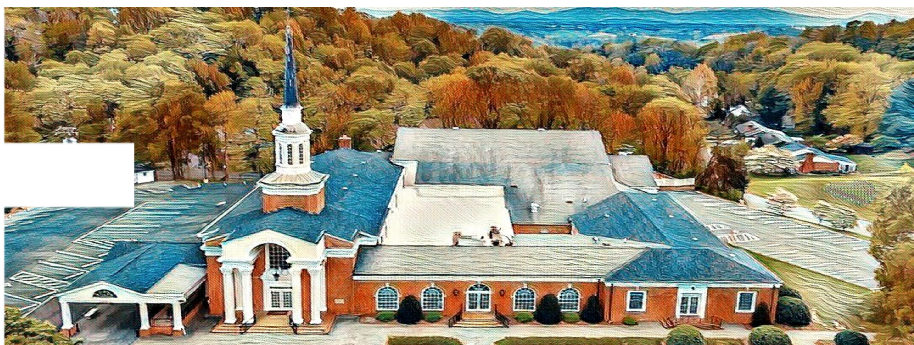


JANUARY 12, 2026
STAUNTON, VA



COVENANT CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

From the Pastor's Desk

As a Matthew 25 congregation, one of our priorities is nurturing congregational vitality. By some measures we are indeed a vital congregation:

- ◆ We had almost 500 people worship with us in person on Christmas Eve, numbers not seen since before the pandemic!
- ◆ Giving has been robust with a budget for 2026 of \$710,000 including \$99,000 for Outreach programs.
- ◆ Adult Sunday School attendance is growing, and our children and youth programs are strong and getting stronger.
- ◆ New Outreach initiatives are providing more opportunities for service.
- ◆ New members are joining, 11 last year, with 4 more prepared to join in the coming weeks.
- ◆ We had fresh voices contribute to our Advent devotional with meaningful reflections.

Those are all signs of a healthy congregation. Yet, in other ways, we are less vital than we might be:

- ◆ Too few people are engaged in any activity outside of Sunday worship.
- ◆ Worship attendance continues to trail pre-COVID weeks.
- ◆ While we are welcoming new members, the pace of growth is slower than before the pandemic.
- ◆ There are increasing segments of our neighborhood and community who are unchurched and with whom we have little contact.

(continued on page 3)



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VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.COVENANTPRESSTAUNTON.ORG

Serving
GOD
Together



GREETERS

JANUARY 18 -

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

10:30 AM....Debbie & Dave Metz

JANUARY 25 -

8:30 AM....Dottie & Ty Tysinger

10:30 AM....Melissa Druff

FLOWER COORDINATORS

Susan Polly and Christy Davis

CHURCH OPENING and CLOSING

JANUARY — Mike Riddell

With Sympathy

Please keep in your prayers:

- ♦ Rae and Janice Rockwell and their family on the death of Rae's brother, Lynn Rockwell on January 3rd.
- ♦ Jim and Susan McClary and their family on the death of Jim's uncle, Jim Fogleman, on January 4 in hospice care.

May God grant Lynn and Jim eternal rest and resurrection joy, and grant to their families 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 each Friday
at 10:30 AM
at Baldwin Park
beginning on
February 6th

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)

No numbers can accurately reflect our spiritual vitality as a congregation, so it seems fair to ask:

- ♦ How vital is your spiritual life at the dawn of this new year?
- ♦ Are you growing in faith and being challenged to find new ways of being faithful, or are you comfortable with where you are with little desire to do more?
- ♦ Have you invited anyone to participate in a ministry of Covenant in the past 6 months, whether it be worship or an outreach project or a Christian formation opportunity?
- ♦ Are you helping to make the church more vital in any way?
- ♦ Is the church meeting your needs and providing opportunities for you to share your gifts?

At its retreat last weekend, the Session discussed the challenges posed by John Cleghorn in his book, *Building Belonging*: *"Can we make church home again in all the ways people hunger for it - not places where consumers receive services, but where a diverse community of faithful stakeholders (I would say, 'disciples') have a passionate coownership of a great undertaking?"* What might it take for us as a congregation to live into that vision? What might it take for you to be part of making that vision a reality?



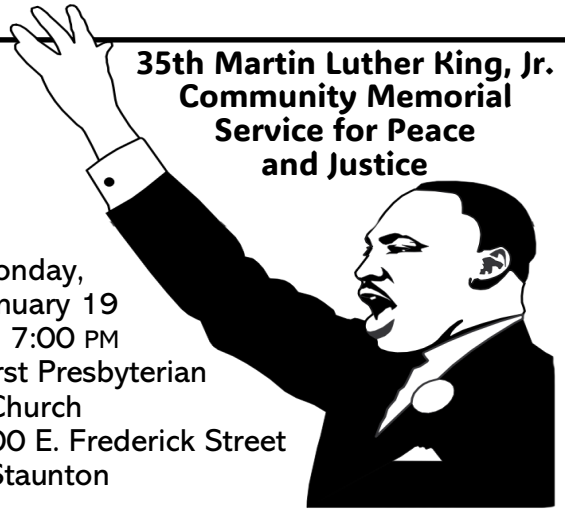
SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

At its annual retreat on January 10, the Session took the following actions:

- ♦ Approved letters of transfer for Earl and Jesse Reeves to Moscow Covenant Brethren Church at their request
- ♦ Approved \$1200 to Rise Up with Hunger
- ♦ Approved a CF retreat for September
- ♦ Approved moving ahead with the revised bulletin with a new logo
- ♦ Adopted four priorities for 2026

35th Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Memorial Service for Peace and Justice

Monday,
January 19
@ 7:00 PM
First Presbyterian
Church
100 E. Frederick Street
Staunton

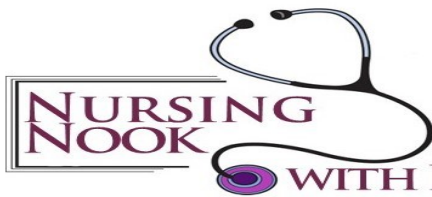


Do you love books? Do you love helping kids? Help us flood the Community Childcare Center with love and literacy for Valentine's Day. Watch for the heart-filled bulletin board in the Breezeway with the books to be purchased. The book collection will run January 18 to February 6.

Items for the next newsletter are due by **9:00 AM on Friday, January 23rd.**

Please email Martha at: covenantpcusastaunton@gmail.com





Kathy Henderson, RN • (540) 290-6396

covenantnurse@gmail.com

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

WITH KATHY HENDERSON, RN

Despite the mind-numbing cacophony of conflicting, confusing information published last year about health and medicine, there was good news out there. It took some sleuthing, but here are a few of my favorites in the “good news” category:

- ♦ **VIZZ eyedrops for presbyopia** (the age-related farsightedness that affects an estimated 128 million Americans) received FDA approval in July and are now available by prescription. In clinical trials, these eyedrops improved vision dramatically for up to 10 hours. Ask your ophthalmologist about them.
- ♦ **Neffy nasal spray for children** was OK'd in March. A lower-dose version of the adult Neffy was approved in late 2024. Neffy Jr – available by prescription only -- provides an easier-to-use, less expensive alternative to EpiPen Jr, for emergency treatment of life-threatening allergic reactions.
- ♦ **Shingles vaccination may stave off dementia.** Just last month, results of a British-led study published in *naturemedicine*, indicates that “the recombinant (shingles) vaccine (currently used in the US) is associated with a significantly lower risk of dementia in the 6 years post-vaccination. Although researchers say more studies are needed, they are “cautiously optimistic” with their findings that the vaccine led to a 17 percent increase in (dementia) diagnosis-free time among those receiving the shot.
- ♦ **Coffee (yet again) proves to be “good” for us.** Although research shows that my favorite drink has many benefits, a large-scale study published last winter in *Nature Microbiology* indicates that regular coffee drinkers have more *Lawsonibacter asaccharolyticus*, a gut bacteria shown to improve intestinal health and brain health.

WARM SHELTER MEALS UPDATE



Wow, oh, wow! Our Covenant Family came together to provide food for our neighbors staying at the WARM Shelter, December 24-27. We provided 10 meals for 35-45 people! We shared the work with 2 other organizations who provided a Christmas Day breakfast and a Christmas Day Lunch. With all sorts of fruit and take away breakfast and lunch foods, we added Christmas cookies and had enough for snacks during the day. For the evenings we provided a spaghetti dinner, a ham dinner, and a potluck dinner with lasagna, soup, and chili.



We also provided homemade cakes and more cookies for desserts. Five Covenant members and two other volunteers served the spaghetti dinner. So many of God's people joining together to serve more of God's people! Your kindness and generosity in sharing your blessings is your light shining . . . showing God's light for us and our neighbors.

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.



1000 lbs. = 1 bench

PLASTIC BAG COLLECTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

THANK YOU, COVENANT! We have kept over **3787 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

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. 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



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

Next meeting is January 13



Happy New Year, Presbyterian Women! The weather seems to be cooperating this month, so we hope to see you for Bible Study. Peggy Roberson and Mary Ann Stripling are doubling up to present Lessons 4 and 5, The Prodigal Child, The Eldest Child, and the Devoted Parent, as well as The Gift of the Woman Who Was Poor from Part II of our study book, Finding Our Joy. Sounds like a great way to begin a new year!



***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

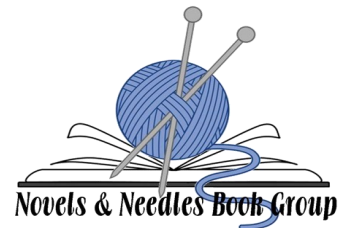
Our group is open to all and offers a welcoming and safe space to share, connect, and support each other. Contact Eileen Cooper for more information.



***Novels & Needles Book Club meets the
Second Friday of the Month
10:00AM in the Breezeway***

Next meeting is February 13

The book for discussion is
Theo of Golden by Allen Levi



November 2025

November brought us the opportunity to train over 100 women, young and old, across northern Nigeria to be trainers in regenerative agriculture. With added learning modules in agroforestry, alternative main crops, and vegetable gardens, they also practiced peer teaching before gaining their certification. We love how our trainer candidates, who were nominated by local Decapolis trainers, spanned the age spectrum. Having elders as trainers increases community impact, as they are culturally respected and entrusted with passing on knowledge to the younger generations. Having young women as trainers helps to mobilize the next generation and increases youth participation in sustainable agriculture.



As I type this, we just received a report of 13 teenage girls who were kidnapped from their farms in Borno State. Insecurity is on the rise in Nigeria, and farmers are often a prime target, as they farm large fields of land in remote areas. While we pray for a lasting security solution, these new trainers are now equipped to teach others this method of farming, which can be implemented on a small portion of land next to their homes, (just 6.25% of a hectare), reducing the risk of being attacked while farming and enabling farmers to still produce enough to feed their families. Please pray for these women as they go back as forces for change in their communities.

"...for the purpose of equipping God's people for the work of serving others, in order to build up the body of Christ." ~ Ephesians 4:12

You can help us continue to equip and empower farmers in northern Nigeria by becoming a monthly supporter or making a one-time donation through your preferred platform below:

Checks: Commission To Every Nation
P.O. Box 291307
Kerrville, TX • 78029-1307

Online: www.cten.org/crystalraphael









Helpful links to follow Decapolis
Community Development Center:

[FACEBOOK](#)
[WEBSITE](#)
[YOUTUBE](#)
[EMAIL](#)

Editor's Note: Covenant supports Decapolis through our Outreach budget and Glorious Gifts.

JANUARY



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
12 Covenant Connection Published 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study  7:00 PM Personnel Team	13 9:30 AM PW Coordinating Team 10:30 AM Presbyterian Women  5:00 PM Preschool Team	14 9:30 AM Yoga Class  yoga class	15 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	16	17	
18 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 2:00 PM Ice Skating 	19 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 	20 5:00 PM Endowment Committee	21 9:30 AM Yoga Class  yoga class	22 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	23 9:00 AM Newsletter Submission Deadline	24
25 — 4 Cents a Meal 8:30 AM Worship Service 9:30 AM Christian Formation Hour 10:30 AM Worship Service and via Live Stream 11:45 AM Fellowship Team 11:45 AM Grief Support Group 12:00 PM Confirmation Class	26 Covenant Connection Published 10:30 AM Monday Morning Bible Study 	27 7:00 PM Stewardship & Finance Team	28 9:30 AM Yoga Class  yoga class	29 12:00 PM Youth Leader Meeting 5:45 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	30	31



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

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

A NOTE FROM RAE:

Are you looking for a new year's resolution to help you grow in faith this spring? How about attending a class during the Christian Formation hour? We've got something for everyone!

Adults have two choices this semester. The Follow Me class with Bill and Sam meets in the fellowship hall and explores a variety of topics about discipleship. This semester, they are beginning with a unit on Practicing Joy and will dive into the book of Acts and the life of the early church.

Our second adult class, which focuses on specific topics across the semester, is beginning with a study on Sacred Art and what it teaches us about the church and our faith, led by Seth Ward. During Lent, Rae will lead a class on worship and the art of liturgy, exploring the words and symbols we use and how they help us grow in faith.

Our youth are continuing with their Holy Disruptions curriculum with a unit on holy discernment in the midst of a world of distraction. Then, in Lent, a unit on freedom, where the students will explore both what God frees us FROM and what God frees us FOR in our living as Christian disciples.

Our children are beginning their Epiphany unit, where they will explore the ways that Jesus called people into a relationship with him during his ministry. Jesus chose to live with and for us. How do we understand this and live in ways that are with and for God? During Lent, they will explore six of Jesus's I AM statements and consider what they reveal about who WE ARE as disciples.

FAMILY EVENT

ANNUAL

CHILI COOK-OFF & DESSERT BAKE-OFF

Those not wishing to compete
are encouraged to
bring cornbread to share!

FEBRUARY
8TH

Begins at
11:30 AM
in the Great Hall

#1
Best
Award



Sign-up for the competition and/or your
attendance: <https://bit.ly/chilidessert>



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.