

Gathering At The Table

MAY 2021



FIRST COVENANT CHURCH + RED WING, MN

MESSENGER

What would you say is the best meal you have ever had? For me, I never miss Thanksgiving dinner with my family back home. On non-covid years, we have a group of about 15 people who gathers together for an elaborate meal with all the fixings! But the best part of this meal is that my mom literally will make a pie for each person (true story)! This year I'm planning on an Oreo Cream Pie #Tasty

But imagine with me a second if, after all this work to create this grand feast, no one showed up to dinner. Everyone who was thought to have been there had "something come up" or no longer wanted to attend. What would you do? How would you feel in that moment?

Recently at youth group, we have been exploring several parables of Jesus. Jesus uses a lot of parables in his teachings to help people understand who God is and what his Kingdom is like. In Matthew 22, Jesus shares a short story about a wedding feast where no one showed up. All of the invites were sent out, but no one came. In fact, verses 5-6 tells us that "they paid no attention and went off, one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. "Well that escalated quickly! Why do you think people didn't want to go to the feast or even go to the extreme of killing the messengers?"

Well, here's what the king did next. In verses 8-10, the king tells his servants, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests."

When I read this, I am reminded that the opportunity to sit at the great feast of our Risen King is an invitation. God is inviting everyone of us to come into his presence, but we have to choose to go. It's a choice to accept the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, which then leads us into his great Kingdom! Have you accepted that invitation yet?

But the challenge doesn't just end there! I often enjoy seeing these parables from a different perspective by focusing on other side characters. In the story, we also see the King's servants. Those who go out with the invitation and present that message to the world. Some died delivering this message. Others found themselves in random streets, in the midst of bad company even, simply to gather people into the great feast. I believe that for those of us in the Church, we really are the servants. We are the message-bearers that should be going out and making disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19).

As we prepare to enter into the final month of the school year and gear up for summer, I challenge all of us to not simply see ourselves as people who are already at this feast, but rather the servants with a very important task... a very important message. Who are you sharing that message with? Where are you actively going to invite people to encounter the feast of our Great King?!

Even that begins with a choice to go.

Pastor Mike Bechtold

Mission of the Month—Paul Carlson Partnership

The Covenant Church in Congo (CEUM) is committed to extending the whole gospel of Christ by being concerned with the conversion of hearts through Christ but also engaging in the tangible realities of people's lives. That is why the CEUM runs a medical system, builds bridges, supports economic development, provides clean water, and the list goes on! The Paul Carlson Partnership (a non-profit organization of the Evangelical Covenant Church) comes alongside our partners in the Congo by providing medical teams (Medical Ambassadors) who train their Congolese medical colleagues in their area of expertise. These Congolese professionals are highly capable and experienced in caring for the people in their communities, but may not have the same resources as those who come to train them in their field. It has been a wonderful and successful partnership for many years.

Prayer Requests:

We join our partners in praising the Lord for the new pediatric ward completed in February of this year at the hospital in Karawa. This September, the Paul Carlson Partnership (PCP) will be sending a Maternal Health team and a Pediatric team to teach how to manage premature labor and care for the small newborn. The hospital will then set up a team to care for premature births. Setting up this team and teaching them to do quality assurance is very important and our prayer for this outcome is greatly appreciated.

There are also two Congolese nurses who have started training in Ophthalmology (they are six months into a three year program). When they have completed their training, they will be qualified to do surgeries such as cataract extractions, as well as prescribing corrective eyewear. There is no eye care system available at this time. Please be in prayer for these nurses as they train and study apart from their families.

Praises:

That COVID has not taken a toll in northwest Congo as it has in other parts of the world, and that the medical staff know how to protect themselves and can guide others in preventative care.

That the first fruits of the Karawa Coffee Project are going to market. This is a source of pride and economic opportunity for the Congolese. If you are interested in learning more about this project and/or purchasing coffee, go to the Paul Carlson Partnership website.

MOPS & MOMSnext

Lies we Believe...mom guilt...school during a pandemic...comparison...chasing joy...dealing with pressure. We have talked about these topics and more these past couple of months, and how good it is to have community AND a good and gracious God who holds us close! Leanna Tankersley reminded us that we do NOT need to hustle, muscle, muster, or lean into our own strength in this world. Those lies can sneak into our thoughts and we can forget that "we are wounded, but also warrior." God is asking us to allow Him to hold us, show us, and love us. When we accept weakness and trust in Him, He will remind us of His truth, the real understanding of who God is and who we are to Him. God says "I am enough." Leanna invites us to breathe this prayer: "In my weakness, You are Strong (Lord)." Another good message comes from Matthew West's song, "Mended." We thank God for who He is and how he leads us.

Rose Gerdes
Coordinator

Congregational Care

What a delight it has been to have such warm sunshine and see the hope of life take form in daffodils breaking through the soil and the blush of green in bushes and trees. I think our hearts have been reawakened to the hope of life moving toward wholeness after the darkness of covid-19 we have been living through, the hope of seeing each other face to face. It will happen, just a little while yet!

I have had folks I have been talking to on the phone all respond with the sense that our time to be together will happen and will be good, just a little while yet.

I have been grateful that we are still phoning and messaging and e-mailing, to check on each other. Many of us have completed our immunizations and are feeling more hopeful that our lives will again be shared with those we care about, just a little while yet!

Hindsight helps us see that this year has been difficult, but we haven't been alone in it. Our Lord has protected so many of us from contracting the virus and walking with those that have been sick and recovered or recovering from it. We now look forward to coming together again and seeing how our Lord will be leading us in our care for one another here at FCC and the people our Lord gives us in our community.

We have the joy of the Murphys coming to us right in the midst of the pandemic to share their lives and lead us in ministry to one another and the world around us. We are the Lord's people who are anxious to be on the move again toward health and wholeness for ourselves and others, just a little while yet!!!

Char Hayes
Congregational Care Chair

Recognizing Our Graduates on Sunday, June 6th

2021 Graduation Recognition

Sunday, June 6

During both worship services

To all High School and College graduates, we want to recognize your accomplishments. Please have your graduation information to the church office by Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

High School Graduate Information Needed:

- Pictures: Senior, baby, youngster and family
- Future plans
- Open House Information
- Your proudest or favorite high school memory (or both)

College Graduate Information Needed:

- Picture
- Future plans
- Degree and school



High School Graduates will be recognized during the worship services. Drop off things to Sarah's office or email at assistant@redwingfirstcov.org

A Reminder From a Toddler

My wife and I have spent most of April having one of our multi week visits with our son and his family in western New York. As grandpa, my job is to play with my granddaughter and grandson all day long. For my granddaughter who is 4 ½, this is nothing new. She has had years of experience doing this. But for my grandson who is 17 months this has been his first experience of an all-day everyday grandpa playmate. It took him a couple of days to get things figured out but he is a quick learner. You begin the day eating breakfast on grandpa's lap. Helping grandpa make his coffee in the Keurig, helping grandpa eat his toast and Cheerios. Then after breakfast its time to jump on grandpa and giggle while you do it. There is a whole lot more that filled our days and weeks. I love being grandpa.

Playing with my toddler grandson reminded me of something very important. Human beings learn and copy behavior from other human beings. My grandson copied what I did. When I smiled, he smiled. When I laughed, he laughed. He watched me make coffee and soon he pushed the buttons in the correct sequence and inserted the Keurig pod and made coffee. At 17 months he followed my actions and mimicked my reactions.

As more people are vaccinated and the pandemic eases its grip on how we go about things, it will be important that we follow the right actions we see. The church council and our staff are doing our best to look ahead and anticipate the what and the when of our ministry for the rest of 2021. It would be easy and even tempting to do what others are doing. Like my grandson has been doing with me. What we need to do is continually ask what would God have us do? Just because another church does "X" doesn't mean we should. Just because we did "Y" before the pandemic doesn't mean we should go back to doing that. What would God have us do? What He would have us do is what we should desire.

As church chairman I would ask that you pray regularly for the council and the church staff that we will be able to discern God's leading so we may follow Him rather than follow what we see others doing. Our next few months will be a time of important discernment and decision making. Please join us in seeking God's guidance.

Roger Johnson
Church Chairman

Library Corner

Joel Rosenberg's book, *The Jerusalem Assassin*, is a thriller of a book with so many headlines from today. It is set in Jerusalem from the temple mount where the president of the U.S. will announce his peace plan. There is also a plot to kill the president happening at the same time. It is up to the heroine in the book to thwart this plan and he has 48 hours to do it. A great read! We have several Rosenberg books in our library to enjoy. The library is open whenever the church is open.

Note of Thanks

Pastor Jim & First Covenant Church

God bless your friends and thank you for all your love and support. You're making a huge difference through your giving and we value you greatly.

Thank you,
Tom Truszinski
MN Adult & Teen Challenge

Financial Secretary Report

OFFERING UPDATE:

2021 Budget: (\$9,417/week needed)
17 weeks 2021 - \$143,219 (-10.5% under budget)
17 weeks 2020 - \$164,645
17 weeks 2019 - \$143,868

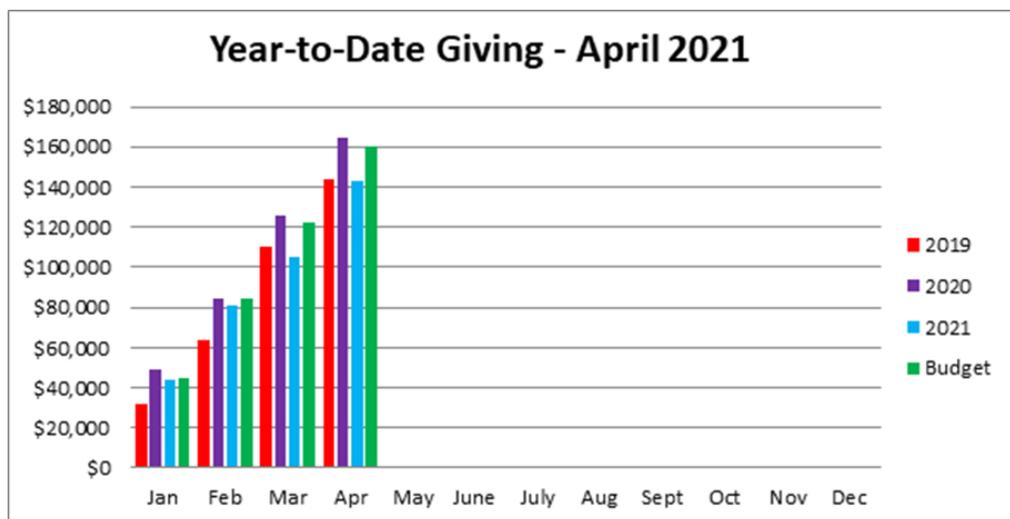
April Comparison:

4 weeks 2021 - \$37,759
4 weeks 2020 - \$38,817
4 weeks 2019 - \$33,573

NOTE: 2021 offerings to date include several large annual donations

MN Teen Challenge: \$3,442

Red Wing Food Shelf: \$1,108 plus 186 lbs. of food



Vacation Bible School

VBS is returning this summer!

Plans are underway for a COVID-safe VBS experience. Save the date: June 21-25. Watch for a registration link and more information to come soon at the Red Wing First Covenant webpage. Space will be limited with a registration deadline of June 1st. We are asking for a suggested donation of \$10 for each participant, with a \$20 cap per family to assist with additional costs due to COVID guidelines. Scholarships are available upon request. Join us for VBS SHINE 2021.



Red Cross Blood Drive

First Covenant Church to host Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, July 9 from 12:00 - 6:00 p.m. This is our 11th drive since we started in 2017. In the past we usually have 30 to 40 appointments to fill, this drive they are requesting 51. The last two drives appointments filled up quickly so register sooner than later. Register at redcrossblood.org or call the church office. There is a critical need for blood.

Please note: After a Covid-19 vaccination, in most cases there is no wait time to donate along as you're a symptom free and feeling well.

Lake Beauty Bible Camp Summer 2021



Begin planning for your child's summer camp experience at Lake Beauty. Students are welcome to invite friends to this life changing opportunity.

Register at www.lbbc.com by May 3, 2021

Camp Session	Grades	Dates	Registration
Frontier Kids Week 2	Completed Grades 1st, 2nd, or 3rd	July 13-15 (Tuesday-Thursday)	21RWFK
Trailblazers Week 2	Completed Grades 3rd, 4th or 5th	June 27-July 1 (Sunday-Thursday)	21RWTB
Jr. High	Completed Grades 6th, 7th, or 8th	June 13-18 (Sunday-Friday)	21RWJH
Sr. High	Completed Grades 9th-12th	August 1-6 (Sunday-Friday)	21RWSH \$187.50 (after discount)

Ice Cream Social to Welcome the Murphy's

Church Ice Cream Social | Saturday, May 8 | 1:00-3:00 p.m.

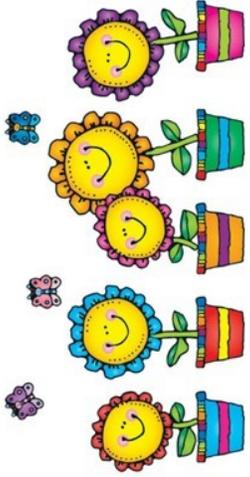
You are **all** invited to a Church Ice Cream Social to WELCOME Pastor Jim Murphy and family to First Covenant Church. Bring a lawn chair for a party in the parking lot and enjoy fellowship with our church family. Root Beer Floats and Ice Cream Sundaes will be served.

All are welcome!

Questions or to serve contact Anna Bechtold.

If poor weather, party will be indoors at the church.





May 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 Holy Communion 8:30am Blended Worship 9:40am Kid's Discovery Hour 10:30am Contemporary Worship 6:30pm Youth Group	3	4 9:30am Women's Bible Study 10:00am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	5 Sarah out of the office 8:30am CODEAP 6:30pm Confirmation Class	6 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	7	8 1:00pm Ice Cream Social Welcome the Murphy's
9 Mother's Day 8:30am Blended Worship 9:40am Kid's Discovery Hour 10:30am Contemporary Worship 6:30pm Youth Group	10	11 9:30am Women's Bible Study 10:00am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	12 8:30am CODEAP 9:00am MOPS	13 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	14	15 3:00pm Bonfire Family Event
16 Paul Carlson Partnership Sunday 8:30am Blended Worship 9:40am Kid's Discovery Hour 10:30am Contemporary Worship 6:30pm Youth Group	17	18 9:30am Women's Bible Study 10:00am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	19 8:30am CODEAP	20 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	21	22 9:30am Confirmation Rehearsal
Pastor Jim on vacation May 19 - 28						
23 Confirmation Sunday 8:30am Blended Worship 9:40am Kid's Discovery Hour 10:30am Contemporary Worship 6:30pm Youth Group	24 6:30pm Council Meeting	25 9:30am Women's Bible Study 10:00am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	26 8:30am CODEAP 9:00am MOPS	27 9:30am Men's Bible Study 6:00pm Worship Team Practice	28	29
Pastor Jim on vacation May 19 - 28						
30 8:30am Blended Worship 10:30am Contemporary Worship	31 Memorial Day All church offices closes					

Remembering Our Birthday Friends with Prayer

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