



MARCH 2024

COVENANT NEWS

A publication of Covenant Presbyterian Church • Charlotte, North Carolina



Welcome to Spring and Holy Week at Covenant

BY BOB HENDERSON

I love Spring: the distinct green hues, fresh breezes and longer days. It feels innately hopeful and fosters a lightness of spirit. One friend, who will remain nameless, says that the coming of Spring makes old people feel like they'll live another year. Regardless of our age, I think we know what he means.

I also love Spring because it means Holy Week can't be far away. Something about the narrative of Holy Week shapes my interior life in a way no other season can; the courage of Palm Sunday that led Jesus to walk that road into Jerusalem; the betrayal of Maundy Thursday and the resilient love that met the betrayers at the table; the pain of Good Friday that somehow gathers up all our brokenness into God's expansive grace. To embrace it all with intention is soul shaping in a way few other endeavors are, and I invite you to make the most of it this year.

In addition, I challenge you to prayerfully peruse the wide scope of work found throughout this newsletter and consider where God is prompting your involvement. Is it time to invest in the life of our youth? The children? Maybe it is for you to serve at a night shelter, or visit one of our homebound. Lent is a season in which we remember the one who said, "I came not to be served, but to serve, and give my life..." If you'd like to consider how to connect and serve, please contact me, one of our elders, or staff. We'll be glad to explore the most compelling needs and opportunities.

In the meantime, I remain grateful for the dynamic life of this congregation. We continue to grow in mission (our Mission Festival was a resounding success!), membership, and care. I consider it one of life's greatest privileges to share the journey with you and look forward to all that is in store in the coming months.





Growing into Our Future

Envision Work Enters Next Phase

At the Session retreat in early January the Envision team presented a summary of the input gathered from the listening sessions, mission partner interviews and emails sent in to the Envision inbox. Their report highlights 4 existent strengths to build on and a set of recommendations to help shape strategic focus for Covenant over the next few years. A summary of that report is included below.

Now we begin the work of integrating these insights into the life of our church. To launch this important phase, staff and lay leadership are holding sessions with members of the Envision team to talk through the input in depth and begin to reflect on ways to use it to inform and inspire plans for 2024 and beyond. At these sessions church leaders are also hearing about the specific creative ideas that were shared.

The Envision listening season reaped so much rich sharing of hopes, dreams, and imaginings of how we can live into our vision in the coming years that it is impossible to convey it all in one report to session or a single newsletter article. Throughout the year you will see and hear further updates on ‘what we heard’ and how the voice of our community is shaping our future. Stay tuned!



Strengths to Build On

Community Building

A core strength of Covenant is we are a welcoming community. There were many examples and stories shared of how members, partners and visitors have experienced Covenant as a gladly welcoming and relational community.

Dynamic Worship

Our openness to reimagining worship and thus having dynamic, diverse worship life has positive impact beyond just the availability of choice. Our varied worship services provide an invitation to transformational experiences of faith to a wide range of people.

Dynamic, Active Faith

People shared examples of how we have continued to stretch how we practice our faith in action. A key tenet of our faith in action is our willingness to face hard issues together. We share anticipation about where God will take us next.

Quality of Staff

Over and over we heard expressions of gratitude for the gifts and spirit of our current staff. People shared stories of ways that members of staff in all areas have had meaningful impact on their experience at Covenant and their personal faith journey.

Recommended Areas of Strategic Focus

- Continue to think creatively about how our worship design can help us better understand and grow towards being a reflection of the kingdom of God and be a source of transformational experience.
- Discernment and action towards our outreach and impact in the world (local and global) beyond ourselves. Explore the question of ‘where is God calling us to our next bold step’ in working towards a whole and just world and how do we cast a wide net of invitation thus engaging many in the work.
- Continued discernment and action towards God’s call for Covenant relative to diversity & inclusion (inclusive of equity and justice)
- Identify opportunities to integrate across ministry areas thus deepening impact and creating even more transformational experiences (Kinship Project was cited dozens of times as an example of this).
- Identify ways to equip a culture of welcoming and engagement in order to have more consistency in people’s experience of being engaged to their desired degree. How to extend our practice of welcoming and embed it into our culture.
- Intentional connection opportunities across the breadth of our church so that we maintain community in the midst of growth with specific focus on intergenerational connection.
- Continue to invest and expand energy into small group creation and support with emphasis on programs and resources to help them be places that nurture spiritual growth and discipleship.





Worshipping Together in Faith



Holy Week Schedule

March 24

Palm Sunday

8:45 a.m. Traditional Service in the Chapel

9:30 a.m. Contemporary Service in the Sanctuary

11:00 a.m. Family Service in Fellowship Hall

11:00 a.m. Traditional Service in the Sanctuary

March 28

Maundy Thursday

6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

A blend of contemporary worship with a dramatic interpretation of the events leading to Jesus's death. (Childcare provided.)

March 29

Good Friday

6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

The last words of Christ from the cross relayed in scripture and music with a traditional tenebrae service led by the Covenant Choir. (Childcare provided.)

March 30

Children's Easter Service

10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Kindergarten class performs the Easter story followed by Easter Egg hunts on our playground. Children and families will be invited to put flowers on the cross. Pet the animals on the Circle and enjoy a sweet treat!

March 31

Easter Service

8:45 a.m. Traditional Service in the Chapel

9:30 a.m. Contemporary Service in the Sanctuary

11:00 a.m. Traditional Service in the Sanctuary

Church office is closed on Monday, April 1



Building Connections and Friendships

Travel, Learn and Connect with our TLC Group

BY BETTY GRAYBEAL



Curious about glass blowing? Want to know more about Habitat for Humanity? Interested in dinosaurs? Love flowers, orchids and being outdoors? Hoping to learn ways to prevent falls?

Then TLC is for you! With trips to Hot Glass Alley, Habitat, the Schiele Museum, and Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens, TLC (Travel, Learn, Connect) provides Covenant members with monthly trips or Fellowship Hall programs from September through June of each year. These programs and trips provide learning, growing experiences and are guaranteed to spark your interests and feed your curiosity for new knowledge. Not only do these experiences provide fellowship, but food too! On-campus programs meet on Wednesdays with refreshments at 10:30 a.m. followed by the program from 11:00 a.m. to noon. When on a trip off campus, we might have brunch close to our destination, a picnic lunch from the Covenant kitchen, or lunch at a great restaurant before coming home to Covenant.

Upcoming TLC Programs

April Program with UNCC (Details to Come)

May 15

Trip to Bitty & Beau's Coffee Shop
1930 Camden Rd in South End

Bitty & Beau's is a human rights movement disguised as a coffee shop, where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are valued in the workplace. It's a place where diversity isn't just appreciated, it's celebrated. Bitty & Beau's Coffee proudly employs 400+ individuals with disabilities nationwide." We will enjoy coffee, muffins, and a presentation about the coffee shop.

June 12

Park Road Books

Sally Brewster, owner of Park Road Books, will preview the latest and coming releases for our summer reading enjoyment.

RSVP by emailing Michelle Williamson at michelle.williamson@covenantpresby.org



TLC is open to all Covenant members, and we welcome you to join us as we celebrate Covenant, friends, and fun learning experiences. We hope to see you in the coming months!

SAVE THE DATE

Women's Dinner 2024

Wednesday, May 8

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Fellowship Hall Patio & Main Hall





Growing in Community

Outdoor Ministry

Sign up: covenantpresby.org/outdoor-ministry

Redlair Preserve Hike

Sunday, March 17 (rain date: March 24)

Meet at the trail head at 2:00 p.m.

Erin Hines, facilitator

Mr. Haywood Rankin, 2023 NC Conservationist of the Year, will lead hikers through this exceptional ecological habitat. Witness a rare, undisturbed Piedmont riverine slope ecosystem and possibly an ephemeral wildflower display.

Camp Grier Hike in Old Fort, NC

Saturday, April 27 at 10:00 a.m.

Julian and Amy Wright, facilitators

Hike around Camp Grier to the Rock Slide and maybe up to the new Fire Tower, or perhaps explore the new Gateway Trails system. Lunch at Camp and perhaps a beverage at Hillman's in Old Fort before returning to Charlotte in the late afternoon.

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S.O.S. (Surviving Our Spouses)

Kandy Cosper, kandycosper@gmail.com

Annual Spring Porch Party

Saturday, April 20 at 5:00 p.m.

Guests are invited to bring appetizers; beverages will be provided. All SOS members should receive an emailed invitation with more details, including the address and a simple way to RSVP.



We enjoyed a Valentine lunch together on Super Bowl Sunday at Mama Ricotta's restaurant. Sandra Pool won the Super Bowl pool, and the group made a contribution in memory of her husband, Joe Pool, to Tomorrow's Youth Organization, Covenant's mission partner helping refugee families in Palestine.

Third Quarter Ministry

Sign up: covenantpresby.org/adults

St. Patrick's Day Celebration

March 17 at 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Brawley's Beverage

4620 Park Road

All members 50-75 years old are invited to join the Third Quarter group on St. Patty's Day for light snacks, non-alcoholic drinks and games. A cash bar (wine and beer) will be available. Don't forget to wear green!



Third Quarter's mission focuses on men and women in the "third quarter" of their lives to increase their sense of belonging, nurture their spirits, and discover new ways to engage in walking with God and one another.

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Hornets + Recreation Ministry = Fun!

Buy tickets here: www.hornetstix.com/CPC

Charlotte Hornets vs. Orlando Magic

Friday, April 5 at 7:00 p.m.

Spectrum Center in Uptown Charlotte

Enjoy a Hornets game and help our Recreation Ministry by purchasing discounted tickets through the link above. A portion of all tickets purchased will directly benefit Covenant's very popular basketball camps, which are open to everyone.



If we have at least 100 attendees, thirty children with these tickets will be selected to stand in front of the Hornets & Magic teams as Anthem Buddies during the National Anthem.

Remember, you must purchase through the link hornetstix.com/CPC to benefit our Recreation Ministry.





Listening and Learning

An Inspirational Visit by Dr. Jemar Tisby

*In early February, Covenant was honored to host the nationally recognized author, speaker, and teacher Dr. Jemar Tisby for a weekend of conversations about the intersection of race and religion. His Saturday public talk attracted attendees from as far as Raleigh, while his teachings during Sunday School and in our pulpit inspired all of us to take action on racial injustice worldwide. **Read three thoughtful insights written by members of our congregation on the weekend with Dr. Tisby and the Tisby Growth Groups before and after his visit.***



BY ERIN NIXON

So often when white people engage in dialog about race, we struggle to see what we, individually, can do to make a difference because it just seems so big. What I heard Dr. Jemar Tisby confirm is that the only way we can influence change on the larger system level is if we commit to it in our individual spheres of influence.

Dr. Tisby says, “It is by knowing other people, developing friendships and collegiality, that we can form the coalitions necessary to take on a society rife with racial bigotry.” By engaging in authentic, vulnerable relationships with people who are different than us, we will feel more urgency to advocate for larger systemic changes. The Tisby Growth Groups are a great opportunity to build a support network in this work. Together, we are more likely to be brave when facing the choice of staying quiet because it feels easier, rather than using our privilege and social capital to question the status quo.



BY AMY FORD

Dr. Jemar Tisby’s message felt like being jolted awake. I was thrilled to be part of a church that would bring a speaker on racial injustice to address the congregation. I was so enthralled with Dr. Tisby’s talk at the 9:30 a.m. Sunday School hour that my whole family attended the 11:00 a.m. worship service just to hear him speak

again. I knew in the back of my mind that my silence was making me complicit when racial injustice was taking place. Plus, from a parenting perspective, I was missing an opportunity to teach my children how to stay in relationship with people who feel differently than they do while calmly advocating for their point of view, and — most importantly — showing them that it is safe to do so. It’s not a responsibility that we can abdicate to others at Covenant or elsewhere. We must take an active role in helping our children learn how to advocate for racial justice and let them teach us how to do so too when they feel comfortable. By being in relationship with all kinds of people while actively working to address racism, we can create space for understanding, change and forward movement.



Supporting Our Neighbors



BY DYLAN WELCHMAN

The Tisby Growth Group, featuring the book study on Dr. Jemar Tisby's *The Color of Compromise*, has truly been a transformative experience. I had never heard of Dr. Tisby, but I do know that racism is an important topic and I wanted to be involved in the discussion.

During the study, I felt just about every emotion imaginable. I felt shame while learning about the Christian Church's complicity in the rise of racism. I felt sadness and anger that racism has endured for so long in our nation's history. I felt hopeless that extreme views of Christianity seem to be gaining popularity, and that the same Christian teachings of love that I grew up with at Covenant are being manipulated by others to justify hate all around the world.

I also experienced enlightenment when I was exposed to different view points from the other members of my group. I experienced hope when my group members shared some of their stories — both of struggles and triumphs — knowing that I was not alone in my own challenges or in my desire to spark change.

Having completed the book study, I feel more educated on the history of the church as it relates to racism. I feel much more aware of subtle, but systemic ways that society continues to perpetuate racism. Most importantly, though, I feel empowered to continue having conversations, to continue learning about racism, and to act.



Outreach Volunteer Opportunities

covenantpresby.org/in-the-community-and-the-world

Intern Support
Operation Sandwich
Texas Hash
Freedom School Supply Drive
Nourish Up Food Sorting
Highland Breakfast
Highland Mobile Food Pantry
Highland Teacher Appreciation

Summer Housing for Interns

This summer we welcome three interns to Covenant. Two interns will serve through the Stapleton-Davidson program with Davidson College (serving at Roof Above) and one will serve as an Intern for Christian Education focusing on youth. **Housing is needed for these interns as we work with them throughout the summer.**

Summer Intern Support Team

Each week throughout the summer, the Stapleton/Davidson and People in Mission interns meet at Covenant to reflect on the work they're doing, the neighbors they're meeting, and the theology they're unlearning/relearning. During these weekly meetings, these hungry college students share their stories as they share some snacks. Please consider supporting these weekly reflections by providing snacks for the interns.

Can you help? Email Nikki Zimmermann at nikki.zimmermann@covenantpresby.org



Children & Youth Events

Middle School Youth's Winter Retreat

Andy Wertz, Middle School Youth Director, says: "Even though many of us were sweating in the unseasonably warm weather, we had great snow and sped down the mountain! Our cabin was beautiful. We ate a great dinner and then talked about rooting our self-worth in being a Child of God, rather than through our accomplishments. Sunday we worshipped by the pond in the back; the frost on the ground, the silence of the hills, and the tracks of deer and rabbit guided us to a peaceful communion with God's creation."



Learn more about our Middle School Youth Program and their upcoming summer trips at covenantpresby.org/youth

Fourth Grade Milestone: Sacred Spaces Tour

In early March, our fourth grade students took a tour of Covenant's "sacred spaces" around our campus. Jason Graffis, Covenant's Production Director, started the session in Fellowship Hall, then led the group downstairs to learn about Room In the Inn from RITI organizer Lynn Morrow. Afterwards our young people heard about the importance of community care, symbolized by our Columbarium and Chapel. The group enjoyed exploring the altar and choir area of our Sanctuary, especially the organ and the pulpit. Finally, the group climbed the bell tower and rang the bells while taking in the spectacular view from our steeple.

The Annual Milestone Program for children is part of Covenant's series of worship and education opportunities designed to nurture children and families into a life of faith. To learn more, contact Claire Brown, Director of Children's Ministry, at claire.brown@covenantpresby.org





Caring for Our Congregation

Helping Hands of Stephen Ministry



BY KELLI MCALISTER

I became aware of Stephen Ministry when I was in my thirties and walking through a “valley” season of life. My husband and I had both lost our fathers unexpectedly, just days apart. Barely a year later our three-year-old daughter was hospitalized and in the ICU for a few weeks and received a medical diagnosis that was very difficult to navigate. I remember someone at Covenant asking if I might want to meet with a Stephen Minister. I declined. Looking back, I wish I could have a “do-over” on that Stephen Ministry relationship.

Fast forward 25 years to my decision to become a Stephen Minister. The five months of weekly training (50 hours in total) reminded me that showing up for someone enduring a hardship is part of our Christian journey. The most reassuring message I learned is that God is present in every caring relationship, and very much at the center of the healing.

A Stephen Ministry relationship is strictly confidential. Katherine Kerr, Senior Associate Minister for Congregational Life and Pastoral Care, prayerfully considers each pairing and is the only person other than the Stephen Minister and care receiver who knows the individuals. Once paired, the two parties typically meet for an hour a week, but that can vary based on need. Stephen Ministers offer encouragement, prayers, and compassion. The relationship with a Stephen Minister provides a special kind of support with one-on-one, confidential, faith-based caring.



Stephen Ministers toured HopeWay in early March as part of their on-going training. If you would like to work with a Stephen Minister, contact Katherine at katherine.kerr@covenantpresby.org.

On Our Gratitude List

Here at Covenant we are blessed with a congregation eager to help those in need. Below are a few of our many volunteers for whom we are deeply grateful.

Our Members at The Sharon



This group always finds a way to pitch in when needed for church events, like prepping silverware for dinner at The Rise. Soon they will be stuffing the Easter Eggs with yummy treats for children to discover during the hunt on Easter Saturday.

Room In The Inn Volunteers



Pizza is a favorite of our RITI guests, so these volunteers crafted a variety of delicious and nutritious made-to-order pies for our friends to enjoy.





Joys and Concerns of Our Members and Friends

OUR SYMPATHY AND LOVE TO

Melissa and Adam Fiorenza and family on the death of Adam's father, August Fiorenza, November 7, 2023
Liza and Tom Christy and family on the death of her mother Nancy Quinn, November 16, 2023
Erin and Nick Nixon and family on the death of her father Mark Schroeder, November 25, 2023
Mollie and Philip James and family on the death of her father Bill Thorn, December 9, 2023
Debra and DeWitt King and family on the death of their son, DeWitt King IV, December 12, 2023
Meredith and John Murchison and Dawn and Jim Murchison on the death of John's father and Jim's brother,
John Malcolm Murchison Jr., December 18, 2023
Karen and Rob Calder and family on the death of his father James Lee Calder on December 24, 2023
Katie and Jeff Stewart and family on the death of her father James Francis Martin, December 28, 2023
Stephen Hicks and family on the death of his mother Martha Spencer Hicks, January 25, 2024
Courtney and Peter St. Onge and family on the death of his father Robert H. St. Onge, January 25, 2024.
Jen and Derek Thomas and Kristin Horner and family on the death of Jen and Kristin's mother Ruth Ann Horner, January 28, 2024
Cheryl and Hunter Hoover and family on the death of her mother Ann Jones, January 28, 2024
Rachel Westra and Dave McIntyre and family on the death of his father David Harvey McIntyre Sr., January 28, 2024.
Lynne Ray and Kristi and Scott Ray and family on the death of Lynne and Scott's mother Jean Wagner Ray, February 6, 2024
Beth and Phil Koonce and family on the death of his father Philip Haywood Koonce Jr., February 20, 2024

IN LOVING MEMORY

DeWitt Walker King IV, May 25, 1987 – December 12, 2023
Thomas Marshall Holland, December 27, 1919 – January 5, 2024
Cynthia Haldenby Tyson, July 2, 1937 – January 6, 2024
Darlene Evans Jonas, January 4, 1935 – February 9, 2024

BIRTHS

Paige Catherine Kelly, child of Heather and Greg Kelly, born November 21, 2023
Matilda Gavigan Bender, child of Rachel Besnoff and Michael Bender, born December 3, 2023
Emily Brooklyn Bridges, child of Marina and Brad Bridges, born January 3, 2024
Caroline Margaret Yang, child of Emily and Jun Yang, born January 19, 2024
Cameron Lloyd Flynn, child of Sophie and Austin Flynn, born January 31, 2024
Skye Penelope Johnson, child of Candace Carter Johnson and Shawn Johnson, born February 11, 2024

BAPTISMS

Elizabeth Louise Yarbrough, child of Frances and Tyler Yarbrough, December 3, 2023
Brighton Olivia Pirie, child of Kelsey and David Pirie, December 3, 2023
James David Collins, child of Christie and Ryan Collins, December 10, 2023
Davis Alden Turner, child of Britney and Chris Turner, December 17, 2023
Katherine Cole Ward, child of Liz and Kirk Ward, January 21, 2024
Townsend Edward Cox, child of Kali and Ryan Cox, February 4, 2024
Andrew Charles Wickard, child of Mollie and Brad Wickard, February 4, 2024
Riley Elizabeth Cranford and Madison Blake Cranford, children of Sarah and Drew Cranford, February 4, 2024
Grant Robert Arnold, child of Mary Catherine and Chris Arnold, February 18, 2024
Woodson Augustus Pollard and Virginia Independence Pollard, children of Maggie and Joe Pollard, February 18, 2024
Anne Miller Hilker, child of Elizabeth and Matt Hilker, February 25, 2024
Levin James McElveen, child of Candace and Jay McElveen, February 25, 2024
William Maxwell Shook, child of Shannon and Tracy Shook, February 25, 2024





Welcome Our New Members



Lindsay Bridges
with Irina Bridges



Kevin & Kayleigh
Carnell



Preston & Grace
Cole with Jane



Carter & Mark
Comer



Paul & Mattie
Cross with Amelia



Jamelia Davis



Allie & Michael
Hanson, with
Edith & Porter



Ruth Hsieh



J.D. Hopper



Anna Blair Izzard



Christina Laube



Sam White

New Members Without Photos:

Cam & Whitney Ferguson

Chelsey Oldham & son Charlie

Richard Challenger

MISSION REMARKABLE



We raised \$45,000!

Our annual Mission Remarkable sale and auction supports our local and global mission and outreach work. Without the money raised by this event, many of our outreach efforts would not be possible. Thanks to everyone who donated, volunteered, and — most of all — shopped, purchased, and bid. If you missed the event and would like to support this work, contact Mandy Rencher, Director of Mission and Outreach, at mandy.rencher@covenantpresby.org



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

8:45 a.m. Traditional Service in the Chapel
9:30 a.m. Contemporary Service in the Sanctuary
11:00 a.m. Family Service in Fellowship Hall
11:00 a.m. Traditional Service in the Sanctuary

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

Youth Sunday is April 28



Our middle and high school youth will share their thoughts and talents in faith, music, and art when they take over worship services for Youth Sunday. Our youth have worked hard and look forward to sharing their with the congregation.



1000 East Morehead Street, Charlotte, NC 28204



de' Angelo Dia Sunday, April 7 at 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall & Zoom

Poet, photographer, and performance artist de' Angelo Dia will speak with us about theological imagination as spiritual formation. In particular, he'll help us explore the ways in which childhood nostalgia, media, art, and literature can engage the Divine and bear witness to the Divine in others.

Dia holds a Master of Divinity and Doctorate of Ministry from Union Presbyterian Seminary.



Dr. Lucretia Berry "Hues of You" Workshop for Parents and Kids! Sunday, April 14 at 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Recreation Wing Gym

Dr. Lucretia Berry is the founder of Brownicity.com, whose mission is to foster education designed to inspire belonging for everyone. Dr. Berry will lead a hands-on workshop based on her book, *Hues of You*, which helps children celebrate the incredible range of colors all around them. See the link below for details:

covenantpresby.org/sunday-events