

August 2023

COVENANT NEWS

A publication of Covenant Presbyterian Church • Charlotte, North Carolina



Grounded & Growing

From Bob Henderson



Dear friends:

It's hard to believe we're transitioning to our fall initiatives. Yet, I've rarely been as excited about the quality and variety of offerings at Covenant as I am now. Specifically, we're launching a year-long theme entitled "Grounded and Growing" in

which we'll spend the months of September to December focusing on how we might be more deeply rooted in faith and then from January to April we'll focus on the more vigorously challenging claims of faith. I hope you'll find a way to participate and trust you'll find it invigorating.

Here are a couple of highlights:

Sunday morning August 27th we'll welcome Dr. Doug Ottati, the Craig Family Distinguished Professor of Reformed Theology and Justice as he speaks of particular features of the Reformed tradition that promote spiritual grounding and well-being. Dr. Ottati is a compelling lecturer, well-regarded scholar, and prolific author. If you'd like to get a glimpse of his work, purchase his most recent book *Living Belief: A Short Introduction to Christian Faith*. I have every confidence you'll enjoy hearing him.

This fall will see the launch of new small groups designed to foster friendship and growth. We hope you will prayerfully consider how you might join or lead a small group to experience the gift of community and some of God's grace.

We'll also ground ourselves in service as we expand our work with Roof Above and serve our homeless neighbors more frequently. Please look for opportunities to sign up and make a tangible difference in the lives of our community's most vulnerable. We need you, and (dare I suggest it) we also need these kinds of service opportunities as we seek to stay grounded.

There's more, much more, and you can learn about it through this and other publications.

May I also ask that you take time to introduce yourself to our newest staff members. We've had several join us during the summer months. They are each uniquely gifted and eager to get traction in their work at Covenant. I'm confident you'll enjoy their friendship.

With gratitude for you all.

Bob



The Envisioning team is hard at work this summer making plans for a series of listening sessions to be held in September and October. The Envisioning process is an opportunity for our church to invite and listen to thoughts and hopes about how we can continue to live into our vision. In order to engage as many people as possible in this process there will be a range of forums from Zoom meetings, to facilitators coming to visit with small groups to larger sessions between and after Sunday worship services.

In August you will see details about how you can share your voice. Information will be shared in this newsletter, our "Windows on Covenant" email, and the worship bulletins. In the meantime, the Envisioning team invites you to reflect on Covenant's vision (printed below) and your hopes and imaginings for how we continue to vibrantly live into our vision in the future.

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Covenant Presbyterian is a dynamic Christian community that gladly invites all people into a transformational experience of faith; boldly proclaims the gospel; bravely works toward a whole and just world; and passionately nurtures discipleship.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

SUMMER: JUNE - LABOR DAY

9:30 a.m. Contemporary Service in the Sanctuary
11:00 a.m. Traditional Service in the Sanctuary

www.covenantpresby.org
facebook.com/CovenantPresby
[@covenantpresbyclt](https://twitter.com/covenantpresbyclt)

COVER ART: Ron Boozer

Kickoff Sunday is August 27!

As we launch our "Grounded and Growing" theme for this fall, join us for a day of special events, finishing with a traditional potluck lunch.

Convocation Speaker

9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

Dr. Doug Ottati

Currently teaching at Davidson College, Ottati previously taught at Union Seminary. He is a past president of the Society of Christian Ethics.

Fall Sermon Series: "Grounded"

9:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Join us for worship and hear about our spiritual focus for the upcoming months.

Blessing of the Backpacks

9:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Potluck Lunch

10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

This event will include relay games, live music, food, and fellowship. Contact Serenity Taylor for more information.

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Coming in September: Classes & Groups

Ground Yourself in Community with Small Groups

This fall we're inviting you to ground yourself in your faith. One way to immerse yourself in this grounding is by joining a small group where you can build community, meet new people, and experience God's grace through conversation and friendship.

Small groups will kick off on September 13. Details to come. Email Grace Lindvall to get involved with a newly forming group.

Re-Imagining Paul in Romans

This September read the book of Romans while meeting weekly to study and re-imagine Paul's letter for the 21st century reader. Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. in Founder's Hall Room 207



Saying “Yes” to the Yucatan Trip

BY AMBER BROWN



Early in the spring, I received a phone call inviting me to join Covenant's service trip to the Yucatan, and I immediately forgot all the books I've read to help me overcome my being a “yes person.” I've attended most of our church's commissioning services over the last 12 years, but I had no idea what it truly meant to the people leaving to serve. Service trip participants work hard to prepare, and some may be anxious. Your thoughts and prayers are held closely on commissioning day and in the weeks to come.

Our mighty team of 13, with help from Covenant's friends of Accion Ministries, mixed and poured 28 tons of concrete during our work week in the tiny Mayan village of Yaxche — an activity which became a community gathering place for their village. When we finished, we enjoyed a game of volleyball on the very concrete we poured during our time there! I can already see how much the community will benefit from this space.

In the evenings, we provided crafts and games for the women and children of the village. Night after night, as word joyfully spread through the village of our offerings, we needed more tables to accommodate the growing group. The women and children were incredibly hospitable, gracious, and loving to each other and us! We found common words, smiles, and gestures that broke down the language barrier and brought us together.

We not only bonded with the villagers of Yaxche, we grew as a church family. We played, laughed, loved, and worshipped as hard as we worked. We shared incredible moments of vulnerability, strength, adventure, and personal growth. When I reflect on who I am and who I want to be, and as a tear falls down my smiling cheek, I say to myself again, I'm grateful to be a “yes person.”

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Backpack Sunday: August 27 at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Kids are going back-to-school, which means it's time for our "Blessing of the Backpacks." Children can bring their personal packs for the blessing and prepare backpacks for children at Highland Renaissance Academy and The Mezzanine. **We need your help purchasing the school supply items listed below. Drop off donations in the "Mission and Outreach" bins in the Welcome Center by Monday, August 21.**

- Washable markers (Crayola 12 count) & Expo markers
- Crayons (Crayola 24 count box)
- School glue (liquid in 4 oz bottle) & glue sticks
- Scissors (5" blunt tip) & Pencils (12 pack, pre sharpened)
- Composition notebook, wide rule
- Pocket folders
- Notebook paper, wide ruled & copy paper



“Kinship” Supports Our Neighbors and Each Other

BY ASHLEY SHAEFER



I recently joined a Kinship group that met Tuesday nights during the month of March to connect meaningfully with our homeless neighbors, and to engage in rich study and discussion exploring the social problem of homelessness, the essence of real community, and the inspiring power of overcoming both

practical and emotional barriers in our society to better serve our neighbors with dignity.

I've been a member of Covenant for a decade and flitted in and out of “small groups” oriented toward all kinds of noble endeavors, but this is without question the most memorable, perspective-changing, and intimate experience I've had as part of a small group.

Alongside a new framework for interacting with individuals in my community who are experiencing homelessness, there are two things I valued most about this experience. First, rather than all of us finding our way to Room at the Inn individually, motivated by a desire to serve but experiencing it perhaps as a one-time isolated commitment, we truly shared a journey throughout the month.

Many of us felt apprehensive about the conversations we would have, the things we might learn around our table, and the ways we might “mess up” and alienate our neighbors. I remember feeling this when I greeted one of our neighbors who we believe may have been experiencing her very first night of homelessness and was visibly traumatized. I was tasked with helping her make her bed, and even though this is a simple task I perform in my own home every day, it felt like I had never handled fitted sheet before. As I battled with the bed linens and tried at the same time to make her feel welcome, I was just overcome with feelings of awkwardness and inadequacy. Being able to return to the Kinship group at the end of the night and share these feelings was incredibly encouraging.

There was something so comforting about knowing that we really were “in it together” and this study group, alongside our practical service, offered not just the opportunity to fulfill a mission together but to share, through our time for engaging with the accompanying



curriculum, the highs and lows – and unresolved questions – that emerged from our encounters throughout the month.

I remember feeling we all unanimously had a particularly joyful night of getting to know our neighbors and came back to our discussion session full of optimism. There were other nights in the month that I remember several of us had really hard conversations and leaned hard on the support of each other and the wisdom from our reading materials. With each passing week, there was truly a sense that our confidence grew because of the opportunity to learn together, and because of that, richer connections with our neighbors were also nurtured.

Secondly, I loved the intergenerational makeup of Kinship. So often– and for good reason– small groups at faith institutions are organized by “age and phase.” I found it not only refreshing, but perhaps even more conducive to authentic connection, to be united by a common purpose instead of by common circumstances.

This is the most enthusiastic I've been about ongoing connection with a small group, and I felt a real closeness in the room we shared each Tuesday night. I consider my Kinship group to be full of mentors and friends with whom there will be a lasting bond, and it fulfilled that intangible thing I had been seeking in small group engagement at Covenant.

Grounded in Singing Skills with Anton Armstrong

September 23: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

September 24: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary
11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Dr. Anton Armstrong, renowned conductor of the St. Olaf College Choir, will be at Covenant working with singers of any experience level and ability to polish existing vocal skills, teach new techniques, and inspire our singing in worship. Youth and adult singers of every experience level are welcome and will benefit from this opportunity. Regular choir attendance is not required for participation. Contact Heather Potter for more information.



Grounded in Celebration, Growing in Expression: Singing the Music of Advent and Christmas

Wednesdays in November and December, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Sing the music of the season with Covenant Choir. Come for one-hour rehearsals in November and December to sing through Advent.

Ground Your Worship in Participation; Grow Your Skills in Music Leadership

Weekly Covenant Choir Rehearsals

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:15, beginning August 23

Weekly Covenant Ringer Rehearsals

Mondays, 6:00-7:00, beginning September 11

Music Opportunities for Youth & Children

Youth Singers

Sundays 10:30-10:50 a.m.
Education Wing Room 315
Begins September 10

Youth Handbell Ensemble

Wednesdays 5:15-6:00 p.m.
Education Wing Room 320
Begins September 6

Youth Strings Ensemble

Wednesdays 5:30-6:00 p.m.
Chapel
Begins September 6

Children's Choirs

**Wednesdays beginning
September 10**

Angelus Choir (K-1st)
Chorister Choir (2nd-3rd)
Jubilate (4th-5th)

Register for children's choir
by September 1 with QR code



Congregational Care Small Groups

Caregiver Support Group: Starting September 5

Caregiving is defined as the activity or profession of regularly looking after a child or a sick, elderly, or disabled person. Caregiving can be a loving and selfless gesture, but it's often a challenging responsibility that generates confusing emotions and hard decisions.

Covenant is offering a six-week caregiving support group starting Tuesday, September 5th, from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in Welcome Center Room 204.

Topics will include the multiple roles as a family caregiver, communicating with those involved, caring for yourself while caring for another, and strengthening your support system.

If you are finding your role as a caregiver more than expected, please join us. For more information, email Laura Capranica at laura.capranica@covenantpresby.org



Join the Health & Wellness Committee

Help coordinate four to five blood drives a year, plan the flu shot clinics in the fall, organize health and wellness programs throughout the year, and encourage CPR/AED training (offered at Covenant) and gather supplies for First Aid Kits given to other Covenant groups.

This committee meets the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. (via Zoom or in person). Members help with one or more of the programs each quarter.

For more information email our faith community nurse, Laura Capranica at laura.capranica@covenantpresby.org

September's T.L.C. (Travel, Learn, Connect)

Our next gathering will discuss the need to lead a balanced life. Julia Tranquillo and Dr. Chris Hux from OrthoCarolina will touch on how the aging process impacts our musculoskeletal system and the best ways to maintain strength, flexibility, and balance.

We hope that you can join us on September 20th at 10:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Please RSVP with Michelle Williamson at michelle.williamson@covenantpresby.org



Outdoor Ministry Hike in Pisgah National Forest

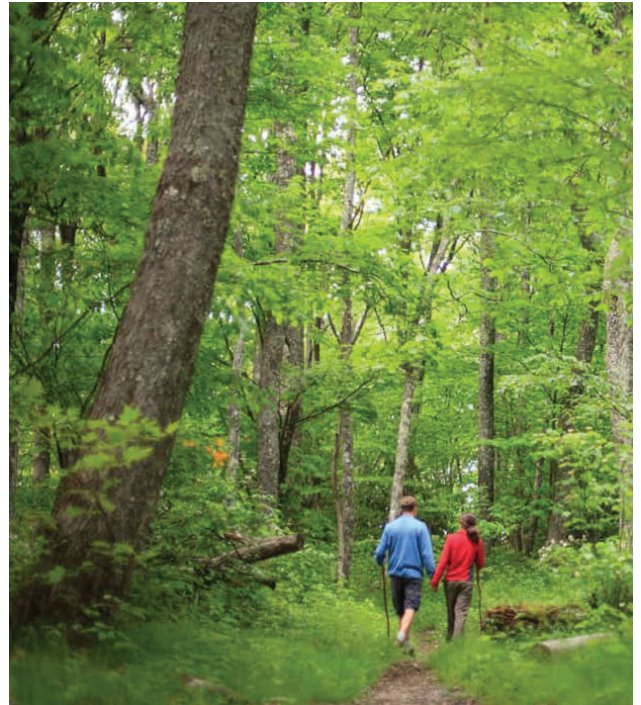
Saturday, September 23: Amy and Julian Wright host a day of hiking and fellowship at their cabin.

The Wrights' rustic cabin is located 2.5 miles down Forest Service Road in the middle of Pisgah National Forest with the closest neighbor is 1.5 miles away. They have access to a host of great hiking trails, waterfalls, and overlooks. Amy and Julian will lead a five-mile loop hike out their front door over the Little Lost Cove Cliffs and North Harper Creek Falls trails. Shorter, less strenuous options will be available, along with rocking chairs and hammocks on their relaxing screened-in, wrap-around porch.

We'll leave Charlotte by 7:45 a.m. to be on the trail (or the porch) by 10 a.m. Carpooling will be available. Plan to enjoy the day and return to Charlotte after 4:00 p.m.

SIGN UP: qrco.de/beABio

For more information, contact Julian at 704/377-8352 or email him jwright@robinsonbradshaw.com.



Surviving Our Spouses (SOS)

Annual Picnic

Saturday, September 30, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Our SOS group will kick off the fall season with an annual picnic on the patio underneath the magnolia tree, with Fellowship Hall available in case of rain. All surviving spouses are invited to enjoy being together with a delicious lunch prepared by Chef Johnny.



Second Sunday Lunch

September 10, October 8 and November 12

We enjoy good Italian food and conversation at Capische, on the corner of Morehead and Caldwell streets, at 12:15 p.m. Reservations are appreciated but not required.

Upcoming activities include a wine tasting in October, a service project in the columbarium, and a Christmas Memory Tree. Contact Kandy Cosper at kandycosper@gmail.com, or Anne Gildea at anne.m.gildea@gmail.com.



Meet Our Newest Staff Members

This summer was a busy and fruitful time in support of our church with three new staff hires and one promotion. We're grateful to our search committees and other staff members who worked tirelessly to make these transitions as smooth as possible.

Mandy Rencher: Director of Mission and Outreach.

As a graduate of both Davidson and Wake Forest, Mandy possesses a wealth of experience, education, and preparation which includes educational roles at Trinity Episcopal School, Charlotte Latin School, and Myers Park Presbyterian Church. She is a long-time member of First Presbyterian Church, Charlotte. In accepting the position, Mandy writes, "I look forward to immersing myself in this role, Covenant's congregation, and our greater community. Thank you so much for believing in me to take on this important position."



Miatta Thompson: Account Manager

Miatta brings over 17 years of accounting experience with nonprofits to her position at Covenant. She began her career at Black Veterans for Social Justice in Brooklyn where she served the community for 13 years. She is coming to us from the Urban League of Central Carolinas in Charlotte, where she has worked since 2020. Miatta says, "I love making a difference in people's lives! I am delighted to work for Covenant because the church will put me in a position to advance God's kingdom professionally, one number at a time."



Andy Wertz: Director for Middle School Youth

Andy is a double graduate from Queens University of Charlotte with undergraduate and graduate degrees in education. He's an elder at Selwyn Avenue Presbyterian Church and a student at Union Presbyterian Seminary. For the last few years, Andy served as a middle school teacher at Trinity Episcopal School. Andy says, "Starting this vocation at Covenant feels like the culmination of a lifetime's worth of experiences and the first step in the journey of my call to serve. With you, I eagerly anticipate growth for myself and the community as members of the Body of Christ in the world."



Michelle Williamson: Staff Accountant

Long-time staff member Michelle Williamson was promoted to Staff Accountant where she'll assist Miatta in our accounting department. Michelle has served several areas during her 24-year tenure at Covenant, including administrative assistant for multiple ministries, followed by her recent years supporting our financial and other campus operations. "This year has taught me to cherish life and take a leap of faith," says Michelle, "so I decided to pursue a deeper involvement in the financial aspects of the church while continuing to work with Congregational Care and Operations."



Welcome Our New Members



Amy Barry and Adam Hanks



Hallie Isom



**Maggie and Joe Pollard
(Joe not pictured)
with Woody and Ginny**



Lucy and Bruce Waldvogel



Allie and Coleman Wombwell

**New Members Not Pictured:
Dorothy and Dan Warnock**

Joys and Concerns of Our Members and Friends

OUR SYMPATHY AND LOVE TO

Jim Harvie and family on the death of his brother, Scott Harvie on May 6
Dan Warnock and family on the death of his father Dean Clinton Warnock on May 7
Mary Edwards and family on the death of her son, Steve Edwards on May 21
Lawrence Calhoun and family on the death of his wife Mary Lynne Calhoun on May 21
Tim Kendrick and family on the death of his father James L. Kendrick on June 16
Cayla Graffis and family on the death of her mother Jill Shannon Smith on June 25
Shel Robinson and family on the death of his mother Theo Robinson on July 2
Rob McNeill and family on the death of his father Bobby Burns McNeill on July 2
Shannon Blair and family on the death of her step-father
Maria Elmore on the death of her brother John Morgan on July 8
Joe Wilson on the death of his sister Margaret Westall on July 8

IN LOVING MEMORY

Jewel Caldwell, May 8, 1926 – May 25, 2023
Anna Hart Bracey, September 25, 1928 – June 2, 2023
Amy McCollum Sullivan, April 7, 1976 – June 1, 2023
Theophinia Couchell Robinson, October 16, 1938 – July 2, 2023
Jan S. Thompson, September 20, 1933 – July 14, 2023

MARRIAGES

Ahmaya Smalls and **Michael Daly**, May 27, 2023

BIRTHS

Emma Thomas Liu, May 23, child of Abby Young and Bo Liu
James David Collins, July 8, child of Christie and Ryan Collins
Elise Sherrill Mullikin, July 9, child of Mary Fletcher and Seth Mullikin

BAPTISMS

Henry Hubert Judy, May 14, child of Logan and Kathryn Judy
Charles Sprock Leitner, May 14, child of Hannah and Zach Leitner
Ayla Ndelo Murray, May 14, child of Cynthia Ndelo and Terance Murray
Layla Gray Walsh and **Jacob Oliver Walsh**, May 21, children of Deb and Nathan Walsh
Jackson David Yates, May 21, child of Kirby and Brian Yates
Kennedy Grace Ray, June 11, child of Erin and Jonathan Ray
Margot Jewett Marosy and **Wrenn Mackenzie Marosy**, June 11, children of Mackenzie and Ryan Marosy
Scarlett Mae O'Brien, June 18, child of Vanessa and Dan O'Brien
Theodore Carl Wozniak II, June 25, child of Cristina and Drew Wozniak
Bowman Scott Eastridge, July 2, child of Mary Beth and Tim Eastridge
Charlotte Simmons Starr, July 9, child of Laura and Conor Starr



Open Table Resumes September 6

Dinner is served from
5:00 - 6:30 p.m., followed by
programming for children,
youth, and adults.

**On September 6, all are
invited to participate in a
listening session with the
Envisioning Team.**



1000 East Morehead Street, Charlotte, NC 28204

Civil Rights Pilgrimage September 14-17, 2023

Leaders: Larry Bosc & Mary Kate Sykes
Cost: \$475

The 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed on Sunday, September 15, 1963, as an act of white supremacist terrorism. The explosion at the African American church, which killed four girls, marked a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement and contributed to support for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

September 15, 2023 marks the 60th anniversary of the bombing. We'll meet our friends from Smallwood Presbyterian Church to participate in a civil rights pilgrimage to the 16th Street Baptist Church and other sites from the Civil Rights Movement. We'll go to The Legacy Museum, which offers an immersive experience with cutting-edge technology and important scholarship about American history and the legacy of slavery.

Join us for this powerful and timely pilgrimage to one of our country's most important landmarks. Sign up at covenantpresby.org/mission-trips-2023

