

The Promise

The People of Covenant are called to:
Gather, Grow and Go Serve... With God's Love!



May 2020

The Monthly Newsletter of
Covenant Lutheran Church
ELCA



Inside This Issue

- 2: Message from Pastor Sara
- 3: Council President's Message
- 4: Property Team News
- 9: Memorials
- 11: Money Matters
- 12: Health Topics
- 14: Social Justice
- 16: Contact Information



Missing our Church

Below is a poem written by Maren Taribassi
Based on Psalm 100

How lovely is your sanctuary,
our sanctuary, O God.
My soul longs for the pews or chairs
for the clear windows to the world around
or glass in sparkling color
that tells the sweet old stories.

My heart and my voice crack with tears
because I miss the music of a choir,
and, yes, even my own tune-in-a-bucket voice
singing concealed by a crowd --
for I am not going to open my mouth
and embarrass myself on Zoom
making a joyful noise to the living God.

Even the smallest children find
a second and holy home,
even babies brought in arms for baptism,
pets brought to Blessing the Animals,
guests who sit in the back pew
because maybe, just maybe,
they want a wedding here someday,
guests who sit at the homeless meal --
which is every bit as much
a nest at your altar.

Happy are those who worship in your home,
and don't want to see the inside of mine.

Happy are those who meet to plan mission
in the basements of a blessed place,
easily able to see who wants to talk
because hearts show in the eyes.
And happy are those who share
a common room of prayer shawls and conversation
rather than crafting tenderness
with crochet hooks
while binge-watching television.

And they go from strength to strength
who drink coffee and eat cake
at coffee hour,
or just drink lots and lots and lots of coffee
at AA, NA, GamAnon meetings.

God, hear my whining prayer;
give ear, O God of the wilderness
who at least gave a design
for a beautiful traveling tent.
Accept my sadness,
missing the place of memories and love.

For I know that worship online,
and meetings, too
are precious in your sight,
and I would rather be a distance-keeper
in the virtual house of God,
than re-open too soon and risk the health
of even one of God's children.

I know that God bestows a blessing
on livestream and facetime
honor on Youtube and Zoom.
No good thing does God withhold
from those who worship digitally.

But, God of the temple in our hearts,
we trust you with our lament,
our discontent, our loss ... and our longing

to be glad when we hear them say --
Let us go to the house of God!

Message from Pastor Sara

A message from the Pastor,

Lord, take me down to the river to pray. Wash away the fears of the trembling earth and find our comforts there. “By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.” Psalm 137: 1. We remember a time when we didn’t have to think about distance and touch, and a time we felt safe. To God we take our grief and grievances and grace anticipations of what life may be like in time to come.

One day we will return to the church that we love. In this time of absence, we recognize the value of what we are missing. The people there, alive in conversation. In beauty of live music, and inspiration in the spoken word. And oh, how we might find the greatest significance in the touch of grace in the broken bread and cup that is shared. The Bishop has encouraged a time of refrain, no not to repeat again, like our mastered hymnody skills, a fasting and pause from partaking of the elements that give us so much comfort and assurance. We will abide, until we can commune in the safety of small gatherings as one bread and one body.

“Where oh where, O losses, is your victory? Where, O loss, is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15: 55. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43: 2.

This is our comfort and our assurance and we find beauty in knowing that we are not alone. Alone in our prayer we hoist them to God and trust that all will be well.

God Bless you, stay safe and until we meet again...

Pastor Sara

Council President's Message

Hello, everyone!

Bored with binge-watching TV reruns? Ready for a break from the daily COVID news squawkers? Here is a question for you to think and talk about: Which is the top Christian holiday: Christmas or Easter? After all, we couldn't have an empty tomb without Bethlehem, but there would be no significance to the birth without the resurrection. *Hmmm....*

Easter is chock-full of reminders of life and hope springing up, with thanks and praise to God for the miracles we see around us every day.

Those signs of persistent, emerging life are evident at Covenant as well.

Our virtual worship events are reaching out beyond our congregation with a message of love and hope. Phone calls by our pastor and care team ministers are allowing expressions of encouragement in the face of isolation and anxiety. Covenant members, as well as non-members, are stepping up and keeping up with monetary needs to keep our essential ministries possible. We are fulfilling our outward-facing mission by funding gift cards for families in need. All these, and more, are evidence that we are meeting the challenges of today's way of church. Thank God.

At our monthly meeting this week, the Church Council started to talk about the days ahead – beyond Safer at Home. Lots of people talk about “getting back to normal lives”, but what will that look like at church? Is there a “new normal” that we need to consider in the life of the Church and our congregation? How do we balance the local authority messages with the unique needs of Covenant? What will stay, and what will change? And, how do we create systems that can flex out and back if there is a next wave of this virus?

Our experience in these days are lessons gleaned for the future. We invite you to join the visioning and contribute to the conversation. Feel free to reach out to anyone on the council with your questions, concerns, thoughts, and ideas.

God is good (all the time),

Council President—Beth Dibbert



Property Team News

The seasons have changed since the last time we were all together, at Covenant. The cold and snowy weather is gone and April showers have brought forth the long-awaited spring flowers, budding trees and green grass surrounding Covenant. Spring is here and there are signs of new life and new beginnings everywhere.

Spring has brought about new beginnings for projects at Covenant also.

There have been some wonderful changes during the time we have been away and hibernating, in our homes, these last few weeks. The Property Team has been busy coordinating construction in the Narthex and finalizing plans for up-coming projects later this month.

Narthex Truss Repair

Think back to the end of February and maybe you remember seeing 4 rust colored metal support poles, placed in the middle of the entrance between the Narthex and the Sanctuary. If you looked closely, you may have also seen the cracks in the wall next to the stained-glass windows, in the Narthex, and some ceiling panels that were bent down along the entrance into the Sanctuary

The snowfalls this year were unusually wet and heavy and because of the buildup and weight of the snow and ice, the flat roof began to bend downward. Joe Oakland, Luke Oakland, Tim Strandlie and Mike Gilbert spent many hours shoveling the snow off the roof to reduce the weight and allow the trusses to be jacked back up to their original position.

Upon initial inspection, it appeared there were breaks in two of the trusses and the repair would be minimal. A building Engineer was brought in to inspect the roof and trusses and Joe Oakland and his team were contracted to do the construction and repairs.

The Engineer's recommendation was to repair and reinforce 8 trusses across the full length of the Narthex. A 2x4 was installed on the bottom of each truss. $\frac{3}{4}$ inch OSB board was glued and nailed onto each side of the truss and an additional 2x4 was placed on the top and bottom edges of both sides of the trusses running parallel to the roof line. This is equivalent to a wooden I-beam. The roof is now really strong!

A representative from Church Mutual, Covenant's insurance company, made an appraisal, approved the engineer's recommendations and determined a very fair settlement. We are extremely pleased with the speed of their response.

Additional snow stops will be installed on the main roof to slow the snow sliding down to the flat roof. Several cracks in the walls of the Narthex and Sanctuary were repaired and many areas repainted including the underside of the right arm of the Sanctuary. The work was completed in March and the area is now ready for the day when we all can return to regular Church services. We hope you enjoy the new, bright and spacious Narthex that is waiting to welcome you!

Property Team News

Trees

If you look along the northeast side of the parking lot, something is missing. Trees! Three (3) dying Ash trees were removed recently. This was timed in advance of the Solar Array installation and parking lot project later this spring. Unfortunately, the trees by the playground are also Ash trees and will need to be removed in the future. Tangeman Tree Care was contracted to do this work.

Parking Lot

The month of May is going to be a busy and exciting time for Covenant. The parking lot project is finally here! Tri- County Paving Inc. has been contracted to do the construction work, which is still on schedule to begin at the end of May. This will greatly improve the appearance of the area. No more potholes!

Solar Array

Have you seen the short poles sticking out of the ground on Covenant's east lot yet? This is a rough layout showing the dimensions of where the Solar Array will be. Ryan Harkins, of Synergy Renewable Systems, has been working on the project for several months and is projecting the initial installation of the conduit, carrying the power from the arrays to the church, will begin in mid-May. It is necessary to have this process completed before the parking lot project begins, as the conduit will run under the eastside driveway to the building. The Solar Array installation should be completed in June, if all goes well.

The sloping grade of the land, on the east lot will need to be leveled and the plan is to replant it in grass and to install several small flower gardens, next to the Solar Array. We have met with representatives from "Applied Ecological" and "Formecology" to discuss flower, wildflower and rain garden options. We will be seeking input from "flower gardeners" within our congregation to help with the final design.

Initially, the plan was to install a wildflower/prairie garden over the entire Solar Array area, but it was quickly determined that the cost and amount of ongoing maintenance would be too high. Our hope is to plant small gardens with a variety of plants and flowers that are friendly to butterflies and bees. This should make this an attractive and welcoming space for our congregation and community to enjoy.

We especially want to thank our volunteer who works tirelessly behind the scenes painting, repairing and doing small projects around the church.

We will keep you updated with information and photos, as the new projects progress. The exterior of Covenant will truly be transformed this summer. What a wonderful time to be a member of Covenant!

Peace,

Property Team members:

Mike Gilbert, JoAnn Gilbert, Stephen Peterson, Michael Hirsch, Don Warren, Fred Sundby

Property Team News



Snow on the main roof collected on the flat roof above the Narthex.



Crack in the wall above the stained-glass windows.



One of the broken trusses.

Property Team News



Joe Oakland's work crew.



Exposed trusses before reinforcement.



The work was sometimes in tight, hard to reach spaces.

Property Team News



Narthex during construction.



Finished reinforced beams.



Narthex is ready to welcome us, when we return.

Memorials



Easter Flowers - While we didn't get to celebrate Easter with our friends and families this year, there were still a few of you that sent in your remembrances and tributes, below:

In Loving Memory of

Our parents
Given By Rod and Joanne Brickson and Marilyn Burrington

Fritz & Lillian Scheldrup & Owen Scheldrup
Given by Grandchildren & Great-Grandchildren

Samantha Cannady
Given by Auntie Shell, Cassi & Ashley

Samantha Lee Cannady
Given with Love, Grandma & Grandpa

Luke Daniel and Ethan David Eugster
Given by Liz Eugster; Joshua, Isaac and Elijah

Our great-grandparents
Given by Andrew and Jacob Kettner

Roy & Jeanette Nelson
Given by the Children, Grandchildren and Great-grandchild

Linda Berman
Given by Irving and Betty Melaas

In Honor of

Grandma & Grandpa
Given by Cassi, Ashley & Jackson

Our children and grandchildren
Given with Love, Edward & Karen Ott

Our granddaughters, Emma & Sami
Given by Norman and Verjean Sime

Our Family
Given by Tom and Philayne Chose

Memorials

These Covenant members passed away in the month of April



Homer L. Howard passed away peacefully on April 16, 2020 at Skaalen Retirement Center in Stoughton, WI. He was born in 1928 in Darlington, WI to Harry and Annie Howard.

Homer and his wife, Marjorie, moved to Stoughton in 1993 and enjoyed becoming involved in church and community activities. After Marjorie's death in 1998, he moved to Vennevoll Retirement Community and finally to Skaalen Retirement Center. Following a family memorial service at a later date, Homer will be laid to rest at Union Cemetery in Darlington beside his beloved Marjorie. Memorials may be directed to donor's choice or to the Stoughton Food Pantry.



Carrie Elizabeth Anderson, age 95, left this Earth on April 19, 2020. She was born on June 15, 1924 in Nashville, the daughter of Samuel and Louise (Cleghorn) Underwood. She married Bruce Warren Anderson on April 10, 1948. Carrie was a devoted wife, a loving mother, a proud grandma and a faithful friend. Her tiny frame belied her fierceness, her tenacity and her power to move mountains. She leaves behind a trail of grateful hearts. "If love could have saved you, you would have lived forever."

MONEY MATTERS...REPORTING ON COVENANT'S FINANCES

Even though we could not gather for worship, you members and friends of Covenant have been generous throughout March. The table below summarizes March and YTD finances:

ITEM	MARCH 2020	MARCH 2019	Year-to-date (YTD) Actual	YTD Budget	YTD 2019
Contributed income	20,848.00	29,885.55	65,495.25	64,993.78	72,878.06
Other income	1,005.46	1,319.09	7,500.33	14,989.97	2,571.99
TOTAL INCOME	21,853.46	31,204.64	72,995.58	79,983.75	75,450.05
<i>Partnerships</i>	2,089.80	2,714.36	6,551.64	6,774.34	7,273.62
<i>Salaries & Benefits</i>	10,749.47	15,405.39	51,295.97	54,535.97	42,886.24
<i>Program Ministry</i>	-14,501.22	600.10	-11,281.67	3,099.94	3,455.32
<i>Education</i>	59.85	0	103.59	62.53	0
<i>Stewardship</i>	0	33.60	42.75	250.03	520.94
<i>Social Ministry</i>	170.83	0	200.96	0	0
<i>Worship and Music</i>	470.34	220.00	2,228.15	1,518.75	1,092.07
<i>Building Operations</i>	4,281.42	10,730.40	11,700.68	13,624.97	32,995.92
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,320.49	29,703.85	60,842.07	79,866.53	88,184.11
Surplus/(Deficit)	18,532.97	1,500.79	12,153.51	117.22	-12,724.06

You may wonder about Program Ministry expense as -\$14,501.22. Covenant received a large settlement from our insurance carrier for damage to our roof due to the heavy snow in early March; this was credited to a line in Program Ministry. The work has been completed but the bill had not been received or paid in March. April will be much different. The bottom line would still show a surplus in March even if the work on the roof had been paid. Our deficit for YTD would still be much smaller than 2019.

Supporting partnership ministries shows we take seriously our call to reach out to care for others with God's love. In March your offerings helped support ELCA World Hunger, Global Health Ministries, Lutherdale Outdoor Ministries, and Skaalen Retirement Services in addition to the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. During this pandemic that support of our partners becomes even more important.

While we still cannot gather physically to worship, we can gather virtually as Pastor Sara posts weekly worship online. We can continue to offer our financial support in one of these ways: Mail your offering directly to Covenant at 1525 N Van Buren St., Stoughton, WI 53589.

Go to Covenant's website, <http://covluth.org/>, scroll down and click "Donate Now" on the right side of the page to make a secure online donation. That service costs Covenant a small fee of just over 1% of your donation.

You may be able to use Bill Pay or something similar through your bank or credit union to send your offering to Covenant. In many cases there is no cost for this service.

We each experience this unprecedented time in our own ways. Loss of employment, reduced hours, illness, loneliness, family stress, physical distancing, providing essential services, safer at home. In every situation we support each other as beloved siblings in Covenant. Whatever our lot, Easter declares life triumphs death, God is always with us, We can count on that!

Submitted by George Carlson, treasurer

Health Topics

May 2020 topic: COVID-19 Coping & Care



Hello dear Covenant family,

COVID-19 recommendations and rules tend to change frequently, yet there are important, unchanging foundations for coping and self-care we can and should do. Here's a quick list (in no particular order):



- Wash **hands** well and frequently
- **Practice** grace, compassion, patience and understanding; we're all in this together
- Call/email/text or send a card to **others**. Open the Covenant directory and look for names of people you either know well OR not well—ask how others are doing
- Nurture your **faith**: watch Covenant YouTube worship opportunities, read devotions/the Bible, pray
- **Eat smart** and monitor body weight (see the March 2019 Promise)
- Wear a **mask** when you leave your home (call/email/text me if you are in need)
- Go **outside** to sit or exercise—fresh air is uplifting BUT stay 6 feet or more away from non-household contacts
- Do activities you **enjoy** such as read, hike, sew, bike, etc.
- Make time in your day for **mindfulness** (see the April 2019 Promise)
- **Limit** exposure to news stories



In faith and health, Denise Pigarelli (608-576-5321, dlwpigarelli@gmail.com)



**American
Red Cross**

Thank You

Covenant Lutheran Church

You Made a difference

Your blood drive with the Red Cross truly made a difference!

Your team:

- registered **36 total donors**
- collected **39 pints of blood**
- recruited **9 first-time donors.**

Your efforts have helped boost the community blood supply and ensure hospital patients have the lifesaving blood they need.

The American Red Cross is so grateful to all our partners that continue to stand with us through the evolution of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Hundreds of thousands of donors and blood drive hosts have responded to the call to support the lifesaving mission and we can't thank you enough!

Assistance for Families in Need



Covid-19 has changed life for all of us, but it has especially hit families already struggling financially especially hard. Several members of the Social Action Team have been in contact with the social workers of the Stoughton Area School District to find out how Covenant can best help. The social workers have indicated that

- 1) The families' needs include grocery and drugstore items as well as gas cards for essential travel
- 2) The most efficient and best way to provide help is through gift cards rather than donated goods.

With this direction, the council approved a \$1000 donation of Stoughton grocery store gift cards which were delivered to the school social workers to distribute to the neediest families in the district. The \$1000 included \$500 in donations from Covenant members, so we thank all that contributed to the effort!

How we support these families in the near term is yet to be defined. We are hoping that once restrictions are lifted, we can go back to collecting food for these families, but we will most likely make another gift card donation before that starts. If you are able to contribute, please send donations to Covenant specifying 'SASD'.

NURSERY STOCK, ready and waiting

Some folks are eagerly waiting to purchase bedding plants or vegetable seeds for their garden. But in this case, the “seed” has already been planted, and parents are waiting for the birth of a child. Covenant has partnered with Global Health Ministries (GHM) in the “nursery business” for decades: sharing NEWBORN KITS to welcome “new little sprouts” in needy places of Africa, Asia, and South America. The goal set last fall was to assemble 100 NEWBORN KITS. The intention was to share our offering of KITS and rolled bandages at the Synod gathering May 2-3. But a GIANT BUG has infested our world and altered many things!

However, it has not stopped HOPE, LOVE, and CARE of each other. GHM is still sending 40-foot sea containers with medical supplies to these needy places. There’s always a big demand for NEWBORN KITS. Each KIT contains a towel and washcloth, Ivory soap, receiving blanket, a shirt or onesie (0-3-month size), infant cap and 2 diapers. Besides the KIT, GHM provides pre-natal care, education and nurture of families.

During the month of May, we’d like to build up the “nursery stock.” Currently, our inventory has infant-sized caps and about 3-dozen onesies. Would you consider how you might contribute to a welcome package for a newborn in a distant place? If/when you visit a grocery store, Dollar General, or Walmart, you might purchase a multi-pack of Ivory soap (BATH-SIZE, 4 oz./each); OR package of receiving blankets, OR light-weight, light-colored towel, max. length 52” (\$3 at Dollar General) and wash cloth (\$1.75). Assembly of kits, as well as a drop-off time/place will be announced at a later date.

Questions? Contact Solveig Carlson, 608-576-1747.

The Promise—May 2020

The monthly newsletter of Covenant Lutheran Church—ELCA

Covenant Lutheran Church—Pastor Sara Rabe
1525 N. Van Buren St.
Stoughton, WI 53589



Phone: (608) 873-7494
Email: covlutheran@covluth.org
Website: www.covluth.org



Like us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)

*The next issue of “The Promise.” will be published in May 2020. The deadline for submitting items for the **June** newsletter is **Monday, May 25.***

*Please submit to submission form [here](#) or to covlutheran@covluth.org.
Thank you!*

Covenant Lutheran Church
1525 N. Van Buren St.
Stoughton, WI 53589