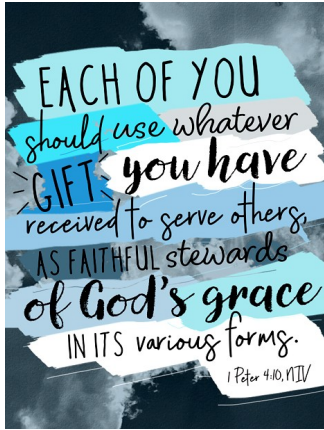


FEBRUARY 24, 2025
STAUNTON, VA

COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



From the Pastor's Desk

Last Sunday evening the Session met for its stated meeting in the midst of a power failure at the church. Since the meeting was scheduled to begin at 7:00 PM, the lack of lighting was a potential problem! However, with the aid of candles placed around our tables, backlit computer screens, and handy cell phone flashlights we were able to complete our work. The soft glow of the candles created a quiet, contemplative mood and a memorable meeting. That does not mean that candles in the dark will become our new tradition for Session meetings!

Meeting with candles in the dark was reminiscent of the way Christians met in the early centuries of the church – among the catacombs or in other dark spots away from the prying eyes of those who would do them harm. We take for granted our ability to worship freely, but it has not always been so, and is not guaranteed for the future. If worship was riskier, if meeting as the church was not so safe and secure, would you still do it? Or is your faith a fair-weather faith, something to which you are fully committed as long as there is no risk to you? In many parts of the world, it is in such risky conditions that the church thrives, while in other places where there is little or no danger, the church withers. What are you willing to risk for your faith?

But I digress! Among the actions of the Session on Sunday evening was the distribution of the surplus from 2024.

(continued on page 3)

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VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG



Seeing
GOD
Together



GREETERS

MAR 2 -

8:30 AM....France Craig

10:30 AM....Dan Drumheller, Sue Morley,
Janet Surratt

MAR 9 -

8:30 AM....France Craig

10:30 AM....Jim Britton, Dan Drumheller,
Jane Wimmer

NURSERY (10:30 AM)

MAR 2 – TBD

MAR 9 – TBD

COVENANT KIDS (10:30 AM)

MAR 2 – TBD

MAR 9 – Anne & Gus Bell

FLOWER COORDINATORS

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING

MARCH — Craig Whitacre

*With
Sympathy*

Shirley Worrell, a charter member here at Covenant, died on the evening of February 12th while in hospice care.

Please keep Shirley's daughter Tammy McCray and their extended family in your prayers.

May God grant them comfort and peace and grant Shirley resurrection joy.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED in Sunday School, Covenant Kids, & Nursery

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.

SIGN UP HERE:

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



**REMEMBER TO SET YOUR
CLOCKS FORWARD BEFORE
GOING TO BED
ON SATURDAY, MARCH 8th**

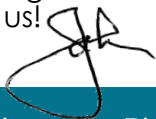
TO OUR VISITORS

If you are interested in learning more about Covenant, our ministries, or membership, please call John Peterson at 540-885-2138.

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

We were blessed with wonderful faithful giving last year in addition to good stewardship of our resources that led to a surplus of \$66,017. What did we decide to do with those funds? We committed \$17,000 to facilities projects to improve lighting, drainage, and landscaping around the church; \$5,000 to support Crystal's work in Nigeria with Decapolis and \$6,500 for a Matthew 25 outreach project; \$7,500 for staff bonuses; \$6,000 to support youth at Montreat and Massanetta Springs conferences and \$2,000 to bring in a speaker under the guidance of Christian Formation; \$1,000 for books and training about grief; \$10,000 to refresh and improve our website; \$3,000 for improvements to sound for our livestream of worship; \$5,000 toward an audit of our finances as we periodically do; \$2,000 for sturdier trikes and bikes for the preschool; \$1,000 for Fellowship to use toward activities, including a possible bus trip. In sum, the funds were allocated across the life of the church to enhance our ministries inside these walls and beyond.

We are grateful for your faithfulness in stewardship, reflected not only in that surplus but also in increased pledges for 2025 to meet our increased budget as costs rise and programming opportunities grow. We are blessed to be God's people in this place, and while we may work in the dark from time to time, we carry the light of Christ out into the world in wonderful ways! May Christ's light continue to shine – through all of us!



Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, March 7th.**

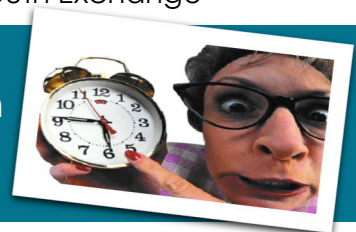
Please email Martha at: covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com

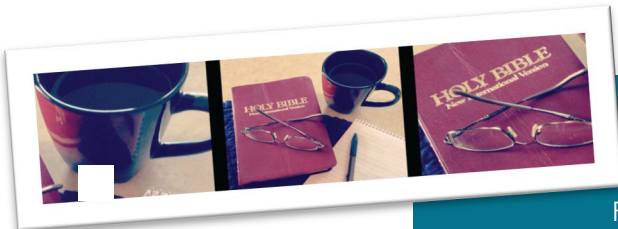
SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



A power outage did not deter the Session from meeting as scheduled on February 16. At this stated meeting, the Session took the following actions:

- ◆ Approved the 2024 PCUSA statistical report
- ◆ Approved a letter of transfer for Gretchen and Mel Allmond to King's Grant Presbyterian Church in Virginia Beach
- ◆ Approved receipt of a gift for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank
- ◆ Approved transfer of funds from the Child Stabilization Grant to make up the 2024 preschool operating deficit
- ◆ Amended the Youth Protection Policy to include electronic communications and social media
- ◆ Approved a gift to Rise for Hunger
- ◆ Approved a request for baptism
- ◆ Approved a new hire for the preschool
- ◆ Approved distribution of the 2024 surplus totaling \$66,000
- ◆ Moved the April Session meeting from Easter evening (April 20) to April 13
- ◆ Adopted guidelines for addressing questions around immigration status
- ◆ Approved a facilities request for Rotary Youth Exchange





CHRISTIAN FORMATION

RACHEL WATSON • (540) 885-2138
revrachelwatson@gmail.com

There is a place for everyone in Christian Formation with classes for our adults, youth, and children happening on Sunday morning and all week long! Come grow in faith with us!

Christian Formation Links are at the Covenant website:

www.covenantpresstaunton.org/christian-formation-opportunities/

A NOTE FROM RAE —

What's new during Lent in Christian Formation? I'm glad you asked!

Our Sunday School classes, children, youth, and adults, will begin a new unit from Illustrated Ministry called Bread of Life. This curriculum highlights how Jesus fed people – both bodies and souls – with good news, stories of redemption, and parables that showed the way of God's kingdom. All are welcome at the table!

Families are invited to take faith formation home this Lent with another Lenten Spiral Devotional. This devotional provides short daily activities for families that correspond with the Bread of Life curriculum. Children will receive the devotional during Sunday School on March 2. If your child does not usually attend Sunday School and you would like a copy, let Rae know and we'll get it to you.

We are excited to offer a second option for adults during the season of Lent. John will be offering a book study of *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* by John Fea, Professor of History at Messiah College. The book is available new or used from a variety of sources. If you are interested in studying the book with us and have difficulty locating a copy, please speak with John Peterson. This study will be held on Sundays during the Sunday School Hour in Room 6 (location subject to change) beginning April 9.

Finally, Rae sends two newsletters out each week, one for Children's Ministry and one for Youth Ministry. These newslet-

ters, in addition to updating families about upcoming events, provide activities, conversation starters, and a scripture study to help families engage in faith formation practices all week long. If you emailed me requesting to be included in the mailing list, you will begin receiving them this week. If you would like to check them out or be added to the mailing list them, email Rae.

Children's & Youth Sunday Christian Formation

Nursery | Birth – Age 3 | 9:30-11:45AM | Nursery
Growing in God's Word | Age 3-Grade 6 |
 9:30 - 10:15AM | Education Wing
Follow Me | Grades 7-12 | 9:30 - 10:15AM |
 Youth Room
Covenant Kids | Grades PK-1 | 10:45-11:15AM |
 Covenant Kids Chapel

Children's & Youth Fellowship

Faith Explorers | Grades 2-5 | 6:30 - 8:00PM | First
 Fridays | Great Hall
Middle School Manna | Grades 6-8 |
 12:00 - 1:30 PM | 1st Sundays |
 Fellowship Hall
High School YOUTH | Grades 9-12 |
 12:00 - 1:30 PM | Typically Third Sundays |
 Great Hall

Adult Christian Formation

Follow Me: Discipleship Study | Sundays |
 9:30 - 10:15AM | Fellowship Hall
Book Study with John | Sundays |
 9:30 - 10:15AM | Room 6
Monday Morning Bible Study | Mondays |
 10:30 - 11:30AM | Room 6 and via Zoom
Presbyterian Women | Second Tuesdays |
 10:30AM - noon | Breezeway
Act III Older Adult Ministry | Thursdays |
 10:30AM - noon | Chapel

FEBRUARY



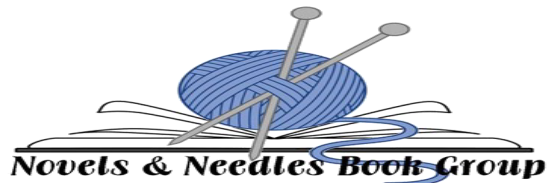
MARCH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>24</p> <p>COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED</p> <p>10:30 AM <i>Monday Morning Bible Study</i></p>	<p>25</p> <p>9:30 AM <i>Presbytery Meeting via Zoom</i></p>	<p>26</p> <p>9:30 AM <i>Yoga Class</i></p> <p>6:00 PM <i>Together on Wednesday (TOW)</i></p> <p>6:45 PM <i>Sacred Playtime for All Ages</i></p>	<p>27</p> <p>5:45 PM <i>Bell Choir Rehearsal</i></p> <p>7:00 PM <i>Choir Rehearsal</i></p>	<p>28</p>	<p>MAR 1</p>	
<p>2</p> <p>YOUTH SUNDAY</p> <p>Peanut Butter Sunday Presbyterian Coffee Project</p> <p>8:30 AM <i>Worship Service</i></p> <p>9:30 AM <i>Sunday School</i></p> <p>10:30 AM <i>Worship Service and via Live Stream</i></p>	<p>3</p> <p>10:30 AM <i>Monday Morning Bible Study</i></p> <p>5:30 PM <i>Congregational Care Team</i></p> <p>7:00 PM <i>Facilities Team</i></p> <p>7:15 PM <i>Worship Team</i></p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9:30 AM <i>Yoga Class</i></p> <p>6:00 PM <i>Together on Wednesday (TOW)</i></p> <p>7:00 PM ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE</p>	<p>6</p> <p>5:45 PM <i>Outreach Team</i></p> <p>5:45 PM <i>Bell Choir Rehearsal</i></p> <p>7:00 PM <i>Choir Rehearsal</i></p>	<p>7</p> <p>9:00 AM <i>Newsletter Submission Deadline</i></p> <p>6:30 PM <i>Faith Explorers (Grades 2-5)</i></p>	<p>8</p>
<p>9</p> <p>8:30 AM <i>Worship Service</i></p> <p>9:30 AM <i>Sunday School</i></p> <p>10:30 AM <i>Worship Service and via Live Stream</i></p> <p>11:45 AM <i>Christian Formation Team</i></p> <p>4:00 PM <i>Technology Committee via Zoom</i></p>	<p>10</p> <p>COVENANT CONNECTION PUBLISHED</p> <p>10:30 AM <i>Monday Morning Bible Study</i></p>	<p>11</p> <p>9:30 AM <i>PW Coordinating Team</i></p> <p>10:30 AM <i>Presbyterian Women</i></p> <p>5:00 PM <i>Preschool Team</i></p> <p>7:00 PM <i>Stewardship & Finance Team</i></p>	<p>12</p> <p>9:30 AM <i>Yoga Class</i></p> <p>6:00 PM <i>Together on Wednesday (TOW)</i></p> <p>7:00 PM <i>Taizé Service</i></p>	<p>13</p> <p>5:45 PM <i>Bell Choir Rehearsal</i></p> <p>7:00 PM <i>Choir Rehearsal</i></p>	<p>14</p> <p>9:00 AM <i>Executive Team</i></p> <p>10:00 AM <i>Novels & Needles Book Group</i></p>	<p>15</p>



NEXT MEETING:
Tuesday,
March 11th,
10:30 AM in the
Breezeway

Presbyterian Women's Fellowship thanks you for your generous support of the Church World Service Blanket campaign. Your support for the CWS Blankets program offers more than just warmth. You provide hope and love to those facing challenging times. Thanks to generous donors like you, 27,275 CWS Blankets were shared with people in need in 2024. Thank you, Lily Watson, Susan and Juli Wszalek, Pastor Rae, and Mary Ann Stripling, for kicking off the campaign with a Tony award-winning performance on Sunday, February 16!



Novels & Needles Book Group

Novels & Needles Book Club will meet at 10:00 AM on Friday, March 14th in the Breezeway with Peggy Roberson, discussion leader.

The book being discussed is
Clear: A Novel
by Carys Davies

Members are encouraged to bring their knitting or crocheting which could benefit the Prayer Shawl Ministry.

We also welcome those who do not knit or crochet.

Please join us!



Monday Morning Bible Study

Join us Mondays at 10:30 AM

We look at the text for the next Sunday's sermon. Come dive a little deeper into God's word, share your insights, and get a head start on the next sermon.

We meet **in person** in Room 6 **and** also offer this meeting **virtually** through Zoom. A link to the Zoom meeting is sent out via opt-ins each Sunday.



The next
Equal Exchange
Sale is **Sunday,**
March 2nd.

Available are:
♦ regular coffee for \$9
♦ decaf coffee for \$10

- ♦ tea for \$4
- ♦ dark chocolate for \$4

Make your purchase between the 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM worship services and after the 10:30 service. You can place a pre-order by contacting 540-290-1089 or

[**bettyandcliff@comcast.net**](mailto:bettyandcliff@comcast.net)

ONGOING OUTREACH

Peanut Butter Sunday

First Sunday of Each Month

You can drop off your jar of peanut butter in the vestibule area outside the church office.

Fun Fact: On average you donate over 80 lbs. of food per week.
That's a lot of peanut butter!



FILL THE BUCKET - HELP RESTOCK THE VERONA FOOD PANTRY

Help feed our neighbors in need!
Donations may be dropped off
in the **RED BUCKETS** located in
the vestibule just outside
the church office or in
the Narthex.



REMEMBER OUR ONGOING COLLECTIONS: *Plastic Bags & Shelburne Pantry Restock*

GEMEINSCHAFT OUTREACH

Covenant's twice-a-month, one-hour visits with the 12 ladies at *Gemeinschaft Women's House* in Harrisonburg are continuing with delightful successes. The staff greets us each time with, "This is a wonderful ministry for our ladies, they look forward to you coming." Our church provides **pizza** and **fruit** for lunch and **craft supplies** to go along with the **conversations** and **crafting**. Also, our congregation has provided the extremely appreciated **homemade cookies**.

OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN IN THIS MINISTRY:

Visiting—1st and 3rd Mondays, 11:30-12:30;

Craft-making—simple creations completed in an hour, join in and/or share new ideas; (Jim Oberg shared his magician talents with the ladies last week!)

Homemade cookie making—(4 dozen, so they can "have some to brighten their day later", (as someone says each time!)

To talk about how you want to join in, contact Joan Sayers at 8917jts@gmail.com or 540-255-6273.





HOST, HELPERS & SOUP NEEDED

March 5 through April 9 - TOW will be serving soups during the Lenten season. We need five (5) crockpots of soup with one being a vegetarian option each Wednesday. TOW begins at 6:00 pm so please have your soup in the Great Hall 15 minutes prior. Hosts are responsible for bringing salad and bread and helping with set up and clean up. Hosts will be notified about how many people rsvp'd and will be reimbursed by the TOW fund.

Sign up at: <https://bit.ly/4hgM28f> or call the church office (540-885-2138).



**Wednesdays at 6:00 pm
in the Great Hall**

**March 5 - April 9
Menu is Soup, Salad, & Bread**

Make a reservation by noon on the Monday before the TOW you plan to attend so we know how many to prepare to feed.

Sign up online at

<https://bit.ly/4jBxYYQ>

OR sign the Friendship Pad on Sunday

OR contact the church office
at 540-885-2138.



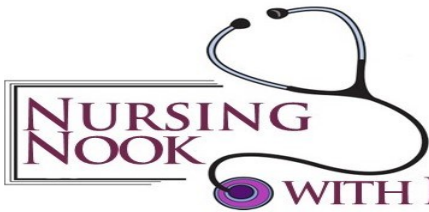
At 7:00 pm after TOW beginning on March 5, join us for Lenten Taizé Worship Services in the Sanctuary.

Look Who I Spy with Rae!



Rae met up with Sarah Wolf, previous Associate Pastor of Covenant and current Pastor at Mt. Bethel Presbyterian Church (Durham, NC) while attending the APCE Annual Event in Memphis, TN. APCE is the Association of Partners in Christian Education. Rae was there as a co-moderator of APCE's JEDI Advisory Council (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion).

For more information about APCE check out: <https://apcenet.org/>



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

Nasty weather. Nasty politics. Skyrocketing flu statistics. We're having a stressful winter. The following suggestions may not resolve our distress but might lighten our hearts and moods.

Eat dark chocolate, the kind that's 50-90 % cacao. We all "know" it's good for our hearts, because its flavanols increase blood flow and lower blood pressure. It also contains immunity-boosting zinc, antioxidants to protect your skin and -- new to me -- a single ounce contains as much fiber as a slice of 100% whole wheat bread!



Another spirit-lifter: "**A good laugh has great short-term effects**," the Mayo Clinic tells us. Immediate benefits include stress relief, increased oxygen intake and stimulation of heart, lungs and other muscles. Laughter also has great long-term effects. Find reasons to laugh regularly and you may discover that your immune system is stronger, aches and pains are less bothersome and your self-esteem is higher. Scientific studies suggest this is because laughter decreases the amount of stress- and weight-inducing cortisol our bodies produce.

If you don't feel like laughing, try smiling: Its stress-relieving properties are almost as great as laughter's. Smiling also makes us appear younger, thinner and more affable, according to a 2023 study done at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. But, the study's authors warned, be aware that smirking and "fake smiling" simply make everyone feel worse. And bonus: **a single smile can generate the same level of brain stimulation as up to 2,000 bars of chocolate**, one British researcher claims.



Another mood-lifter recently in the news is fidgeting. Although often associated with restless children, fidgeting (which can range from leg-bouncing and hair twirling to doodling, pen-chewing, and knitting) can be beneficial for adults, some researchers claim. Fidgeting alleviates some of the negative impact of our too-sedentary lifestyle by increasing blood flow, burning calories and helping the fidgeter focus. "**Crushing the natural urge to fidget is a public health calamity**" and at least partially responsible for the current worldwide obesity epidemic. Mayo Clinic professor James Levine says, "If you allow the body's natural drive to move... the likelihood is you are actually going to be healthier, happier and thinner, and quite frankly, live longer."



If all the chocolate eating, laughing and fidgeting are tiring, feel free to **take a nap:** the American Heart Association recommends napping for adults who sleep less than 7-9 hours at night. The AHA suggests you plan your time and place (mid-afternoon, in a quiet place, which could be your car if your boss is not amenable to nap breaks) and **keep the nap brief** (20 minutes or so). After all, a 2023 study of Spanish nappers, indicated that regular nappers had lower blood pressures and higher cardiovascular health. A word of caution: Scientists are running studies to check suspicions that longer naps cause problems with heart health and weight.

And, as always, remember: Hard science suggests that **people of faith** -- especially those who participate in their faith communities' work -- **live longer, healthier and happier lives.**



Pictured L to R: Kristen Lambert, Zoey Cline-Taskey, Jaxon Folk, Aubrey Lawson, Dan Drumheller, Zane Cline-Taskey, and Seth Ward.

**Winner, winner, chicken dinner!
Well, in this case, chili and dessert!**

On Sunday, February 9th at Covenant's Annual Chili Cook-Off/Dessert Bake-Off delicious chilis and desserts were sampled and the youth ruled the roost taking first place in both categories. Congratulations to Zane Cline-Taskey for his Boilermaker Tailgate Chili and to Aubrey Lawson for her Droppings from Heaven. Runners-up were Seth Ward for chili and Zoey Cline-Taskey, Jaxon Folk, and Kristen Lambert for desserts.

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mailing Address:

PO Box 2948, Staunton, VA 24402

Physical Address:

2001 N. Coalter Street, Staunton

Office — 540-885-2138

Fax — 540-885-4399

Office Hours:

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

Fri, 8:15AM - 12:15PM



MINISTERIAL & PROGRAM STAFF

John C. Peterson

Pastor

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

is a publication of

Covenant Presbyterian Church.

The newsletter is published bi-weekly to inform members and friends of church programs, news and events.

The Connection newsletter is online at

www.covenantpresstaunton.org.

COVENANT



Presbyterian
Church

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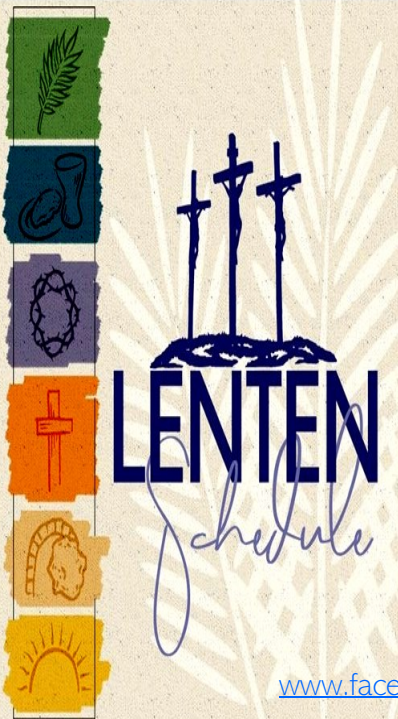
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MATTHEW 25

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



Ash Wednesday Service in Sanctuary (no live stream)
Wednesday, March 5 at 7:00 PM

Lenten Taizé Service in the Sanctuary (no live stream)
Each Wednesday March 12 through April 9 at 7:00 PM

Palm Sunday Services in the Sanctuary:
Sunday, April 13 at 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM (live streamed)

Maundy Thursday Service in the Sanctuary
Thursday, April 17 at 7:00 PM (live streamed)

Easter Services in Sanctuary:
Sunday, April 20 at 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM (live streamed)

Live streams can be viewed at

www.facebook.com/Covenant-Presbyterian-Church-163891301309/videos/