

Covenant's Newsletter



REACHING OUT WITH CHRIST TO AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD

FROM CPC'S PASTOR

I'm not much for crowds. Maybe it's my tendency towards claustrophobia. Maybe it's genetic - my parents used to leave football games and fireworks displays early so we didn't get caught in a post-event traffic jam. I was in college before I saw a pyrotechnic grand finale. So, in November when Dwight's twin brother invited our family to ring in 2020 in New York City, what I thought was, "NYC on New Year's Eve with a million revelers counting down to midnight as a Waterford crystal-covered ball drops in Times Square? That sounds really crowded." But what I said was, "Great, let's go!" So, we did.

But not before I had made arrangements to run in the opposite direction from Times Square on New Year's Eve. Literally. I signed our family up for the Midnight Run in Central Park that began at the stroke of midnight. With fireworks! And free bagels at the finish! So, at midnight while tourists were jammed wall-to-wall in Times Square, the Naves were thrilling to fabulous fireworks while coasting up and down the hills in Central Park. Race volunteers and NYPD officers cheered us at every turn. It was a blast! And a great way to thaw our frozen feet.

We had been told to arrive an hour and a half before race time. Security lines would be long with only two entry points into the park for 5000 runners and spectators. Getting through security took us about 35 seconds. Which meant we had nearly an hour and a half to wait in 38-degree weather, accompanied by a brisk NYC wind. Luckily? We had signed up to run in the slowest-running group, which meant we walked nearly a mile to our starting position. But moving to the back of the line kept us from becoming ice sculptures in the park.

Running in Central Park at midnight to ring in a new decade may have been incentive enough, but throw in all-you-can-eat genuine New York bagels at the finish line and that's a dream come true. Not that we needed any sustenance. Just hours before the race, Dwight's brother had wined and dined us at a fancy restaurant across the street from the fabulous Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. We ended our meal with *Buche de Noel*, an Instagram-worthy yule log dessert with decorative meringue mushrooms. Yum! No time to savor after-dinner coffee, though, we had to eat and run!

We changed clothes at Doug's NYC law firm. He works in London now, but managed to get us in the building so we could put on our running gear. The non-runners in our group offered to schlep our belongings back to the hotel and cheer us on from the comfort of our 44th floor room. With no carrier bags to tote our stuff, Doug improvised. He removed the garbage bags from the law offices to transport our clothes. Apparently, the bag he used for my coat recently held Chinese take-out cartons ... it smelled like soy sauce! "Well," Doug noted with attorney's logic as he stuffed my clothes in the bag, "you coulda brought a duffel bag!"

That's how I started off 2020 with a coat smelling of soy sauce, a NYC blueberry bagel, a 2020 Midnight Run tee shirt, and a contented smile. How did you ring in this brand-new year? What hopes and dreams rise up in you as you peer into the fresh waters of a new decade?

Here at Covenant Church we are launching our 2020 Vision in the hopes that, as a church family, 2020 will find us deepening our stories, seeing new possibilities, and taking bold risks to follow God's plans for us. As a community of faith, we're looking to honor our historic traditions and also do some different things - sing new songs, take new risks, try new paths.

Our path as a church family may not take us on a footrace through Central Park at midnight, but I pray that as we come together to worship God and grow in our faith in Jesus and our reliance upon the Holy Spirit, we will experience God's presence in life-giving ways. As we worship and serve, I hope that we will open our hearts to God and to each other. For Covenant is a healing place. It is a place where we can talk about questions that are challenging us in our faith. A place to share learnings and frustrations, and nurture that for which we are most hopeful. A sacred space where God can bring each of us more fully alive as we notice the movements of the Spirit in the Biblical stories and in the stories of our lives.

In his bestselling book, *We Make The Road by Walking*, Brian McLaren addresses a universal need. He writes,

"The quest for aliveness explains so much of what we do. It's why readers read and travelers travel. It's why lovers love and thinkers think, why dancers dance and moviegoers watch. In the quest for aliveness, chefs cook, foodies eat, farmers till, drummers riff, fly fishers cast, runners run, and photographers shoot ... The quest for aliveness is the best thing about religion, I think. It's what we're hoping for when we pray. It's why we gather, celebrate, eat, attend, practice, sing, and contemplate."

We have been given the gift of a brand new year. Let's seek out and celebrate all the life and light we can gather, to the glory of God.

Happy New Year!

Sarah Howe

P.S. Jazzie's family toured New York City just before Christmas. They had a wonderful time, and brought back this gorgeous snow globe for the church. Thanks so much!



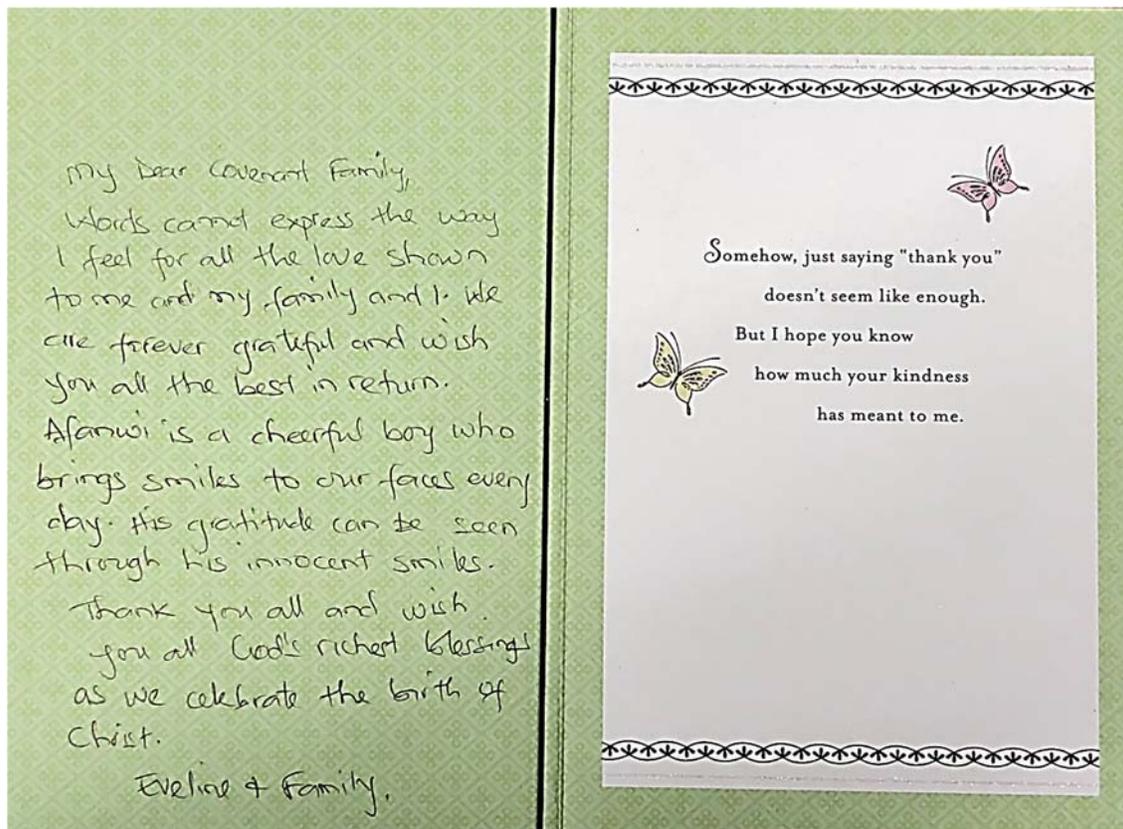
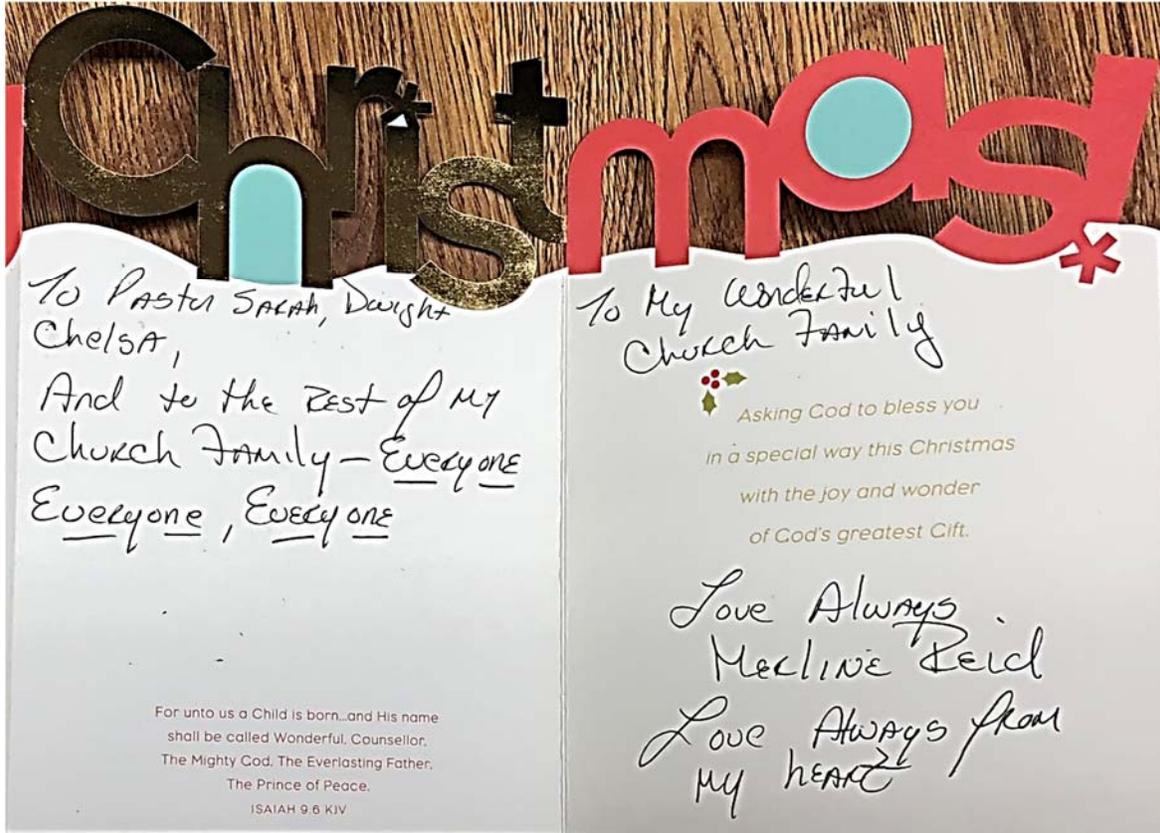
LOOKING FORWARD TO VALENTINE'S DAY

Remember when you were in First Grade, and you gave Valentines cards to everyone in your class? Do you have a picture of yourself from those days?

If you happened to have a photo of yourself as a youngster, we invite you to take a picture of it with your phone, and send it to Dwight (804) 731-7607. In February, we will have fun seeing if we can match faces with names. Thank you!



TWO WONDERFUL CARDS WE RECEIVED AT CHRISTMAS



BEGINNING VISION 2020

| Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | April | May | June | July | Aug. | Sep. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
|---------|------------|----------|-------|-----|--------|--------|------------|----------|------|------|-----------|
| Preview | Form Teams | Ministry | | | Assess | Adjust | Form Teams | Ministry | | | Christmas |

JANUARY – PREVIEW

During each of the four Sundays in January, we are looking at the one of the primary ministries of Vision 2020.

- Jan. 5th **Performing Arts Worship**
- Jan. 12th **Disciple-Making Worship**
- Jan. 19th **P.L.A.Y.**
- Jan. 26th **Healing Prayer**

The essence of the preview is simply to provide opportunities to wonder whether any, or all, of these ministries may be for us. Which ones catch our fancy? In which ones do we see ourselves – perhaps – participating?

FEBRUARY – FORM TEAMS

Throughout February we will be creating teams that would like to participate in these ministries. And at this point we are hoping that everyone will feel completely free to follow their hearts in deciding what is best for them.

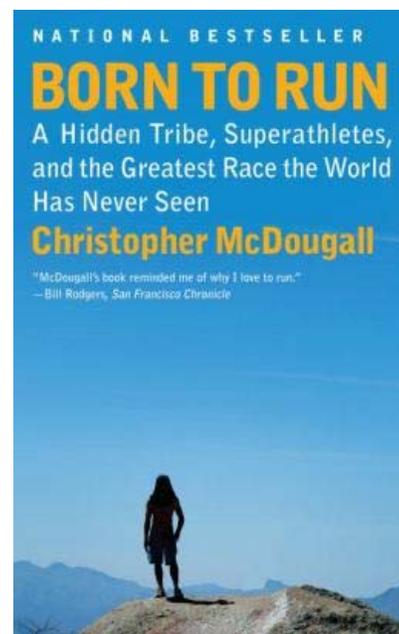
The idea of following your heart is like the delightful story of Jenn, and Billy Bonehead. They are two surfer party-kids from Virginia Beach (who also are straight A college students). One summer they fall in love with long distance running – something they had never done before. So much so, that they leave college during midterms to run a 50 mile race in the remote mountains of Mexico!

For them it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to run with the hard-to-find, and happy Tarahumara Indians: who have honed the ability to run hundreds of miles without rest or injury; and also team with several legendary ultra-distance champions from the U.S. They just read about it in a magazine, and said "YES!"

I love their enthusiasm! Making it up as they go, they almost miss a 10-mile pre-race jaunt over the mountains. Their small team is asking, "have you seen the Party Kids?" No one has. Then, just as everyone is starting up the trail, here they come sprinting down the road: "GUYS! WAIT FOR US!" And the team did!

Who wins the race? It's all in the book Born to Run, by Christopher McDougall. The point is they didn't put pressure on themselves to have it all figured out before they jumped in. They held it lightly, and had a lot of fun!

Forming teams in February is simply saying: "I'd like to try that! I'll simply showing up and see what it's like."



MARCH – MINISTRY

March is when the fun of sharing our talents, creativity, energy, and gifts from God really takes off! Having formed teams in February, we are ready for some truly fruitful ministry. And it's only three months – done before Summer vacations start. It's a chance to do something new, and then go back to what we were doing in life. What adventures might we have together in just three months?

JUNE – ASSESS

June is when anyone who wants to, along with the Session and pastors, will evaluate our ministry adventures. What was a “10”? What would we tweak? Where was there perhaps a “rock in the shoe”? How much fruit did we harvest? What was really fun? What did we fall in love with? What new opportunities did we see?

JULY – ADJUST

July begins the second cycle for 2020. It's a time to adjust the Vision to follow the opportunities, and leadings of one another and our Lord Jesus Christ. Which will lead us into forming **new teams in August** as we decide what **ministries** we would like to participate in next! All of which is done by **December** and the start of the holidays.

AND SO WE PREVIEW. TO WHAT MIGHT WE SAY YES?

- **Performing Arts Worship** 
Creating the splendor of the worship of God: through music, theater, puppets, band ... And perhaps, as the Apostle Paul writes “... by all means [we] might win some.” [I Corinthians 9:22-23].
- **Disciple-Making Worship** 
“I appeal to you therefore, my family, to present your bodies to God as a living sacrifice ... so that you may prove what is the will of God: what is good, and acceptable, and perfect” [Romans 12:1-2].
- **Play • Laugh • Arts • Yes** (to life) 
In a culture – where by adulthood laughter has drops by 80%, and suicide has jumped 33% in a generation – helping children find the happy habits of the abundant life in Jesus [John 10:10].
- **Healing Prayer** 
Learning to pray like Jesus so as to continue his compassionate ministry of helping to heal the damages of life: emotional, spiritual, physical, and what has been caused by the evil one.

The writer of Hebrews challenges us: “... since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, ... let us run ... the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith ...” [12:1-2]. Let's run!

DEAR FRIENDS,



We had a fantastic year of giving at Covenant. Thank you!

- We expected \$69,000 in pledges, and received \$78,000.
- We budgeted \$16,000 in occasional giving, and received \$38,000.
- On top of this, we received \$16,000 in special giving to the Memorial Fund, Good Samaritan Fund, Five Cents A Meal, Harvest Thanksgiving, and other designated gifts.
- Our total giving topped \$132,000.

As we enter 2020, we have received 12 pledges that equal 60% of the amount we budgeted for last year. While this is less than the 31 pledges we received in 2019, we noted that more people are picking up offering envelopes this year. Help yourself, they are in the narthex-available for everyone. We also had a financially strong first Sunday of the new year. Thank you again!

The question is, how much should we budget for income in 2020?

We will be finalizing the budget on January 20th. If you would like to suggest an amount, or perhaps submit a pledge card by January 19th, we will bring all these things before our Lord in prayer at our next Session meeting. Thanks everyone!

With you in ministry,

Dave Buck, Elder and Treasurer.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A new church year began on Sunday, December 1, with the first Sunday of Advent. The four Sundays of Advent are often seen as the countdown to Christmas, as the time when we get things ready for Christmas. Trees need decorating, and presents need wrapping. And somewhere in all this are the goings on of everyday life - work, school, meetings, doctor appointments, running errands. The temptation is to live what someone has called a “hurry-up, get busy, Christmas is almost here,” Christmas. There is another way.



Advent is a time when the Church stands up in the midst of all the busyness of life, shopping, parties, cooking, decorating, and traveling and asks us to slow down, to focus, to be alert. For the four Sundays of Advent aren't the time when we prepare for Christmas but the time in which *we are being prepared for Christmas*. We are to look and listen for the God who is always coming to us. We reflect on who we are and whether our friendship with Christ is deepening our experience of God and our relationships with each other. We look for Jesus in all the unexpected places-in the stuff of everyday life, especially in the needy of our world. We live with expectancy of God's presence in our lives.

That's not easy living as we do in a culture of distraction and noise, busyness and instant everything. That's not easy to do any time, but especially in one of the busiest times of the year.

At Covenant this Advent season we celebrated God's presence in worship with the 300th anniversary of the song, “Joy to the World”. As we anticipated the One for whom all heaven and nature sing, we began each Sunday service with a visit from a living Advent Wreath. They taught us how to look for God's joy even during hard times. On Christmas Eve, the Christ candle told how brightly God's joy shone in our world in the manger-born King.



Our candlelight Christmas Eve service was lovely. A guest worshiping with us that night sent a note to say it was one of the best services they had experienced at any house of worship. In addition to David Starzer's splendid organ music, Anastasia Jellison provided exquisite seasonal music on her harp. Harold Haughton regally sang ‘Once in Royal David's City’.

When the living Advent Wreath appeared that night, the Christ candle told us that Jesus was coming to us to bring God's light of hope and joy into the world. Dressed as Mary, Eveline Numfor brought her newborn son, Afanwi, to the front of the church as we sang “Silent Night”. Serenading a two-week old baby brought home the good news of great joy the angel shared with the shepherds... “*Today in the city of David there has been born for us a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*”



Thanks to everyone who helped decorate the sanctuary for Christmas: the wreaths, the bows, the candles and snow globes. Thanks to Betty Wade Jones for generously providing the evergreen swag. Thanks to all who donated poinsettias in honor or in memory of loved ones. Blessings to Wanda Bond and Joe Hackley for purchasing the poinsettias and refusing reimbursement as their gift to our church. Thanks to the elves who undecorated the sanctuary!

Thanks to our Presbyterian Women for providing the Salvation Army stockings and *Christmas Giving Early* envelopes so we could spread Christmas cheer in our community. Thanks to all who filled a stocking with toys for local children. Thanks to the baking elves who brought cookies to give to our neighbors as they drove past. Thanks to the friendly CPC adults and youth who stood on the corner of Walnut and Wakefield offering Christmas greetings and cookies to passers-by. Advent and Christmas are seasons of preparation and expectancy, times to anticipate and celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world. Thanks be to God, Advent and Christmas seasons were joy-filled times in the life of our church. Happy New Year!

JANUARY 2020

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--------------------|--|------------------|----------|--------|---|
| Welcome to Vision 20:20! | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | | HAPPY NEW YEAR! | | | |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 9:15 am Bible Study 10:30 am Worship with Communion 11:45 am Fellowship Noon Undecorate Church 12:15 pm Elder Training | | 6:00 pm Fitness Warriors  | 6:30 pm Choir | | | 10:00 am Presbyterian Women  |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 9:15 am Bible Study 10:30 am Worship with W.O.W. & WeeWOW. 11:45 am Fellowship Noon Healing Level II Noon Elder Training | | 6:00 pm Fitness Warriors  | 6:30 pm Choir | | | 10:30 am Examination of New Elders |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 9:15 am Bible Study 10:30 am Worship with Ordination / Installation of Elders. 11:45 am Fellowship Noon Healing Level II | 6:30 pm Session | 6:00 pm Fitness Warriors  | 6:30 pm Choir | | | |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |
| 9:15 am Bible Study 10:30 am Worship with W.O.W. & WeeWOW. 11:30 am Fellowship | | 6:00 pm Fitness Warriors | 6:30 pm Choir | | |  Do you want to ... |

FELLOWSHIP HOSTS

- 5 Dwight & Sarah Nave, and Roslyn Jarrett
- 12 Dave & Tricia Buck, and Dr. Ben Rice
- 19 Jazzie Earnest
- 26 Bill Benson

SCRIPTURE READERS

- 5 Dwight Nave
- 12 Melissa Thornton
- 19 Joe Hackley
- 26 Dawn Zepernick

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 2 Lynne Hanes | 28 Janet Spencer |
| 5 Rob Gregory | 28 Brenda Thompson |
| 8 Jordyn Stutz | 30 Jimmy Mason |
| 14 Taylor Ellington | |
| 15 Megan Moran | |
| 19 Shannon Spence | |
| 20 Al Thompson | |
| 21 Ann Rice | |
| 27 Titus Boyd | |
- 

PRAYER REQUESTS

Dr. Ben Rice, Merline Reid, Shernette Reid, Jerry Terrell, Carol Milton, Nancy (Tammy Dovel's mom), Tricia Buck, Peggy Pope-Maxfield (recent deaths), and Cameroon (Eveline and Gladys Numfor's homeland).

Marks of Discipleship: **PRAY** daily, **WORSHIP** weekly, **STUDY** Scripture, **SERVE** Christ in the world, **FRIEND** others to encourage mutual **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**, and **GIVE** freely of my time, talents and resources.

Planning Ahead?

We will be Feeding our Hungry Neighbors on: February 13th, 20th; June 11th, 18th; and October 8th, 15th.
Vacation Bible School will be the week of August 9th.

OUR CORE VALUES



Commitment Faith Generosity Hospitality Love Respect

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Witness to our faith through worship and compassionate Christian service.

OUR VISION

People's lives will be transformed by knowing and experiencing Christ, so that God is glorified.



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