

COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

DECEMBER 16, 2024
STAUNTON, VA



From the Pastor's Desk

Last Monday I attended the SACRA (Staunton Augusta Church Relief Association) benefit concert. It was a joyous event with a variety of musical groups, a large audience, and over \$17,700 raised to assist folks in need in our community! That same day, I saw someone ringing the bell for the Salvation Army outside Food Lion with a kettle full of donations. All this as a crew from Covenant delivered coats to the Middle River Regional Jail so that those being released would have something warm to wear as they head out into the cold. It is a time of year when folks across the community step up to help neighbors in need with gifts of toys, food, warm clothing, and financial support. It is a sign of the Christmas spirit among us!

That Christmas spirit is faithful to Christ's call to us to minister to those in need. Here at Covenant, we try to carry that giving spirit with us throughout the year. Last evening the Session adopted a budget for 2025 that includes \$90,000 in Outreach spending. With additional gifts through Glorious Gifts, Four Cents Per Meal, and special offerings, our total support of mission work locally, nationally, and internationally tops \$120,000! But it is not only dollars that we share; we also give time and talents by serving meals at Trinity Soup Kitchen, delivering food for Hispanic families, reading to children at Community Child Care, helping out at the Verona Food Pantry, repairing homes with Renewing Homes of Greater Augusta, assisting our refugee family, providing baby showers for women at Gemeinschaft, and more.

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VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG

Seeing
GOD
Together



GREETERS

DEC 22 -

8:30 AM....Joan & John Sayers

10:30 AM....Dan Drumheller,
Beth Jennings, Randy Smith

DEC 24 (Christmas Eve) -

4:00 PM....volunteers needed

7:30 PM....Melissa Druff

DEC 29 -

10:30 AM....Melissa Druff, Sue Morley

NURSERY (10:30 AM)

DEC 22 - volunteer needed

DEC 29 - Molly Corbin

COVENANT KIDS (10:30 AM)

DEC 22 - volunteer needed

DEC 29 - volunteer needed

FLOWER COORDINATORS

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING

DECEMBER — Randy Smith



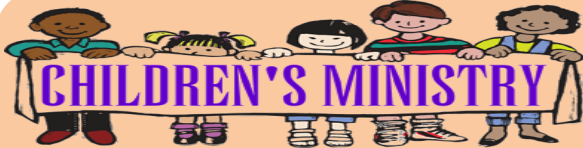
Monday Morning Bible Study

Join us Mondays at 10:30 AM
We will begin again on January 6th.

We look at the text for the next
Sunday's sermon. We meet **in person**
in Room 6 **and** also offer this meeting
virtually through Zoom.



"Very few people realize this, but the cornerstone of
this church is actually a fruitcake given to me by Ethel Mabeline
during the Christmas of '72."



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our Children and Youth Protection Policy requires that we have two adults (present whenever we are working with kids. This helps keep our kids and our volunteers safe. We have a fantastic team of Christian Formation program leaders that work hard to prepare for our kids, but we simply cannot provide these programs without help. Volunteers are needed for Sunday School, Covenant Kids, Nursery, and Youth Group.

SIGN UP HERE:

<https://bit.ly/3Z80CXM>



With Sympathy

Bill Jennings, a faithful Covenant member, passed away on December 12th in hospice care. Please keep his wife Carol and their family in your prayers. May God grant them comfort and peace, and grant Bill resurrection joy.

Bill Roberson, a faithful Covenant member and elder, died on December 12th in hospice care. Please keep Bill's wife Peggy and their family in your prayers. May God grant them comfort and peace, and grant Bill eternal rest and resurrection joy.

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK *(cont'd)*

As we journey toward Bethlehem this Advent season, take note of the Christmas spirit among us and in you. Then carry that same spirit into the new year so that giving of yourself becomes, not just a seasonal practice, but a daily way of life. In the words of the Christmas carol we sang yesterday:

*What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.*

Merry Christmas!



MERRY CHRISTMAS
FROM THE **STAFF**



There will be a Called Congregational Meeting on January 5, 2023 immediately after the 10:30 service to approve changes to the pastors' terms of call.

Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, December 27th.**

Please email Martha at: covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

At its stated meeting on December 15, the Session took the following actions:

- ◆ Approved a budget for 2025 in the amount of \$678,599
- ◆ Approved reallocation of \$4750 of Outreach budgeted funds to assist three agencies impacted by the closing of the United Way
- ◆ Approved communion dates for 2025
- ◆ Approved acceptance of the gift of a screen for the Fellowship Hall from the Augusta Bird Club
- ◆ Called a congregational meeting for January 5, 2025 to approve changes to the pastors' terms of call

Ushers/Greeters Needed



Help is needed!

If you are available on Sunday at the 8:30 or 10:30 service, please sign-up at <http://bit.ly/3KPmamT>

We need ushers/greeters for the Christmas Eve services at 4:00 and 7:30PM.



Thank You!

Our sharing of Warm Winter Wear for people being released from Middle River Regional Jail this winter was warmly received. The Director of Programs there was genuinely impressed, and the Coordinator of Re-entry was grateful as she had only a hooded jacket and some sweat pants to offer a woman released the previous evening. The wonderful generous goodwill of this congregation was quite evident. We delivered 14 boxes of warm hats, gloves, socks, sweaters, sweat shirts and pants, winter jackets, and three giant leaf bags full of bulkier winter coats. May God bless all, and keep all of us warm and in His loving care this season. — David Stahl



**Sunday, December 29th,
at 11:45AM in Room 5.**

Whether your loss is recent or years ago, holidays can be a difficult time when you are missing a loved one. Our group offers a welcoming and safe space to share, connect and support each other. We hope you can join us.

We meet on the 4th Sunday of each month immediately after the 10:30 service. Contact Eileen Cooper if you have any questions.

Sunday, December 22nd

When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we prepare the way for the leaders of our Church — past, present and future.

50%

of our gifts smooth the path for current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need.

50%

of your gifts prepare students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.



CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
LEADERSHIP, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Prepare the Way

ISAIAH 40

THE PERFECT GIFT



WAYS TO GIVE



Through your congregation



Donate by credit card online at pcusa.org/christmasjoy



Text **CHRISTMASJOY** to 91999 to give or visit pcusa.org/christmasjoy



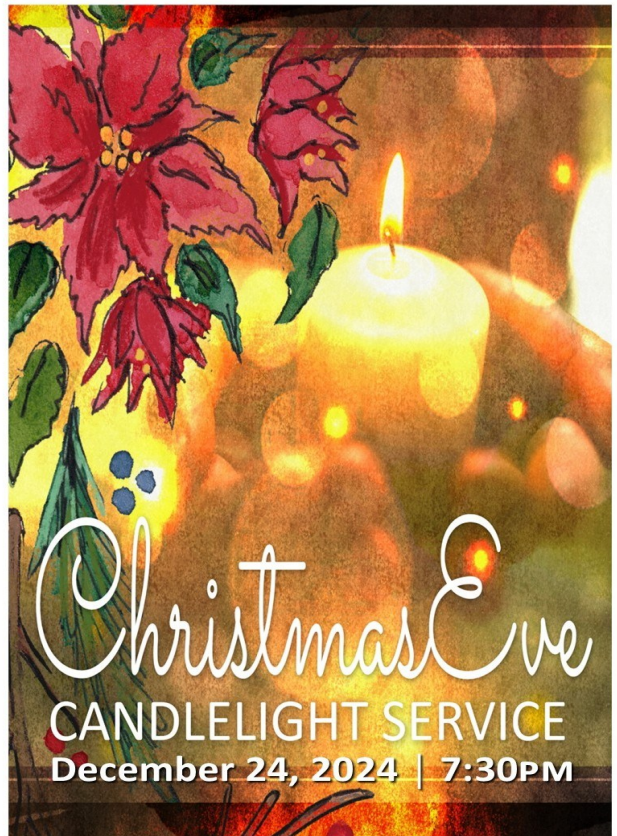
Longest Night Service

Wednesday, December 18
5:15 pm in the Chapel

As we prepare for Christmas in this Advent season, we lean into the joy and happiness it brings. We revel in company and in the sharing of traditions. But, for many, this time is also tender, filled with memories of those no longer with us or worries of a world that has fundamentally changed for us because of illness, loss, or broken relationships. The Longest Night service lets us hold the grief in the midst of this season with a quiet and meditative service that holds both our grief and our hope. Join us on December 18 at 5:15 PM in the chapel. All are welcome!




Family Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday,
December 24th
4:00 PM



DECEMBER

JANUARY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|-----------|
| 22 Fourth Sunday in Advent 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Grief Support Group | 16 COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED 7:00 PM Christian Formation Team 7:00 PM Elder Training | 17 3:00 PM Memorial Service for Bill Jennings | 18 9:30 AM Yoga Class 5:15 PM Longest Night Service  | 19 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | 20 1:30 PM Memorial Service for Bill Robertson | 21 |
| 29 4 Cents a Meal 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream | 30 COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED | 24 CHRISTMAS EVE 4:00 PM Family Christmas Eve Service 7:30 PM Candlelight Christmas Eve Service | 25 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED  | 26 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED | 27 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline | 28 |
| 23 | 31 | 23 | JAN. 1 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED  | 2 5:45 PM Outreach Team 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | 3 | 4 |

Nativity Word Scramble

- STBALE _____
- HEEPS _____
- NLGEA _____
- TSAR _____
- GAMREN _____
- JHPOES _____
- OENYDK _____
- EUSSJ _____
- SHNGI _____
- YMAR _____

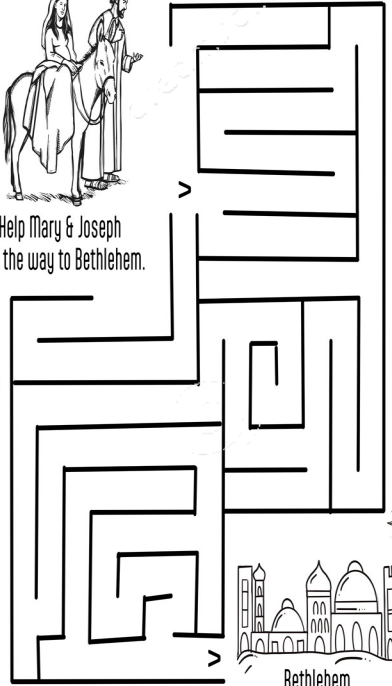
Word Search

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H | R | L | Y | V | E | L | A | B |
| O | B | L | E | S | S | O | A | R |
| L | R | G | I | F | T | V | S | A |
| Y | E | G | F | P | S | E | B | T |
| J | O | Y | A | T | A | E | B | S |

JOY, LOVE, GIFT, HOLY, BLESS, STAR

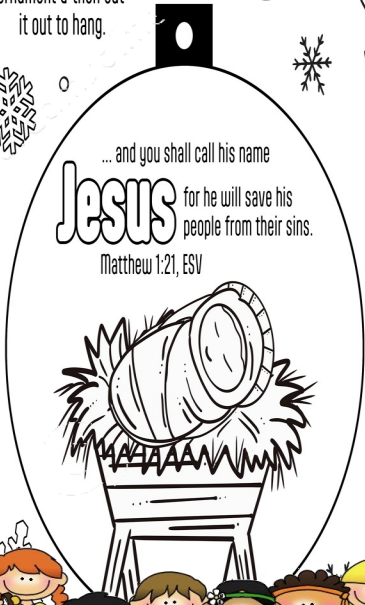


Help Mary & Joseph find the way to Bethlehem.



Bethlehem

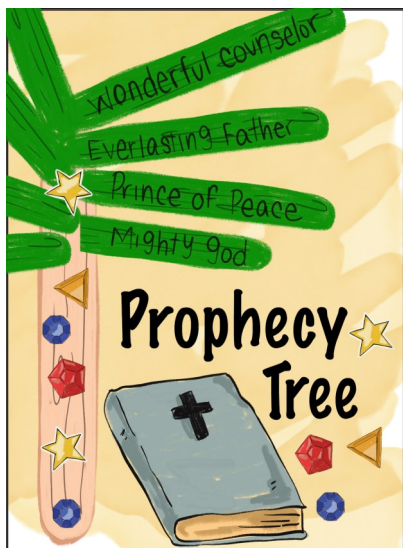
Color the Christmas ornament & then cut it out to hang.



Merry Christmas



Children's Corner



Make this Christmas craft to display special names for Jesus.

What you need:

- Large wooden craft stick
- Small green wooden craft sticks
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Bible
- Permanent marker
- Craft glue
- Optional: star stickers or craft jewels

What you do:

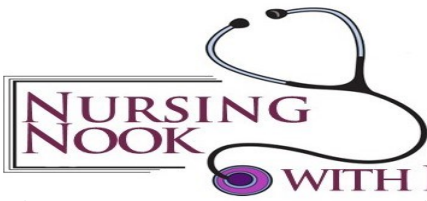
1. Place the large stick on a table vertically, like a tree trunk.
2. Cut the green sticks into pieces that measure 4", 3½", 3" and 2½".
3. On each green stick, write a name for Jesus from Isaiah 9:6 — Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Write small or ask an adult for help.)
4. Use a dot of glue to attach each green stick to the large stick, like tree branches.
5. Decorate your Christmas tree with stickers or jewels.



Gingerbread House Decorating!

On Wednesday, December 4, approximately 50 houses were decorated by children and adults! A great time was had by all!





Kathy Henderson, RN • (540) 290-6396
covenantnurse@gmail.com
Contact Kathy with medical questions or
for a blood pressure check.

After several weeks' home confinement following knee replacement surgery, I ventured out last week for my first holiday shopping excursion. Nothing fancy: just a few shops, I thought. The new knee did fine: my head, not so much. The noise. The Muzak. And so many people crowding aisles of half-empty shelves. Before lunch, no less. Two stores into my foray, I fled.

Safe at home, I pulled out my gift lists, fired up my laptop, and typed in: "Suggestions to make holiday shopping easier." Google's 10- page contribution to this question can be summed up in two words: "Buy online."

Moving on, I tried "anxiety during holidays." More than 15 pages of suggested titles popped up. "Don't Let Anxiety Stop You From Enjoying the Holidays;" ("Practice self-care," several bloggers suggested.) "15 Tips on How to Manage Holiday Anxiety." ("Set Personal and External Boundaries," one magazine suggested) My favorite, from "5 Quick Tips to Zap Holiday Stress." ("Ever so slightly raise the upper corners of your lips in a half smile (to) automatically reduce all that tension between your eyebrows and relax your face muscles.")

Oh, please! We all "know" that holidays are difficult for those suffering from mental disorders. Of course people with anxiety disorders, depressive issues, and schizophrenia are going to feel more stressed during the general craziness that the month of December brings – but what about the "rest of us" — the folks whose moods and emotions tend to flow along fairly smoothly?

Well. . .For 63 percent of Americans, "**the (Christmas) holiday season is more stressful than tax season,**" according to an American Heart Association poll conducted in December 2023. Over half of those surveyed said it took several weeks for them to feel "normal" again.

Year after year, surveys by outfits ranging from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and the American Psychological Association to Mommy Blogs indicate that this is a difficult time of year. For those struggling with mental health issues (particularly depression), advice to "take care of yourself/ be kind to yourself" is difficult to hear, much less heed.

Perhaps we should rethink our concept of gift-giving to include "presence." The act of simply and quietly "being there" for another person is a scientifically and spiritually proven prescription for well-being – especially during this noisy chaotic time of year. Give it a try: It might be the best present you ever give.

NAMI offers a year-round hotline, with real people answering the phone 10 AM -10 PM (ET) Monday through Friday. The number is 800-950-NAMI (6264) Warning: You must listen through almost a minute of options before actually speaking with a human.



A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS SHARING TIME WITH THE GEMEINSCHAFT LADIES

This is one of the eight creative gingerbread houses the Gemeinschaft Ladies made during their luncheon last week with Covenant ladies: Beverley Riddell, Linda Owen, and Joan Sayers. Their enthusiasm and smiles were abundant as they worked with kits provided by Covenant and candies leftover from the TOW Gingerbread house decorating event. Oh, the joys of sharing God's love!



According to legend, there was a candy maker who wanted to invent a candy that was witness to Christ.

First, he used a hard candy because Christ is the Rock of Ages. This hard candy was shaped so it would resemble a “J” for Jesus or, turned upside down, a shepherd’s staff. He made it white to represent the purity of Christ.

Finally, a red stripe was added to represent the blood Christ shed for the sins of the world, and three thinner red stripes for the stripes he received on our behalf when the Roman soldiers whipped him. Sometimes a green stripe is added as a reminder Jesus is a gift from God.

The flavor of the candy cane is peppermint, which is similar to hyssop. Hyssop is a mint that was used in the Old Testament for purification and sacrifice. Jesus is the pure Lamb of God Who came to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

So, every time you see a candy cane, remember the message of the candy maker: Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is the sinless rock of ages who suffered and died for our sins.

<https://lovelandbeacon.com/the-legend-of-the-candy-cane/>

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Mon - Thurs, 8:15AM - 3:15PM

FRI, 8:15AM - 12:15PM



MINISTERIAL & PROGRAM STAFF

John C. Peterson

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Rachel Watson

Associate Pastor

Jeffrey Ryman

Minister of Music

Christopher Wszalek

Organist

Lou Dolive

Handbell Director

Mitzi White

Developmental Preschool Director

Martha Pierce

Administrative Assistant

Debby Bibens

Financial Secretary

Paul Sorrell

Treasurer

Kathy Henderson

Covenant Nurse

Cleo Holly

Custodian

**The Mission of
Covenant Presbyterian Church is
“Striving to be Faithful Disciples
of Christ: Worshiping with Joy,
Growing in Faith, Serving in Love.”**

Covenant Connection
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COVENANT



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MATTHEW 25

*Striving to be Faithful Disciples of Christ:
Worshiping with Joy, Growing in Faith, Serving in Love*



*The weather outside is frightful!
Are church services or events canceled?
Want to know the answer?*

Information is available via an opt-in email, through the Covenant Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Covenant-Presbyterian-Church-163891301309), on the home page of the church website (covenantpresstaunton.org), and on WHSV-TV.

If you are not on the opt-in email list and would like to be, please contact Martha in the church office at 540-885-2138.

