divided equally between our Youth Program and our Preschool. Special thanks to Gene Collier and his team for preparing the delicious barbecue.

Volunteers Needed to help fold, seal, and label our monthly newsletter for mailing to the congregation. If you have a few hours to help on the last Wednesday of each month, please contact the church office.

Malawi News and Updates

Presbytery of the Peaks Grant

Covenant received a \$3000 grant from the Presbytery of the Peaks Hunger Relief Two Cents-a-Meal program for the Christian families and children in Kalikumbi, Malawi. We have received this "Thank You" letter from Reverend Chiumia in Kalikumbi for our continued efforts on behalf of their children, communities and families:

"Vote of Thanks" to Covenant Presbyterian Church & The Presbytery of the Peaks from Kalikumbi CCAP Congregation"

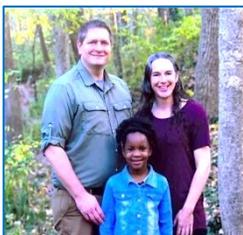
Dear Brethren, Receive our festival greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from Kalikumbi. We are so grateful for the grant of \$3000 towards Kalikumbi nursery school and Mtuzuzu orphan center to assist during our "hunger season". We are so thankful for your untiring support. May the Almighty God Bless you abundantly for marvelous work you are doing that reveals the love of God. On behalf of Kalikumbi congregation and community. Reverend Bright Chiumia



Reverend Bright Chiumia



Kalikumbi preschool children and their teacher Michael Mvula



Our Mission Co-Workers Tyler and Rochelle Holm continue to shelter-in-place in Louisville, KY. They work to balance their mission work in Malawi as they await their return to Africa later in 2021. The Holms ask for prayers for Malawi as Covid-19 numbers continue to slowly rise with over 6000 cases, prayers for the start of the rainy season and for the many farmers to have abundant and successful crops this growing season to ease the "food insecurity" problems, for the country of Malawi, the government, leaders, students and especially for the CCAP (Presbyterian Church) as the leadership has recently changed. The Holms continue to pray for Covenant and all those that support their ministry.

To learn more on our Mission Co-Workers Jim and Jodi McGill, please go to PCUSA.org/Mission for a long update on their lives and work. From the McGill's, "Thank you for supporting Jim's work with water and sanitation in Niger and South Sudan and Jodi's work in nursing and public health in Niger. Your prayers make a difference to people in Niger and South Sudan."

Loving God, loving people, making disciples

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 New Year's Day Church Office closed	2
3 Epiphany Sunday 9:00 Worship, with Communion *Bring Bread No Sunday School	4	5 9:30 Staff Meeting (Zoom)	6 10:00 Holy Hunch Bible Study (Zoom) 4:00 Centering Prayer (Zoom) No Choir Practice	7 6:30 Centering Prayer (home)	8	9
10 9:00 Worship *Hunger Offering Zoom Sunday School: 10:30 - Children 11:00 - Youth 11:00 - Adults	11 10:30 Women's Bible Study (Zoom)	12 9:30 Staff Meeting (Zoom) 7:00 Circle of Friends (Zoom)	13 10:00 Holy Hunch Bible Study (Zoom) 4:00 Centering Prayer (Zoom) No Choir Practice	14 9:00 Red Cross Blood 4:00 Drive 6:30 Centering Prayer (home) 7:00 Personnel & Policy Team (Zoom)	15	16 8:00 Men's Bible Study
17 9:00 Worship Zoom Sunday School: 10:30 - Children 11:00 - Youth 11:00 - Adults	18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 7:00 Finance Team (Zoom) 7:00 Child Protection Sub-group (Zoom)	19 9:30 Staff Meeting (Zoom) 7:00 Missions Team (Zoom)	20 10:00 Holy Hunch Bible Study (Zoom) 4:00 Centering Prayer (Zoom) No Choir Practice	21 10:00 Newsletter deadline 6:30 Centering Prayer (home)	22	23
24 9:00 Worship, followed by Congregational Meeting Zoom Sunday School: 10:30 - Children 11:00 - Youth 11:00 - Adults 6:00 Session meets (Zoom)	25 10:30 Women's Bible Study (Zoom) 8:00 Diaconate meets (Zoom)	26 9:30 Staff Meeting (Zoom)	27 10:00 Holy Hunch Bible Study (Zoom) 4:00 Centering Prayer (Zoom) No Choir Practice	28 6:30 Centering Prayer (home)	29	30
31 Officer Ordination & Installation Sunday 9:00 Worship Zoom Sunday School: 10:30 - Children 11:00 - Youth 11:00 - Adults						



Join us for Worship on Sundays @ 9 AM

- ◆ **In the Sanctuary: Socially distanced with face masks; registration required**
- ◆ **Virtually: Live streamed on Facebook, with video posted to YouTube**



Covenant Presbyterian Church
1831 Deyerle Road, SW
Roanoke VA 24018

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