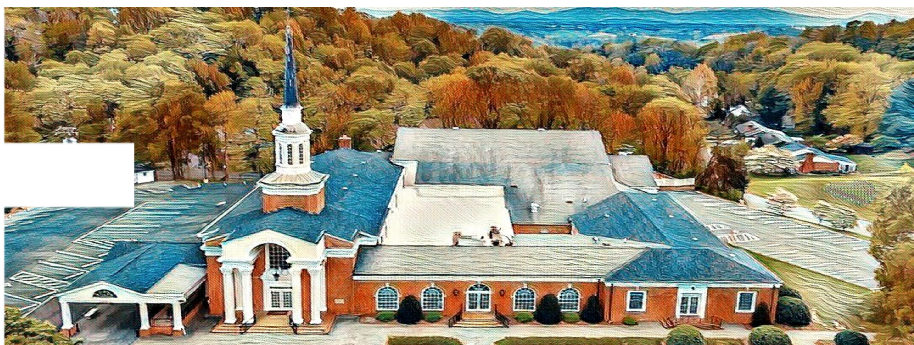


DECEMBER 29, 2025  
STAUNTON, VA



# COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## *From the Pastor's Desk*

With the carols and stories of Christmas still ringing in our ears and the dawn of a new year on the horizon, we Christians, of all people, should be hopeful. The hope we hold is not grounded in the promises of any president or the results of any polls; it is not grounded in the stock market or the weather forecast or the potential of our favorite sports team; it is not dependent upon world events or the illusion of some alternate reality that denies the reality on the ground. Our hope is grounded instead in those promises incarnate in the child in Bethlehem who is the savior of the world and our Lord!

At the time of his birth, the world was a mess with the Pax Romana violently enforced with crucifixions and violence; a paranoid Herod ordered the slaughter of all male children under two years of age, forcing the holy family to flee to Egypt; in his ministry Jesus was rejected in his hometown, derided by the Jewish authorities, and chided by his own followers for not being the king they wanted him to be. He was put to death on a cross for all the world to see. And after his resurrection some sought to undermine its truth while others simply declared it untrue. If anyone had reason to be hopeless about the world, it should have been Jesus. Yet, he never gave up hope; he never stopped loving his neighbors; he never compromised the good news of God's love for the world by adopting the sinful values of that broken world. Instead, he trusted God – fully, completely – and offered us an example of how to live faithfully.

*(continued on page 3)*

may the God of  
**hope**  
fill you with all  
**JOY**  
and  
**peace**  
as you trust in him.  
ROMANS 15:13, niv

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VISIT US ONLINE AT  
[WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG](http://WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG)

*Serving*  
**GOD**  
*Together*



### **GREETERS**

JANUARY 4 -

8:30 AM....Becky & Chris Earhart

10:30 AM....Melissa Druff, Dan Drumheller

JANUARY 11 -

8:30 AM....Jeanne & Mick Lambert

10:30 AM....Alan Cameron,  
Dan Drumheller, Jane Wimmer

### **FLOWER COORDINATORS**

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

### **CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING**

JANUARY — Mike Riddell

*With Sympathy*

Please keep in your prayers Paul Sorrell and his family on the death of his sister, Betsy Ann Foster, on December 16th while in hospice care in Kentucky. May God grant her eternal rest and grant to Paul and his family comfort and peace.



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.

**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>

**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.

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

He encouraged us to follow that example and so to find joy and peace in our lives, come what may! Across the ages, a host of saints have followed his example and dared to hope in hopeless situations, to love the unlovable, to refuse to compromise their faith, and to believe where they had not seen. The world was a mess for many of them too, but they persevered faithfully!

As we look to 2026, may we be such faithful examples in our lives and life together. May we be beacons of light that shine in the darkness for all the world to see, to the glory of God. May we dare to hope in the face of the disasters, despots, and devils who "threaten to undo us," to quote Luther's great hymn. May we live with joy and find peace that passes our understanding for these are God's gifts to us to be freely held and freely shared. And so may we boldly shout Happy New Year! for the Lord our God is with us, with us every step of the way!



**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.

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

At its stated meeting on December 21, the Session took the following actions:

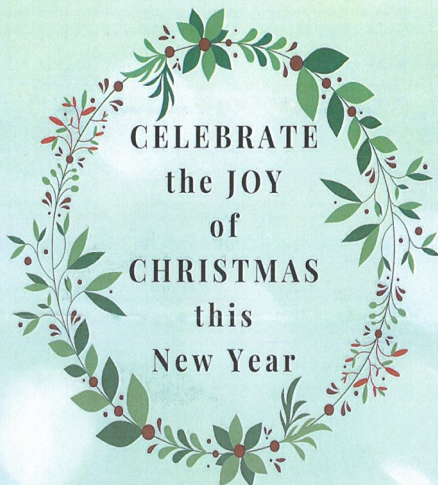
- ◆ Sustained the examinations of elders-elect Katie Campbell, Frances Craig, Christy Davis, Troy Kurtz, Kristen Lambert, Linda Owen, and John Sayers
- ◆ Approved support for the pastors' endorsement of an ecumenical statement on Christian Nationalism
- ◆ Elected Bob Stripling and Tom Brooks as commissioners to the February meeting of presbytery
- ◆ Approved team assignments for 2026, elected Paul Sorrell as Treasurer, and by virtue of office appointed Paul Sorrell, Bob Stripling, and Jane Wimmer as trustees
- ◆ Approved a budget for 2026 in the amount of \$710,000
- ◆ Approved \$800 for afterschool snacks for a tutoring program at Ware Elementary School
- ◆ Approved special offerings and communion dates for 2026
- ◆ Approved four facility use requests
- ◆ Appointed Jane Sawyer and Louise Scott to the Endowment and Memorial Fund Committee, Class of 2028
- ◆ Approved moving Presbyterian Women from Congregational Care to Christian Formation in reporting to Session

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

Please email Martha at: [covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com](mailto:covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com)







CELEBRATE  
the JOY  
of  
CHRISTMAS  
this  
New Year

*Benefit Concert  
for the*

*Blue Ridge Area Food Bank Network*  
Church and community choir with chamber orchestra  
Under the direction of David MacMillan

*Staunton Church of the Brethren*

*1615 North Coalter Street*

*January 4, 2026*

***3 p.m.***

*prelude at 2:30 p.m.*

Free Will Offering  
Reception following concert

Benefit Concert for

**SACRA**

Staunton, Augusta Church  
Relief Association

Monday,  
January 5

7:00 pm

Doors open at 6:30

Come join us for  
a time of music,  
fellowship, and an  
offering for SACRA.  
A "Meet & Greet the  
Artists" with  
refreshments will  
follow the concert.

Memorial  
Baptist Church  
224 Taylor St.  
Staunton

*Featured Local Musical Artists*

Marie Masin cup  
Organist

The Boogie Kings  
Ragtime, Boogie &  
Rockabilly Trio

The Harringtons

w/special guest, Rya Martin  
Family Harmony & Fun

Wishing you

A VERY

HAPPY  
NEW YEAR



## ONGOING OUTREACH

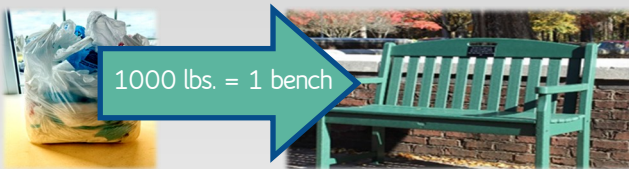
### Peanut Butter Sunday First Sunday of Each Month

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

**Fun Fact:** On average Covenant donates 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.



### PLASTIC BAG COLLECTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

**THANK YOU, COVENANT!** We have kept over **3720 pounds** of plastic out of the landfills. **AND** we've provided benches to the Boys and Girls Club and Covenant Preschool. **We are now working towards a sixth bench!** Keep up the good work:

- Please make sure your bags are **CLEAN, DRY** and **FREE OF FOOD RESIDUE**.
- Plastic bags need to be stretchy. Look for a #2 or #4 recycling symbol (polyethylene films).
- You don't need to cut off zip tops or remove paper labels.
- Please no cellophane (as in snack bags) or metallic films (see nextrex.com for details)

**WANT TO HELP?** Volunteers are always needed to do the weekly weigh-in and take bags to Food Lion. Sign up at <https://bit.ly/3CzoJTW>  
**Questions?** Contact Robyn Sommerfield at [robysommerfield@gmail.com](mailto:robysommerfield@gmail.com)

### LET'S RESTOCK THE SHELBURNE PANTRY



For January, the 'target item' is a basic one, chosen to help families maintain their homes — dish soap. It will keep their cookware clean, their plates and bowls sparkling, and their utensils shiny after meals, and that will help maintain their health and a clean home environment. As always, items such as snacks, laundry supplies, soup, toothpaste, and all the rest are welcome, and they all go to the Shelburne students and their families who need a bit of help. Covenant families is truly appreciated. We have labeled boxes in the narthex and outside the church offices for you to drop off items, which we will then take to the school pantry for distribution.

*THANK YOU for your generosity in helping Shelburne students and families through this Outreach project!*





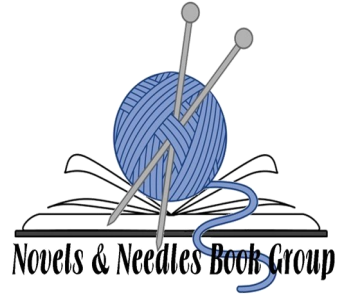
# GROUPS MEETING MONTHLY



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

The book for discussion is  
*The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans



PRESBYTERIAN  
WOMEN

---

***Presbyterian Women meet the  
Second Tuesday of the Month  
10:30AM in the Breezeway  
Next meeting is January 13***



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***CareGivers meet the  
Third Sunday of the Month  
immediately after the 10:30 service in Room 5  
Next meeting is January 18***

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 January 25***

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.



# CHRISTMAS IS A WRAP!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to wrestle a gator? Well, our fearless wrappers (not the musical rappers) decided to take on the challenge and give it a shot! And guess what? They lived to tell the tale! It's not every day you get to say you've wrestled a gator and made it out alive! We're still trying to process how they managed to pull it off! Thanks to everyone who came to wrap gifts for the Community Child Care Center (Joan Sayers, Becky Earhart, Debbie and David Metz, Janey Terry, Vicki Printy and her friend Bobbie Lawson, Melissa Druff, and Linda Tenney). Work was "wrapped" up in about an hour even though some of the gifts were a bit challenging.



Joan Sayers (standing) and Melissa Druff wrestling the gator.



Debbie Metz, Vicki Printy, Bobbie Lawson & Melissa Druff.



Becky Earhart and Janey Terry.










The next **Equal Exchange** Sale is **Sunday, January 4**

Available are:

- ♦ regular coffee for \$10
- ♦ 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@gmail.com](mailto:bettyandcliff@gmail.com).

# JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>29</b> Covenant Connection Published	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 9:30 AM Yoga Class	<b>JAN 1</b> <b>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</b> 	<b>2</b> <b>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 AM Act III Bible Study 	<b>3</b>
<b>4 - Peanut Butter Sunday Presbyterian Coffee Project</b> 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:30 AM Called Congregational Mtg 11:45 AM Outreach Team	<b>5</b> 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study  5:30 PM Congregational Care Team 7:00 PM Facilities Team 7:15 PM Worship Team	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 9:30 AM Yoga Class	<b>8</b> 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>9</b> 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline 10:00 AM Novels & Needles Book Group 10:30 AM Act III Bible Study at Baldwin Park 6:30 PM Faith Explorers (Grades 3-5)	<b>10</b> 8:30 AM SESSION RETREAT
<b>11</b> 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Christian Formation Team 2:00 PM Ice Skating  4:00 PM Technology Committee via Zoom	<b>12</b> Covenant Connection Published 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study  7:00 PM Personnel Team	<b>13</b> 9:30 AM PW Coordinating Team 10:30 AM Presbyterian Women 5:00 PM Preschool Team	<b>14</b> 9:30 AM Yoga Class	<b>15</b> 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>16</b> 6:30 PM Middle School Manna 	<b>17</b>





# CHRISTIAN FORMATION

**RACHEL WATSON • (540) 885-2138**  
[revrachelwatson@gmail.com](mailto: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/](http://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

**Exploring Sacred Art** | 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

## NEW CHRISTIAN FORMATION CLASS — “EXPLORING SACRED ART”

Explore the history and evolution of Christianity and the church through the lens of sacred art. From 2<sup>nd</sup> century catacomb paintings to 21<sup>st</sup> century modern glass chapels, from medieval reliquaries to Protestant Vanitas flower paintings, we will explore how each century shaped and molded the faith. Come curious and open minded, for art is meant to



The Catacomb of Commodilla

inspire, evoke,  
 and help us  
 uncover the  
 questions we  
 so often have!

Join Seth Ward in  
 room 5 on Sunday mornings during the  
 Christian Formation Hour beginning at 9:30 AM.



Vanitas Still-Life with a Bouquet and a Skull (1643) - Adriaen van Utrecht

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](http://WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG)



## 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](http://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#](http://www.facebook.com/CovenantPresStaunton#)),
3. on the home page of the church website ([covenantpresstaunton.org](http://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.