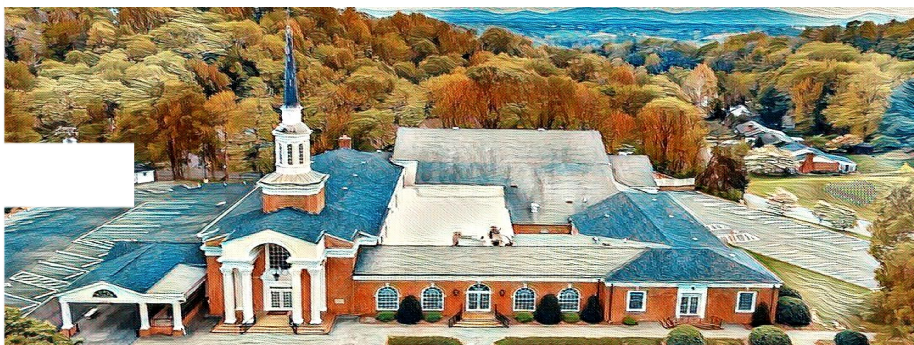


DECEMBER 15, 2025
STAUNTON, VA



COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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From the Pastor's Desk

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth and anticipate his return in glory, it might be fair to ask what difference his coming has made in the world. Positively, his coming has offered salvation, hope, and peace to all people. His life and teachings offer an example of faithful living for us to emulate. His call to discipleship gives us purpose for living – a vocation that permeates our daily work and play. His coming among us affirms God's great love for us all, and his death and resurrection offer to us not only forgiveness for our sins but also hope for eternal life that buoys our living day-to-day. Following him, churches and individuals have reached out to feed the hungry and work for justice for the oppressed; they have welcomed strangers and healed the sick; they have created housing for the unhoused and shown compassion to those at the margins of society who thought they had been forgotten. Jesus' coming has changed the world for the better in more ways than we count – and that is worth celebrating!

But his coming among us has also had less positive results. It has led to persecution, not just **of** his followers, but also **by** his self-proclaimed followers – in the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades, and the brutal treatment of Native Americans and African-American slaves in our own nation. It has spawned conflict among Christian siblings who disagree on what Jesus would have us do and are willing to fight to prove their point. We have seen supposed followers of Jesus bomb Planned Parenthood offices, support racist policies, attack queer neighbors, persecute Jews, and

(continued on page 3)

VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG

Serving
GOD
Together



GREETERS

DECEMBER 21 -

8:30 AM....Gary & Nancy Gourley

10:30 AM....Bob & Mary Ann Stripling

DECEMBER 28 -

10:30 AM....Cindy Bowman,

Alan Cameron, Sharon Zaccaria

FLOWER COORDINATORS

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING

DECEMBER — Bill Terry



Join us Mondays
at 10:30 AM
IN ROOM 6
OR VIA ZOOM

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.

A link to the Zoom meeting is sent out via opt-ins each Sunday.



Sanctuary
flowers
SIGN-UP

Provide flowers in memory or in honor of someone, or just to decorate the sanctuary. Directions are given on the sign-up form. Please sign up at <https://bit.ly/3MD9wX0> at least two weeks before your desired date.

Questions? Contact Susan Polly or Christy Davis.

ACT III



FAITH FORMATION
FOR THE OLDER ADULT YEARS

Join us Fridays
at 10:30 AM
at Baldwin Park

Act III is a ministry geared for older adults who are navigating the blessings and challenges that come with age. In this group, we study scriptures through the lens of aging and explore our vocation and discipleship in this particular stage of life.

**Ushers/Greeters
Needed**



Help is always needed!
If you are available at the
8:30 or 10:30 service,
please sign-up at
<http://bit.ly/3KPmamT>

**NOTE TO OUR
VISITORS!**

If you have been visiting in person or online
and are interested in learning
more about Covenant, our ministries,
or membership, please give John Peterson
a call at 540-885-2138.

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

impose their own interpretation of the faith in some of the most unloving, violent, and oppressive terms imaginable. We might dismiss those events as the misguided interpretations of a minority of believers, but there have been enough of those actions across the years to make one wonder how many people have suffered as a direct result of Jesus' coming. Herod's slaughter of the innocents shortly after Jesus' birth – an act that forced the holy family to flee to Egypt as refugees – was the first in two thousand years' worth of suffering related to Jesus' coming.

The historical record is thus a bit mixed. Why then do we celebrate his birth with such great joy? We do so because we believe that his coming is good news for the world in the midst of a lot of bad news, some of it done in the name of Christ but not in obedience to him. As his disciples, we proclaim that his message is fundamentally about God's love for the world – for the whole world – and God's hope-filled promise of peace on earth and eternal life beyond this earthly existence. We who celebrate his coming should not linger too long at the manger, basking in the glow of that Silent Night. We should head out to share his good news as the shepherds did, to work for justice as the wise men did in defying Herod, to follow his example and live as he calls us to live – with love for all our neighbors, and to oppose the corruption of the gospel by those who use it in violent, divisive, hateful, unloving ways. In other words, we should show the world that Jesus' coming really is good news for the world – and good news for us!



Congregational
meeting

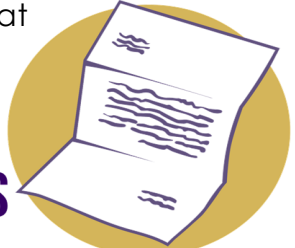
There will be a Called Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 4 after the 10:30 service to approve changes to the pastors' terms of call.



MERRY
CHRISTMAS
FROM THE
STAFF

Contribution statements for December have been emailed and mailed. If you do not receive your statement, please contact Dave Metz at 540-292- 8864 or dmetz@ntelos.net.

**CONTRIBUTION
STATEMENTS**



Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, December 26th.**

Please email Martha at: covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com



Covenant's Annual

Ice Skating Event

January 18, 2026 ❄️ 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Generations Park, Bridgewater

Skate Rental is \$4.00

Skaters and Spectators will be able to enjoy a warm cup of hot cocoa and cookies.



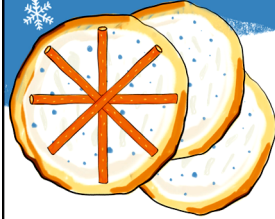
Skaters & Spectators, please sign up at

<https://bit.ly/iceskatingevent>

WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG



Snowflake SNACK CAKES



Celebrate the beauty of winter with these fun snowflake-inspired treats!

What you need:

- Graham cracker squares or sugar cookies
- White frosting or marshmallow fluff
- Pretzel sticks (snowflake arms)
- Shredded coconut or white sprinkles
- Mini marshmallows or candy pearls

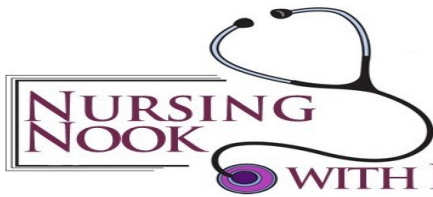


What you do:

1. Frost each cracker or cookie.
2. Arrange pretzel sticks in a crisscross for the snowflake base.
3. Sprinkle with coconut or sprinkles for snow.
4. Add marshmallows or candy pearls to the ends for detail.

Lesson tie-in:

Remind kids that God made each of us unique—just like no two snowflakes are alike!
(Psalm 139:14, KJV)



Kathy Henderson, RN • (540) 290-6396

covenantnurse@gmail.com

Contact Kathy with medical questions or
for a blood pressure check.

WITH KATHY HENDERSON, RN

For many of us, Advent is a time of hope, joy, and high anxiety. We sit in our beautifully decorated sanctuary, singing favorite Christmas hymns, looking forward to raucous or solemn Christmas Eve services. We collect warm clothing and cook food for the needy. We decorate our own houses, bake for family, and agonize over which Christmas gifts to find (and wrap and deliver). And often, we grow very, very tired. Sure, we all “know” how to avoid (or minimize) holiday stress: Eat well, exercise regularly, maintain good sleep routines, meditate, delegate. The media is overflowing with “self-care” advice.

For caregivers, though, this can be a particularly difficult time when “self-care” simply doesn’t happen -- but affordable and/or no-cost help is available.

Covenant’s **“Respite Care”** volunteers will come to your home for a few hours to visit with homebound family members while caregivers are out. Call Eileen Cooper or me to schedule a respite visit.

The Memory Café offers a monthly “drop-in” social gathering for those with mild-to-moderate dementia. Sponsored by Trinity Episcopal Church and held at the Staunton Public Library from 2:00 to 3:30 PM, the third Thursday of each month (including this week!), the Café is designed to create “an opportunity for normalcy,” with light refreshments and various activities. Caregivers do not have to stay.

The Gathering Place, newly created by Valley Program for Aging (VPAS), and open from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM every Wednesday, is designed to provide a “peaceful pause” for older adults living with dementia -- and their caregivers. Participants engage in various activities (ranging from singing and chair yoga to puzzles and board games), eat lunch, and socialize. Caregivers are free to leave -- or to stay. An application and informal interview are required. Green folders on my office desk include details and application forms. You can also email thegatheringplace@vpas.info or call Heather Lawrence, 540-383-7006, for more information.

Herd Immunity achieved! Even as rates of childhood vaccinations drop, our area stands out as the “most protected” in the United States, a new Johns Hopkins study shows. Tied with the state of Connecticut for No.1 status (2024-25 school year), the study shows that statewide, 98.2 percent of all Virginia kindergarteners received their MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) shots. *In our area, the stats exceeded the 95 percent needed to achieve “herd immunity,” with Waynesboro showing 98 percent, Staunton 97.1 percent, and Augusta County 95.3 percent rates of immunization.* Of note: 100 percent of Highland County kindergarteners received the MMR vaccine, but Bath, Rockbridge, and Rockingham Counties -- as well as Harrisonburg -- failed to meet the herd immunity threshold.

As vaccine misinformation has proliferated, immunization rates have dropped in many places. If you’re interested in seeing how immunization rates affect community health, check out an easy-to-read piece from NBC News, at: [Vaccination map: How protected is your community?](#) or a more technical explanation from Johns Hopkins at: [Across the U.S., Childhood Vaccination Rates Continue to Decline | International Vaccine Access Center](#)



GROUPS MEETING MONTHLY



**CareGivers meet the
Third Sunday of the Month
immediately after the 10:30 service in Room 5**

Next meeting is December 21

This group is for anyone caring for a loved one who would like to talk with others in similar situations.

**Grief Support Group meets the
Fourth Sunday of the Month
11:45AM in Room 5**

Next meeting is December 28

The holiday season can be difficult and present new challenges in our grief journey. Please join us as we explore coping and self-care strategies for managing grief during this time. Our group is open to all and offers a welcoming and safe space to share, connect, and support each other. Contact Eileen Cooper for more information.

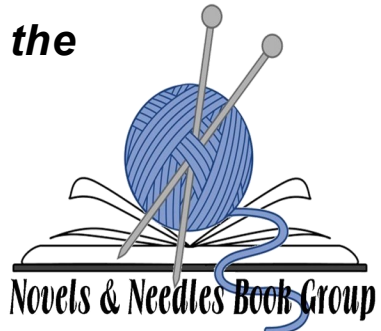


**Presbyterian Women meets the
Second Tuesday of the Month
10:30AM in the Breezeway**

Next meeting is January 13

**Novels & Needles Book Club meets the
Second Friday of the Month
10:00AM in the Breezeway
Next meeting is January 9**

*The Correspondent
by Virginia Evans*



Novels & Needles Book Group



HELP FEED THOSE AT THE WARM SHELTER

The WARM shelter is a beacon of hope, providing a cozy refuge during the winter months for those in need of shelter. We have a wonderful opportunity to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day from December 24 to December 27. The dedicated staff at WARM will prepare and serve these meals with the fresh, shelf-stable, and frozen foods we contribute. On Christmas Day, two other churches will generously provide breakfast and lunch, allowing us to take care of a delightful lunch-type meal on Christmas evening. We invite you to join us in this heartwarming effort! Please sign up for what you can to help make this a memorable occasion. Remember, we'll be delivering food on December 23, so please make note of the use-by dates for items like milk and fresh fruit. We ask that all contributions be placed in the Great Hall kitchen by Tuesday morning, December 23.

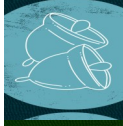
Your support means the world to those we serve!

SIGN UP AT: https://bit.ly/warm_shelter






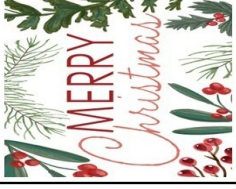





DECEMBER



JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 21 – Youth Bake Sale 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM CareGivers Group 6:00 PM STATED SESSION MEETING	15 Covenant Connection Published 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 	16 7:00 PM Stewardship & Finance Team 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 	17 9:30 AM Yoga Class 7:00 PM Longest Night Service 	18 12:00 PM Preschool Christmas Program 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	19 9:00 AM Executive Team 10:30 AM Act III Bible Study	20 9:00 AM Youth Baking
21 – Youth Bake Sale 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM CareGivers Group 6:00 PM STATED SESSION MEETING	22 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 	23	24 4:00 PM Family Christmas Eve Service 7:30 PM Candlelight Christmas Eve Service	25 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 	26 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline	27
28 – 4 Cents a Meal 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Fellowship Team 11:45 AM Grief Support Group	29 Covenant Connection Published	30	31 9:30 AM Yoga Class	JAN 1 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 	2 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 AM Act III Bible Study	3



CHRISTIAN FORMATION

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

There is a place for everyone!
Come grow in faith with us!

Christian Formation Links are at the Covenant website:

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

CHILDREN & YOUTH SUNDAY CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Nursery | Birth – Age 3 | Nursery |
9:30-11:45AM

Growing Together | PreK-Grade 4 |
Preschool Wing | 9:30-10:15AM

Up Next | Grade 5-6 | Education Wing |
9:30-10:15AM

Holy Disruptions | Grades 7-12 |
Youth Room | 9:30-10:15AM

CHILDREN & YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Faith Explorers | Grades 3-5 |
Fellowship Hall | Second Fridays |
6:30-8:00PM

Middle School Manna | Grades 6-8 |
Fellowship Hall | Third Fridays |
6:30-8:00PM

High School Mini-Missions |
Grades 9-12 | Great Hall | Typically
Third Saturdays | 9:30-11:00am

ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

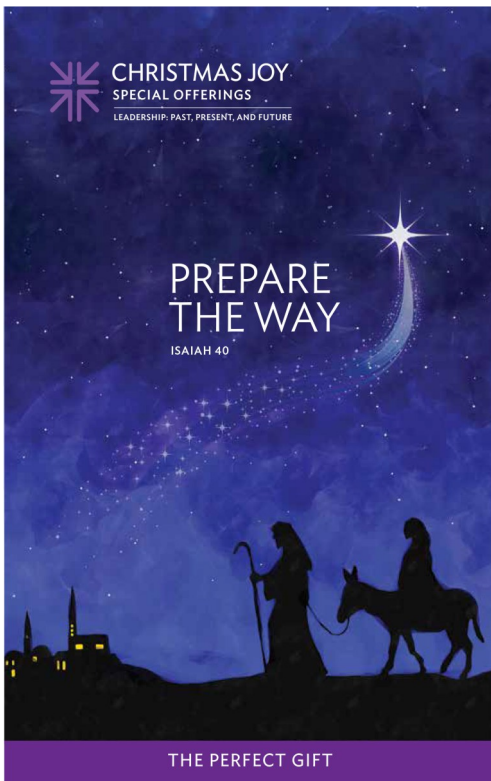
Follow Me: Discipleship Study |
Fellowship Hall | Sundays |
9:30-10:15AM

Faith and Life | Room 5 | Sundays |
9:30-10:15AM

Monday Morning Bible Study |
Room 6 | Mondays | 10:30-11:30AM

Presbyterian Women | Breezeway |
Second Tuesdays | 10:30-11:30AM

Act III Older Adult Ministry |
Baldwin Park | Fridays | 10:30-11:30AM



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



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

**OFFERING DATE IS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST**

50%

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

50%

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



WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE

GET THEM HOME WARM

Help us **WARM UP** those being released
from Middle River Regional Jail...

It is that time of year when we turn from the warm weather of Summer to Fall, to the chills of Late Fall to Winter. As you go about your shopping or as you change out your seasonal clothing, please look to see if you might have something to pass along.

Those leaving the MRRJ facility need items of clothing just to get them home.


LONG-SLEEVE T-SHIRTS, SWEATSHIRTS,

AND SWEATPANTS L-XXL

(VERY FEW XXXL, PLEASE),

GENTLY USED CASUAL SHOES (MOSTLY

.SNEAKERS), GLOVES, AND SKI CAPS



Please place your donations
in the collection bins by the
church library and in the
vestibule area by the
church office.

**COLLECTION DATES
ARE NOW
UNTIL JANUARY 1ST**



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

Alan Cameron

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.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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:

1. via an opt-in
2. email, through the Covenant Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CovenantPresStaunton#),
3. on the home page of the church website (covenantpresstaunton.org),
4. 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.