

2011



August

Covenant's Day at Camp—Saturday, August 27

Although our annual weekend retreat at Holston Camp is not scheduled for this year, we are still offering the opportunity for Covenant's congregation to enjoy fellowship in the mountains for a day. On Saturday, August 27th, we will make the trek for a day trip with all of the normal adventures to be enjoyed at camp including hiking, swimming and canoeing. A \$5 fee per person will cover lunch and all activities. Carpooling will be available and we'll look for a group dinner stop on the way back for those who are interested. Please sign up in the Narthex if you plan to attend. Lodging at camp may be available for anyone who would like to spend the night – you may contact Lisa Jones at Holston Camp (828-898-6611) for more information. Look for more information in the coming weeks.

Music Leadership Search

A search committee has been formed to find two people whom God has called to lead the music program at Covenant. It has been decided we need a Music Director and an Accompanist; two separate positions. The committee members are: Gwen Hunter, Chair, Maureen Knechtel, Jim Amstutz, Cameron Hopkins, Ellen Hagelberg, and Max Wilson. Christian Zembower is acting as a consultant to the committee. Input, and candidate referrals are most welcome. If you have suggestions, comments, questions, or candidate referrals, contact Gwen Hunter at 423-928-8579, or via e-mail at HunterGR@usa.redcross.org

New Member/Inquirer's Class

An Inquirer's class will be offered in September for anyone who is new to Covenant or considering membership. We will explore what it means to be distinctively Presbyterian and how you can live out your Christian discipleship in the worship, service and study at Covenant. Meeting dates and times are to be determined by the needs of the participants. If you have questions or would like to sign up, please call the church office.

WNL! - Not Just For Kids Anymore!

Bible 101 for Adults

Have you every wished you knew more about the Bible? You know the stories, a lot of them, anyway, but have you ever wished that you knew more about the whole history of God's people, or how the different books of the Bible relate to each other, or what those crazy prophets were all about? Ever wondered what was in some of those books we never get around to talking about in church?

Those topics and many others will be discussed in an overview of the Bible course that will be offered on Wednesday evenings this fall from 6:00 – 6:45 p.m. followed by dinner with the rest of the WNL participants. This is not intended to be a Bible study, but a class that will look at major themes of each of the books, what was going on in "world" history at that time and how those events are reflected in the events of the Bible.

Questions? Call or e-mail Sharon. Ready to sign up?? Call or e-mail Tina so we can get a head count for supper (there will be a suggested \$5 donation for supper each week for the adults since this wasn't budgeted this year).

After Church Lunch Sunday, August 14, 2011

Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship on August 14th in celebration of this year's bountiful garden harvest – bring your favorite salad or vegetable dish as we enjoy the summer season's produce! If your dish needs to be kept warm or even heated at the last minute, someone will be in the kitchen by 9:30 a.m. to receive your dish and your instructions. We look forward to sharing this fellowship opportunity with you! If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Sutter or Lauri Zembower.

Young Adult Monthly Gathering—Saturday, August 13...Lynnea Hunter

Are you a Young Adult? Do you act like a Young Adult? Do you have the perpetual mentality of someone in their early 30's regardless of the year on your birth certificate? Then join the Young Adults at their August Free-For-All on Saturday, August 13th! We have such a rockin' time together we want to open this meeting to all our Young Adult-minded friends. We will meet at Dave and Maureen Knechtel's, 916 Katie's Way in Boone's Creek, at 6.30 p.m. to enjoy some food, fun, fellowship and a boat! If you have any questions contact Lynnea Hunter at 828.266.1917 or lynneahunter@hotmail.com.

Third Thursday Dinner—August 18

The Congregational Life Committee invites you to join your fellow Covenant members for our monthly Third Thursday dinner. Our next dinner is scheduled for August 18th at 6:30 at Carraba's. Kids are always welcome (and we can even arrange for them to have their own table if there's interest). Please contact Lauri Zembower (620-3625 or broncofan524@yahoo.com) if you think you'll be attending so we can get a count for the tables. Hope to see you there!

YAV - One Year Out ...by Lynnea Hunter

Mom came home about a month ago with the very first of this year's peaches. When she handed me the bag I buried my whole face in it and breathed deep of the sweet, summer smell. I came up to exhale, and then buried my face again. This process repeated itself about three times, and I could hear Mom and Dad laughing the whole time. When I finally relinquished the bag of peaches, Mom had this look on her face that said, "That was a little enthusiastic. Maybe more so than is altogether normal."

"What?" I said. "I missed peach season last year!" And with that I proceeded to bite into the sweetest, juiciest peach.

Thus is how odd discoveries are made in my life. Little things that tip me off to the fact that, oh yeah! I wasn't around for a year. Like when the Scott's Strawberry stand went up in the Mize parking lot and I did a U-turn in the middle of Watauga Avenue to get to it. Or the simple truth that even as I sit on my porch in shorts and a tank top at 10:30 a.m. it's still ridiculously hot.

The same is true in reverse, though, too. I crave chips on a regular basis, and no kind of Americanized French fry, steak fry, or potato wedge will do. I miss the ability to take affordable public transportation all over the country, and even Europe in general. And it never gets to 90 degrees. (It never gets to 80 degrees for that matter.)

This time of year has me thinking about my time in Belfast, Northern Ireland, a lot. As of July 26 I will have been State-side for a whole year. In some ways it seems I never left; like Belfast was this fun, crazy dream I had. But in other ways, it's an experience indelibly etched onto my being. The people met, places visited, and lessons learned are now a part of who I am and who I am becoming.

Possibly, the most revealing experience was the ability to gain some perspective; to see my country, my world, my life and even my faith from a completely new and different angle. Northern Ireland has a lot going for it: beautiful scenery, tasty food, a rich history, outgoing people and, yes, Guinness. But it has a lot holding it back, too: conflicts and fighting over ancient ideals, vendettas against whole groups of people, an adulterated view of who Christ is and what he represents, and—worst of all—apathy. Belfast has a huge homeless population, alcoholism is rampant, racism (between Catholics and Protestants, Eastern Europeans and Western Europeans) is an everyday problem, and many people just don't care. Summer especially means Catholic-Protestant relations are strained worse than usual and you can typically cut the tension between housing estates with a knife. Protestant neighborhoods "celebrate" their national holiday by burning the Irish Tri-Color (the orange-white-green flag of Ireland and symbol of all things Catholic), and Catholic neighborhoods retaliate with petrol bombs. And of course, there are the ever-present peace walls, the dividers of the city.

It's easy for me (especially now, one year removed) to watch Northern Ireland in the grips of the summer "Marching Season" and stand appalled on the sidelines wondering how any group of people who call themselves civilized can willingly and gleefully partake in such cruel behavior as burning another nationality's flag. I'm saddened and horrified to watch the people I work with take part—from both sides—in such destructive activities, especially when I have heard them profess with their own lips, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." There is a huge disconnect between what they say and what they do.

But thus be it ever. These are also the same people who know more about American politics, history and foreign policy than I ever will. They ask about exactly who we're fighting in the Middle East. They ask about our policy on immigration reform. They ask about healthcare, abortion, gay marriage and education. They ask

(continued on next page)

YAV - One Year Out (continued)

about the Church's position on sexual abuse and what should be done to priests and pastors who take advantage of their flock. They ask about what's being done to help Haiti, New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. They hear what we say and see what we do and wonder how any group of people who call themselves civilized can have such a huge disconnect between what they say and what they do.

Turns out, we're not so different.

Paul uses some of the most beautiful imagery in Ephesians 2:13-22 that addresses this. He tells us this:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

It's easy to walk through a place like Belfast with its physical walls separating groups of people and pray this verse over the concrete and razor wire. But what about the other walls? The emotional walls and mental walls we all put up? Seeing my country, my world, my life and even my faith from the outside, from someone else's shoes, allowed me to look at some of these walls; some physical—that wall in south Texas looks a lot like the one in west Belfast—and others more incorporeal. These verses take on a whole new meaning then.

Paul also tells us in Colossians 3 verse 11 that, "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."

I know we're probably not supposed to "add" to the Bible, but in an exercise I did with the youth group at Fortwilliam and Macrory in Belfast, I added this: "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. There is no young or old. There is no rich or poor. There is no man or woman, gay or straight. There is no black, white, Asian, Hispanic or Slovak. There is no British or Irish. There is no Protestant or Catholic."

The same holds true for us, and by "us" I mean everyone, for there is no American, British, Irish, Mexican, Asian, Indian or Arab. The important parts of this revelation, though, are the instructions Paul gives us immediately after this new identity—Christ IS all; verses 12-17 are vital. It's my prayer for Northern Ireland, it's my prayer for America. It is my prayer for my world. I can't say it better, so I leave you with this:

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

PENTECOST OFFERING (update)

In June we received the Pentecost Offering. Sixty percent (\$505.60) has been sent to Presbytery to support: General Assembly ministries with youth and young adults, Advocacy at the denominational level on behalf of children at risk, and Young Adult Volunteer opportunities. Forty percent (\$337.06) of this offering will be used to focus support on the children within the Johnson City Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). Thank you.

"So I Send You" John 20:21

Dear Covenant Family,

Several weeks ago, our pastor, Sharon, contacted me and shared a ministry opportunity which was a true surprise. She said she felt God was calling me to chair the Worship Committee at Covenant! The previous chair had stepped down, and my name was the first one to come to mind. Being a sensible person where God's calling is concerned, she didn't immediately act on that impulse, but after prayerful consideration my name was still there, so she contacted me. I was very surprised. I've been involved in many aspects of the life of Covenant, but never served on the Worship Committee. It didn't take long for me to realize I was very excited about this opportunity. I guess God had called me. (Proving, God has a great sense of humor, I think!) I continue to be surprised by this chain of events because I know it's a big job, but I'm totally energized by this new task. Maybe that's one way God shows us we are called to a ministry, not just doing a job...if the challenge of the task is energizing. I hope you'll pray for me in this new role, and share your dreams and visions of how the worship experience at Covenant can best touch your soul and help you grow in your relationship with God. Let's enjoy the challenges ahead together.

Gwen Hunter

Thoughts and Happenings on the Greater Church...by Hal Hunter

Having had the opportunity over the past two years to attend almost every meeting of Holston Presbytery, I want to share some observations. We Presbyterians are a connectional church and presbytery is the first level. Over the past year there have been three recommendations from the 2010 General Assembly that will impact on our denomination and directly, our congregation. First there is the "New Form of Government" (or in the current jargon of acronyms; N-FOG), second is the recommendation that The Confession of Belhar be added to our existing Book of Confessions, and third is the change in ordination standards or Amendment 10-A.

N-FOG and 10-A have passed the majority of presbyteries and will be part of our Book of Order in the future. Sharon had an excellent article on the passage of 10-A in the June Courier. (I recommend reading it if you missed it.) The effect of these two changes will not be seen immediately, but will have a impact on us in the future, especially 10-A, as presbyteries and congregations have more latitude in who they accept to calls for ministry and ordination of elders.

N-FOG went into effect on July 10, 2011. What this means is that many of the specifics of how presbyteries, sessions and congregations operate will be left up to the various groups. For example, quorums for session, committees and congregational meetings are no longer defined in the BOO. For us, the Session will have to develop guidelines for many of these items and determine how WE want to operate. The Session has appointed a task force to look at the specific impact on Covenant and Alan Lewis has agreed to chair this group.

While Holston Presbytery approved the addition of the Belhar Confession, it did not pass other presbyteries and therefore will not be added to our Book of Confessions. This confession was written by two branches of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. It grew out of the realization that division and apartheid in South Africa was not working and was not biblical. While the major focus is on ethic/racial reconciliation, the confession addresses the issue of reconciliation in all areas of our Christian lives. Lynnea spent last year in Northern Ireland working on reconciliation. It is an ongoing issue for all of us as we work on living out the instruction of Jesus Christ to "love our neighbor as ourselves." It would seem appropriate that we consider the use of this confession at times, even though it is not part of our "official" documents.

It has been a very thought provoking several years to be involved in presbytery functions. As I complete my third year on Session, I am looking forward with excitement to be working with the changing face of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Thank You, Covenant

Roger and I felt so blessed to be part of such a loving church family. You helped us in so many ways throughout the 3+ years of his bone marrow disease (MDS); with your concern, prayers, visits and cards, as well as all the delicious food.

Ruth & Martin, David & Beth, and our grandchildren, Steven & Karen, were duly impressed with your caring attitude and concern, including the wonderful Celebration of Life service and the reception following.

Please accept our sincere gratitude and thankfulness.

Amy Hecht

Dear Covenant Friends,

Thank you for all of the kind words and well wishes for my high school graduation. I appreciated your cards and thoughts as I get ready to head off to UT.

Sincerely,
Brent Stoner

New in the Library

Trolls & Truth: 14 realities about today's church we don't want to see, by Jimmy Dorrell, the pastor of The Church Under the Bridge. This church began as a Bible study with 5 homeless men, meets under an interstate bridge in Texas, and gained an attendance of 300 people.

Donated in memory of Daniel Willard
by Deborah & Alan Lewis

Memorial Gifts

GIVEN IN MEMORY OF:

JULIA TRIFILETTI
BY

Bob & Estelle Armistead
Steve & Jackie Bader
Alan & Donna Bridwell
Amy Hecht
Bob & Betty Maletich
Gary & Anne Smith
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DOROTHY STANFIEL
(Sharon Miller's mother)

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Richard & Bonnie Wakeland
Harold & Arlene Wilkinson
Faculty & Staff at ETSU
Faculty of the Dept. of Sociology &
Anthropology at ETSU

GIVEN IN MEMORY OF:

FERN KEMP
(Evelyn's mother)

BY

Roger & Amy Hecht

Entered into the Church Triumphant:

Hazel Rowe—June 12, 2011
Julia Trifiletti—July 10, 2011
Roger Hecht—July 14, 2011

June Treasurer's Report

Income to General Fund June

Actual \$14,370.21
vs. Budgeted \$20,967.33

Expenses from General Fund June

Actual \$18,609.12
vs. Budgeted \$20,967.33

Year to Date Income General Fund

Actual \$127,246.81
vs. Budgeted \$125,804.00

Year to Date Expenses from General Fund

Actual \$123,612.15
vs. Budgeted \$125,804.00

**The 5-Cents a Meal Offering
for June was \$134.00.**

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Where's the Choir?

The choir is taking a break for the month of August while we search for new leadership. Enjoy the addition of their voices in the congregation. And, if you sit near a choir member, you'll probably notice that person doesn't really sing any better than you do! Isn't it amazing? There's room for you in the choir. Please come make a joyful noise to the Lord with us. It's fun!

Blood Drive Success

The blood drive Nik Hopkins hosted at Covenant on July 20 was a great success! The goal, set by the American Red Cross for this drive, was 35 units of blood donated. Nik's hard work, and the support of the community and congregation, resulted in 37 units being donated. Since each donation can help up to 3 different people, 111 people may be helped. Nik is now qualified for the drawing for a \$1,000 scholarship from the American Red Cross. Nik did a wonderful job organizing and hosting this life-saving event. Congratulations, Nik, and thank you to everyone who participated!

Mission Statement

Covenant Presbyterian Church exists to glorify and enjoy God. We live knowing that God calls us to be a place of love, support, hope and acceptance regardless of earthly labels; Jesus Christ commissions us to make disciples and passionately share our gifts with the world through prayer, teaching, and service; the Holy Spirit allows us to determine and carry out Christ's will for our lives and the life of our church, and empowers us to seek out and respond to the needs of our local and global community.