

January 2021



# Being Adaptable

Adaptability, that is my word for 2021. Last year I shared with you that instead of making a resolution, I pick a theme word for the year. Whatever word I choose, this is the word that I will spend the next year meditating on, learning about, and putting into practice. Sometimes these words are things that we are inspired to pursue or excited to grow in; other times it's things we might be obligated to embrace.

Having the characteristic of adaptability means that you are able to adjust to new conditions as they come. You are patiently able to tweak, undo, or even change course when a situation, event, or even a vision calls us to. The pandemic has forced everyone to be adaptable, and I know for many it was very difficult! Between consistent changes, lamenting what has been lost, systems not working, lack of communication, short-term planning options, and lock-downs... this is the kind of adaptability that almost puts our sanity to the test.

But there has also been a good side to being adaptable! Without diminishing the many who have found these last several months to be gut-wrenching difficult, allow me to share some of the good that has come from our adaptability during this pandemic:

Within a week from the pandemic, we were able to continue to provide our worship services online. While it wasn't ideal, we had the resources and capacity to make it work; and we adapted because we knew that being together was important (and biblical - Heb 10:25)! Since March, we have invested much into this area by purchasing better equipment to make our online experience better. Thank you for your patience as we continue to learn how to do this new area of ministry well!!!

We might think that our online service was just a tool to help our people "get through the pandemic", but there have been others outside our community who also have been impacted. Someone from our church shared about how she had been watching the livestream of our service from home, which forced her husband who hadn't been engaged with the church to also watch (or at least listen from a distance). Turns out, what he was hearing through our services intrigued him, and now he has started coming with his wife since we started doing in-person services.

In addition, a long-time member of our church shared the link of our livestream with their sister who lives in Northern Wisconsin. Her church did not have the resources or capacity to meet online and forced them to just shut down for a season. So she started watching us online and has fallen in love with our church community from afar. In fact, she has also shared the link with several of her friends and neighbors. So now we have a small community in Northern Wisconsin that is being impacted by the ministry of First Covenant!

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## Intentional Invitations (cont.)

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Being connected when we can't physically be together has also needed to adapt. Throughout the pandemic, we have shifted our teams to simply check-in with one another. Council members are calling all 163 families in our church, while our congregational care team is connecting with those who are home-bound more often. One person shared how someone they called had just been furloughed earlier that day. When God orchestrated a random phone call that afternoon to be encouraged and prayed over, it completely changed this person's outlook on their situation. God provided for their family during those few months until they were able to start back at work!

During these few months we have started a short-term ministry to help about 50 students each week with their distance education through CDEAP. Through your generosity, we have been able to send out extra support to others we are connected to like Lake Beauty Bible Camp and Teens for Christ. We have often helped supply the food shelf, as well as students from our youth group helped pack 40 boxes of Thanksgiving meals and host a drive through pick-up for families in our community!

These are but a few examples of how, in spite of the pandemic, God is still at work and we have been able to adapt and further His mission of sharing the hope and love of Christ in our community! This has been a difficult year, but God is good! When we find ourselves in trying circumstances in life, we can know that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). Adapting isn't easy, but sometimes it's necessary to continue the high calling Christ has placed in our lives. I invite you to join me this year in making adaptability something we choose to embrace for the message of Christ to be proclaimed in new and unique ways!

Mike Bechtold

## Congregational Care—Have We Lost the “Future”?

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The other evening I was listening to the news and was very aware that the phrase "moving forward" was used many times instead of talking about goals or the future outcome of a situation or even peoples hope. If we only talk about "moving forward" without a goal or future, we end up moving purposely in any direction that turns up.

The apostle Paul talked frequently about running a race. In a race you have a beginning and an end. In Acts 20:24 Paul talks about running to finish the task of sharing the good news about God's grace given to us in Jesus.

2020 has felt like we are running a race - and we have been. For us who have centered our lives on Christ and his body, the church, we have hope and a future and each other.

I want to encourage us to keep reaching out to one another - safely!! We can almost see the end of the race before us but we keep putting one foot before the other, or one call before the other as we continue staying in touch with one another. We have a future in this race and it is us together in Christ once again. So may 2021 make us aware of the future we share together here at First Covenant.

Continue staying safe,  
Char Hayes

# Welcome to 2021

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Happy new year to each and everyone of you. Better than welcoming a new year On January 1<sup>st</sup> is that we get to welcome a new lead / senior pastor to First Covenant Church. Welcome Pastor Jim, Deanna, Natalie, and Greta Murphy. We are so glad to have you coming to Red Wing. We look forward to what God has in store as we do ministry together in the coming years.

As one who spent 40 years in pastoral ministry, I offer three simple suggestions how we can welcome our new pastor and his family.

Give them time to settle in and adjust. The Murphys come to Red Wing from Arizona. While they did live in Minnesota, it will take time to adjust to our climate again. It will take time for them to discover how we do community, things like River City Days, the arts festival, the Holiday stroll, and the Sheldon's various offerings. It will take time for them to discover how we get things done like what day garbage is collected and what, when, how we recycle for example.

PANDEMIC ADJUSTMENT: Give them extra time since nothing is exactly normal.

Give yourself time to discover our new pastor's style, strengths, and unique nesses. Every pastor is gifted differently by God and differently than the person who was your favorite pastor, so take time to discover who Pastor Jim is. Then take some time to ponder how your style, strengths, and unique nesses can best come alongside of him to make his ministry at First Covenant everything God wants it to be.

PANDEMIC ADJUSTMENT: Give this extra time because we won't have the usual opportunities so discover these things like we are used to doing.

Give everyone time to adjust to the inevitable changes that comes with a change of leadership. Be open to the new doors of ministry as they come and old things which are better left in the past. It is ok to let go of some things.

PANDEMIC ADJUSTMENT: Give it more time. In "normal" times change never seems to come easily, under pandemic conditions it may well be even be more difficult.

It is going to take a bit more creativity to welcome the Murphys because of the pandemic road blocks but we can do this. Pastor Jim told us when he was here on December 6<sup>th</sup>, "tell me your name, and next time tell me again." Yea we can do that and it's a good start making the Murphys feel welcome.

My name is Roger Johnson, and I am currently the church chairman. Happy New Year and welcome to First Covenant of Red Wing.

## Library Corner

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Our hope for the New Year is simply for a normal return to our lives as we knew it. That FREEDOM will return for everyone. I am not a big New Year's Resolution person but want to suggest that you resolve to do more reading of good books in 2021. If you never have checked our corner out, please feel free to come and browse, and our prayer and hope is that you will find a book or topic that interests you. We are updating our library so more current topics are available.

Library Committee

## Kids Ministries Discovery Hour Resumes January 10

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This has been a big area that needed our attention most since the pandemic shut things down. We have experimented with a few things over the last few months that lead to some great memories and cool little stories to share, but we believe we have the capacity to start gathering our younger families more consistently.

**Starting Jan 10 at 9:00 a.m.** we have an amazing team of volunteers who will host a kids discovery hour gathering in the gym. Join us for an upbeat opening song, a fun little gathering, and a lesson as we continue through the Gospel Project! Parents are encouraged to come and sit with their kids (if able). This is intended for students in grades Pre K through 6th grade, but older students are welcome to join or even volunteer to help! We will end at 9:45AM, just in time to head up stairs for the worship service. We hope your family will consider joining us this January!

## Youth Group is BACK starting January 10

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After taking the month of December off, we are looking forward to reconnecting with our youth on Sunday nights. Starting Jan 10, junior high (grades 6-8) will meet from 6:00-7:00 p.m., and senior high (grades 9-12) from 7:15-8:15 p.m. down in the youth room. Please enter using the youth room entrance around the side of the building.

Our theme for the Spring semester will be Foundations. You always have to start somewhere. When you build a house, you start with the foundation. When you learn math, you start with the basics. From there, you can build elaborate structures or understand the most complex problems. The same is true in figuring out who we are and why we exist. During this series we will tackle some of the most basic questions about life and faith!

## Fresh New Look in the Kids Wing

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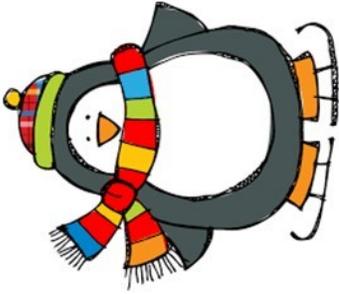
**Huge THANK YOU** to ALL that helped bring a fresh look to our Kids Wing in 2020. Many paint colors, hard-working hands, and over 150 hours went into updating this space for our kids ministry at FCC. Our Community CDEAP program has already been enjoying studying weekly in this space and we can't wait to share it with our First Covenant Kids and Awana groups! We were so blessed to have on our team: Debbie Olson, Judy Wachholz, Melissa Zenzen, Amber Gabrielson, Angela Hu, Teagan Walter, Anna Bechtold, Tim Schmidt and Darold Glander. Look for an announcement this January for a Prayer Walk Open House!

## Note of Thanks

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Mike, Melissa, & Youth Group

Thank you so much for partnering with RW Youth Outreach on the Thanksgiving baskets! Thank you for letting us use your space. I'm so happy we can work together on projects like this. RW Youth Outreach



# January

2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<b>1 New Years Day</b> All offices closed	<b>2</b>
<b>3 Holy Communion</b> 10:00am Worship	<b>4</b> 9:00am CDEAP	<b>5</b> 9:00am CDEAP	<b>6</b> 6:30pm Confirmation	<b>7</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10 Pastor Ken's final Sunday</b> 9:00am Kids Discovery Hour 10:00am Worship 6:00pm Jr. High Life Group 7:15pm Sr High Life Group	<b>11 Pastor Jim in office</b> 9:00am CDEAP	<b>12</b> 9:00am CDEAP	<b>13</b> 9:00am MOPS	<b>14</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 9:00am Kids Discovery Hour 10:00am Worship 6:00pm Jr. High Life Group 7:15pm Sr High Life Group	<b>18 Annual Report Articles Due</b>	<b>19</b> 9:00am CDEAP	<b>20</b> 9:00am MOPS Leaders 9:30am Women's Bible Study	<b>21</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24 Installation Sunday</b> 9:00am Kids Discovery Hour 10:00am Worship 6:00pm Jr. High Life Group 7:15pm Sr High Life Group	<b>25</b> 9:00am CDEAP 6:30pm Council	<b>26</b> 9:00am CDEAP	<b>27</b> 9:00am MOPS 9:30am Women's Bible Study	<b>28</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31 MN Teen Challenge Visit</b> 9:00am Kids Discovery Hour 10:00am Worship 6:00pm Jr. High Life Group 7:15pm Sr High Life Group						

# Remembering Our Birthday Friends with Prayer

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1st	BJ Vette, Autumn Snyder	15th	George Gabrielson, Anna McCann, Brian Back, Martha Johnson-Svedvik, Stefanie Vette, Todd Irke
2nd	Wayne Bean	17th	Branda Keehn
3rd	Dorothy Crane	18th	Jane Shirk
6th	Denise Doden, Kevin Jensen, Gary Thom	21st	Melissa Evans
10th	Linnae Carlson	23rd	Torie Hart
11th	Ginny Ulrich	27th	Marilee Lampman
12th	Jerry Sibert, Avi Johnson	29th	Jacob Kline
13th	Jane Schultz		

Prayer is a vital part of the life of our church. In order to help us focus on praying for one another, please use our list of birthday friends in each month's Messenger to pray for them and their families. There will be enough names to pray for someone throughout the month. Let's make praying for one another a means of encouragement to us all!



FIRST  
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