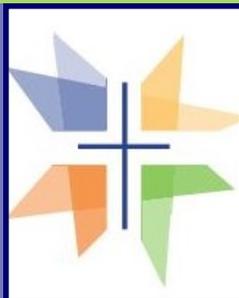


Overcomers

MAY 2020



FIRST COVENANT CHURCH + RED WING, MN

MESSENGER

Speaking to his disciples after the last supper and before his arrest, Jesus says, “Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. [As in childbirth] so with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:20, 22).

This is a time of grief. To be sure we are doing our best to make the most of our time under the ‘stay at home’ directives. There are the hilarious memes about homeschooling, working-from-home attire, and friending our new bestie – the refrigerator – on Facebook, but these days life is emotional, stressful, and in some cases filled with anguish. During this time there has been loss – loss of income and jobs, loss of tempers and direction, loss of routine and normalcy. Some of you have lost loved ones and have not been able to hold appropriate gatherings to share stories and say goodbye. Still others have heard distressing news about a loss of health that makes this time even more uncertain.

As the disciples enter into what will become for them an earth-shattering time, Jesus shows them two realities. First, you will grieve. Second, you will rejoice. The first will in fact give way to the second. And the rejoicing will allow you to endure, to overcome your current burden-filled circumstances, he says. Recently, I read the blog of a friend who has had to take early retirement, at 53, from a high-powered law firm due to the onset of Parkinson’s disease. He quotes David Kessler in his book on grief who writes, “... in grief, pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional.” When we find *meaning in the grief* or *meaning despite the grief*, the pain can be transformed.

As with the disciples, their pain was transformed when they came to understand that the loss of Jesus by crucifixion led to his being with them *always* by way of the Spirit. His death led to their life. His sacrifice led to their eternal freedom. When we let faith reign in our lives – faith that Jesus is who he says he is, faith that he did what he came to do, and faith that he is alive in the world – grief is transformed. The pain is real, but the joy of Jesus overcomes the pain, takes it in, and allows for an even deeper reality than circumstances could ever provide.

Sometimes though it seems like pain is senseless and has no connection to what we believe about the cross and empty tomb. It’s not spiritual or logical; it just seems pointless. While I would argue that everything has a connection to Jesus, grief at times feels this way. “Suffering,” says Kessler, “is the noise our mind makes around that loss, the false stories it tells because it can’t conceive of death [or pain] as random.” Despite the pain, we know that God holds the past, present, and future in his hands. Paul says it this way, “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

(cont. on top of page 2)

Overcomers (cont.)

As I was writing this, I got an email from friends whose daughter-in-law experienced a miscarriage at 37 weeks. Thirty-nine is full term and thousands are born much earlier than this. This is true pain; it seems senseless – without any purpose. I find myself asking, “WHY! did this happen?” Maybe the simplest answer is: because it did ... and God is still good and God has made a way for death, pain, and sadness never to touch us again. He has done this for us. As Jesus says to his disciples, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). As we employ our faith ... we too can overcome. By his great love, we are overcomers!

Grace & Peace,
Marc

Pastoral Search Committee

The search process is now entering the phase where the committee gathers and sifts through a great deal of information from potential candidates. In early April, the position was posted along with our church profile on a Covenant website designed to connect churches with potential candidates. With the assistance of our NWC Superintendent, Mark Stromberg as well as NWC Assistant Superintendent, Kara Stromberg, several well-qualified candidates were matched with our church profile.

Next steps for the committee include: (a) Review resumes and consider the compatibility of applicants' skills and experience with the needs of our church family, (b) Listen/Watch sermons of potential candidates, (c) Conduct initial telephone or video conference interviews with several prospective candidates. This is all done with the goal of eventually presenting one candidate for recommendation to the congregation.

As you can understand, the candidate review phase involves a significant time commitment and requires committee members to be seeking God's voice and sensitive to His leading. Please continue to lift each member up in prayer for discernment, time to perform the extensive tasks, and a spirit of unity among us as we seek to follow the Holy Spirit's leading. We are so grateful for your support and encouragement.

MOPS & MOMSnext

Dear MOPS members, our in person meetings were cut short this spring, but we WILL stay connected via ZOOM, email, text, postal mail, and phone calls. We'll have ZOOM meetings on May 13 & May 27 at 10 AM. Watch your email or check in with your discussion group leader.

MOPS International has live videos on Tuesdays at 10, for all moms. There are great speakers who are encouraging, educational, and inspiring. See YouTube for MOPS International.

We are praying for you, and urge you to change expectations on this time with everyone home. May we all strive to "trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know." Proverbs 3:5

From the Church Chair

Greetings from my everything chair. From this chair I attend meetings via video, participate in conference call meetings, receive and send electronic communications, read all kinds of things, have my quiet time and devotions, think and ponder, drink my coffee, watch some TV, and look out the window to watch a world that I now only occasionally visit.

Sitting in my everything chair has been very exciting. I have been blessed to work with some incredible people who make up our church council and staff. They have been diligent in watching after their areas of responsibility. They have faithfully stepped up in this atypical situation of a pandemic and the result has been wonderful. So, I am declaring the month of May 2020 as Thanksgiving. I am thankful for how our pastors have led us through Lent and Holy week. I am thankful for the extraordinary work of our council members. Everything that has been needed they have cared for and more. I am thankful for the faithfulness of each and every person in our congregation for your giving of tithes and offerings during this time of sheltering at home. What we need to carry on our ministry each week has been provided by you. You have been generous in giving food items to help those in need in our community. We are very blessed and God is honored by your faithfulness. Thank you one and all.

In my reading I came across this most interesting thought by Kimi Harris, in ["How the Forest Inspired Me to Stay in Church,"](#) where she quotes German forester Peter Wohlleben, to suggest that maybe the way God made trees is the same way he made us:

"A tree is not a forest. On its own, a tree cannot establish a consistent local climate. It is at the mercy of wind and weather. But together, many trees create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold, stores a great deal of water, and generates a great deal of humidity. And in this protected environment, trees can live to be very old."

We are enduring this time of sheltering at home and safe social distancing. The longer this continues the more we might be tempted to conclude we can get along with less real contact with our fellow believers once we are able to gather together again. We may become accustomed to video worship and YouTube studies and even feel we have grown spiritually. But the kingdom of God is at its best when we stand side by side, interacting with each other and changing the climate of the world in which we live. For now, I am thankful for all that God is doing in and through us, and my prayer is for that day when we will again be able to stand side by side. Join me this month in thanksgiving and in prayers of preparation for the day when we stand together side by side and move forward.

Roger Johnson, Church chairman

Library Corner

2 Timothy 1:7 "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of wisdom, love and a sound mind." These have been unusual days, but the Lord has become a very dear friend, who sticks closer than a brother. We know that "this too shall pass" and we will be able to gather again, and the Library will be "open".

We have not been able to pick up a book when we need one. 😞 Even the Public Library has been locked down. Trust you are staying healthy and safe. We all miss our "church" family. We have received some new books - so we will need to get those checked in and we will be back in the ministry of books and growing in our faith.

Congregational Care

We are walking through a strange but good time in our church, our country and our world! You might be thinking that "good" may not be the appropriate word for this time.

I have been aware that although we are not seeing each other we are choosing the way of love by not seeing one another, protecting each other from a "hot" virus. We are having to slow down, stay home, see our families and cope with "I'm bored", "leave my stuff alone", "get out of my space". How do we creatively help our children see the good in what we are going through? In our neighborhood we have a family who has used sidewalk chalk to leave messages of fun encouragement, others who are checking on some older folks by calling regularly and leaving groceries on the front porch. Did you know you can play games with friends via the computer with an app? I do now, but I didn't!!

How do we as a fellowship, a church, care for each other? Well, Marc has us bringing food for the freezer, plugged in outside, and non-perishables for the folks that might need it. We call each other, when they cross our mind, just to see if they are doing all right. We can even send a note and we pray that the Lord will use this for good in our church, Red Wing and our nation.

We have had several events on the church calendar that have come and gone, we will have others coming up that we may not be able to celebrate, like our new Conformation class, High School and College graduates. That's not a tragedy, just an opportunity to be creative in connecting. Hebrews 10:24 says "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds...", but from a distance!!

Looking forward to having celebration dates on the calendar to go to...

Blessings to you,
Char Hayes

ECC—A Global Day Dedicated to Covid-19 Giving

Together, as the Evangelical Covenant Church, we are extending God's love and care to those who are suffering and meeting new challenges because of COVID-19. **On May 5, we as a Covenant community have the chance to respond and participate in #GivingTuesdayNOW, a global day dedicated to COVID-19 giving, by making a gift to support Covenant COVID-19 Relief.**

The Covenant COVID-19 Financial Relief Initiative provides **short-term loans** to local churches, conferences, and camps; **global relief grants** to our partners who are walking alongside marginalized communities around the world; **missional relief grants** to churches who are caring for the most vulnerable in their communities, and the **Ministers' Crisis Fund** to care for emergency needs for our pastors during this time. To find out more, go to covchurch.org/covidrelief.

To help support these initiatives, we are inviting you, as you are able, to partner with us in supporting Covenant COVID-19 Relief. Join us on or before May 5 for #GivingTuesdayNOW, by making a gift to support our ECC brothers and sisters, as well as vulnerable people in our communities and around the world.

Your gift today or on May 5 will support our COVID-19 relief efforts.

Thank you for your generosity to those in need during this time. **We are in this together.**

Treasurer | Financial Secretary Giving Graph

Things have really changed a lot and very quickly since 27 March, the first day of Governor Walz's stay at home order. The Covid-19 pandemic and stay at home order has created much uncertainty.

One of the actions taken by the federal government was the passage of the CARES Act that included the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan. The Council discussed participating in the program and ultimately approved to participate. The discussion did include conversation about whether others may need the funds more than FCC. The decision to participate was made due to the uncertainty of how Covid-19 may impact FCC in the future.

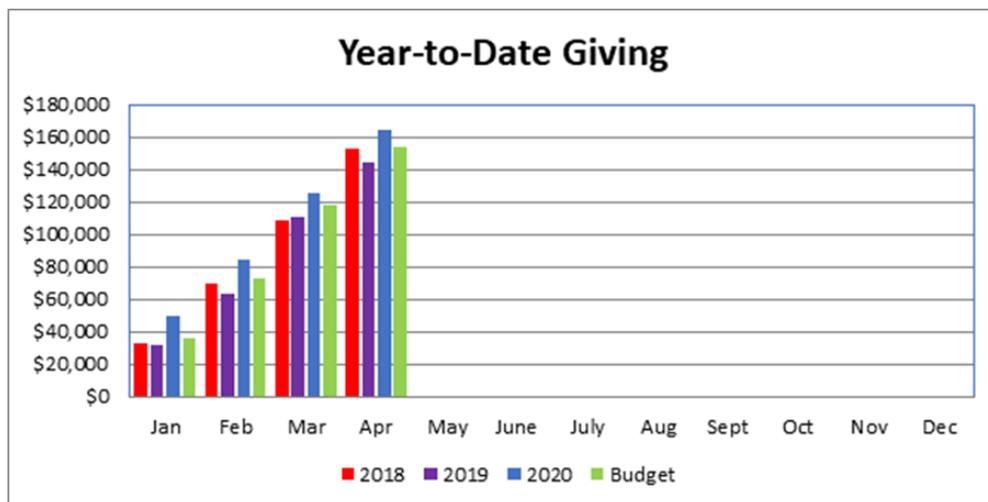
First Covenant Church was approved for \$54,100 that can be used for salaries, healthcare premiums, retirement contributions, mortgage interest and utilities. The funds must be used during an eight week period beginning 16 April 2020. If the funds are used for the purposes outlined above, the loan will be forgiven. Any unused portion will be returned.

During this time of uncertainty we can look to the Lord for comfort and guidance, he is our rock and will always be there for us.

In Christ,

Paul Resel, Treasurer

Comparison Year to Date Giving



Notes of Thanks

Dear Marc, Mike, Sarah and all the incredible members on First Covenant,

Thank you so much for all you have done to make Hope and Harbor a reality. Your church, hands down is what have made this shelter from a thought to something that provides warmth, food, compassion and shelter to those who need it the most.

Liz Magill

Thank you for your generous donation to my trip to Uganda. Your support helps immensely and is much appreciated! God is already working through this trip and I cannot wait to see what else He will do. Thank you for being an incredible church family!

God's blessing,
Autumn Snyder

Remembering Our Birthday Friends with Prayer

1st	Bailie Roschen, Hallie Roschen	17th	Ron Gray, Tim Young, John Hart, June Olson
4th	Jacob Peterson, Joey Mason, Nathan Eix		
6th	Rick Peterson	23rd	Joel Tastad, Chris Heineman
7th	Cindy Dugstad, Bill Franciskovich	24th	Janis Kimball, Jim Daggett
9th	Rob Keehn	26th	Bryan Thoner
11th	Lydia Beaulieu	27th	Julie Malyon, Dave Jaeger
13th	Brett Gadiant, Laura Eix	28th	Mary Roskam
14th	Claire Zenzen, Hannah Gadiant, Larry Gilbert	29th	Verone Sherman, Wanda Feldman, Tim Schmidt
		30th	David Hoseck

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!



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