



## The Covenant Contact

January 2023

### A New Year

Well, it looks like we made it to 2023!

One aspect of our Christmas holiday season which I genuinely enjoy is how friendly people can be. As I walk through town, a smile, a hello, and a “Merry Christmas” can sure lift one’s spirits. This past Christmas I found most people to be amazingly friendly; I must have heard “Merry Christmas” at least 12 times between church and Pattie’s restaurant one morning. But yesterday, as I walked uptown for breakfast, I could not believe the difference a week makes. I got the normal hellos, but I could not believe how miserable some people looked as they headed into the post office or reluctantly allowed me to cross the road in front of their car.

It seems that nothing packs up and leaves town quicker than the Christmas spirit!

One question we all need to think about is: “What is next?” In this new year, where do we turn our focus? Just listen to what Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:3-4a:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world** [emphases added].*

And in verses 11 and 12:

***In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all thing according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory** [emphases added].*

Paul is setting forth his great theme of the mystery revealed: Christ’s salvation extends beyond Judaism to include all peoples. We are all members of the same body.

These scriptures also makes us think. . . ok, Christmas is

over. . . .there must be more,

What is next? Of course there is something more if we are open and receptive to His word. Well, God is beginning (or has begun) to make clear to us His divine purpose in the world, the plan of the ages, and how **we are a part of it**. God has not left us alone to our own devices, nor are we left without meaning or direction for our lives.

***We are here for more than our own comfort and pleasure. We are a part of God’s great enterprise of redemption, reconciliation, and the healing of God’s broken world.***

The secular trappings of our Christmas holiday season have faded away. Old Christmas trees are easily found lying on the sides of the roads (except for that one family who will try to make it to February, no matter how many needles fall off). Bulbs and all that other stuff are back in their protective boxes, and soon will be back up to the attic, packed away for another year.

Are you also packing your Christmas spirit away in one of the boxes? Well, don’t; you will need it, so go back and get it.

The spirit of Christ is something we all need to keep alive and well in our families, homes, and worship, and, more importantly, in ourselves throughout the upcoming year.

**We represent Christ in everything we do**, as individuals and as a united church!

Our church has been called out and sealed by the Holy Spirit. **We have no meaning apart from our calling** by God. **We are not here for our own pleasure**; our lives are not our own. **We do not use God** to make our own plans come true, or our own lives richer, healthier, happier, or more prosperous, rather, **we are used by God** to, among other things, heal, mend, and reconcile. At the beginning of a new year and on the eve of the Epiphany season, Paul’s message demands that we ask the questions, “How big is our God, and what is God’s purpose for us and for our church?”

**Our God is big enough to choose us, to use us, and to protect us.**

God’s plan is to sum up all things in Christ. This means that, for each individual Christian, there is **no satisfaction or meaning**

for our lives **unless we are doing what we were chosen by God to do!** So, in this new year, **let's set our hope on Christ**, asking Him to grant us His guidance and His vision for our lives and for our church, **that we might live for the praise of His glory.**  
*In Christ, Pastor Gary*

### **Men's Study**

- New Men's Breakfast and Study starts Friday, January 6, 8:30 a.m., in the Fellowship Room.
- Becoming like Jesus is an 8-session study by Randy Frazee.  
BE LIKE JESUS – Am I Becoming the Person God Wants Me to Be? God wants to transform our thoughts and actions so we will bear good fruit, impact the world, and experience joy in our lives. Contact Pastor Gary if you would like to join us!
- Future Studies:
  - Why Easter Matters by Andy Stanley
  - He Chose the Nails: What God Did to Win Your Heart, by Max Lucado
  - I Declare War: The Battle with Yourself, by Levi Lusko
  - Wild at Heart: Discovering a Man's Soul, by John Eldridge

### **Search Committee**

The Search Committee thanks all of you for the honor and privilege it is to serve in this capacity. We are meeting weekly in order to ensure timely progress. Our goal is to find a new pastor who can preach well, lead well, and care well. We also are working on a vision of what we think our church needs in a new pastor. Jessica Bedosky will serve as Chair and Ruth Johnson is the secretary. Our first task is to meet with Pastor Howard, our Superintendent, for a search committee orientation. He has provided us with numerous resources and a detailed checklist to ensure our organization and fidelity to the process. Pastor Howard will then review our church profile and make our posting "live" within the Covenant denomination. This should all happen by January 15. We will provide monthly updates the last Sunday of every month during the service and during the Board meetings.

*Jessica Bedosky, Search Committee Chair*

### **Women Ministries**



Women Ministries events are for all women of the church and their friends.

**Planning Meeting:** Our annual planning meeting is on Tuesday, January 4, at 9:30 a.m. in the church Library.

#### **Continuing activities:**

- **Women's PM Study**, Tuesday evenings, 6:30 in the Potter's House. They are studying women of the Bible. Contact Mary Butkevich (marybutkevich@gmail.com or 860 841-7254) for more information.
- **Women's Bible Study is on break until March:** Thursday mornings, 9:30 -11:00 in the Potter's House. Contact Ruth Johnson (860 605-8040 or churchmouse11@juno.com) for more information.
- **WM Book Club:** next meets on January 18, 6:30 in the Potter's House. The book to read is *The Girls in the Still House* by Kelly Mustian.

### **Giving Made Easy**

Give online in just two minutes. You can opt for one time, weekly or monthly donations. Just open the camera app on your phone and scan the QR Code. You will then be taken right to the Giving Page on our website.

Covenant Church of Thomaston  
Giving Page QR Code



## ***Quarterly Meeting, December 11***

Pastor Gary reported on baptisms this year. D/C classes are going well, and he has started a Friday morning men's breakfast/Bible study at 8:30 a.m. He hopes to start a Saturday women's Bible study and to take the 39ers to visit the Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge.

Financial Secretary Deb Melvin reported offerings for 49 weeks at \$139,783.16, which is below budget by \$20,409.15

Treasurer Lori Vigeant reported that all bills are up to date and the General fund balance is \$22,489.39. Our anticipated short-fall for the year is equal to a Pastor's medical and pension payments.

The congregation approved consolidating some restricted funds. The congregation approved that the Budget Committee develop a pledge plan for 2023 to make up the \$416 per week short-fall and present the plan at the annual meeting.

Ted Ryan reported for the Trustees that much was accomplished with very little money. Funds for projects will be presented to the Budget Committee.

Jessica Bedosky, Diaconate Chair, reported on the scriptures they have been focusing on, as well as praying for Advent and for the Search Committee. Julia Becker will be the guest speaker in January.

For Christian Ed, Mary Butkevich reported that the Christmas pageant will be Sunday, December 18, and that youth winter retreat registration has begun.

For Missions and Evangelism, Brenda Tousignant reported that five Operation Christmas Child boxes were delivered. Christmas presents are being assembled for a family from the snack pack program.

Women Ministry chair Christy Barrett reported that their trip to the Scandinavian Shoppe and their Christmas Party both went well. Twenty-two ditty bags were delivered to the New England Seafarers Mission.

*(Quarterly Meeting, December 11, continued)*

For the Development Committee, Ruth Johnson reported that the completed church profile is online at the denomination's website. The congregation approved disbanding the Development Committee.

Ruth Johnson also reported that the Search Committee has scheduled its first meeting for December 21.

Nominating Committee: John Bedosky presented a slate. Several changes were made and the slate was approved.

*Ken Hopkins, Church Chair*

## ***Some Thanks and Other Stuff***

- From Alice Nelson: Thank you very much for my beautiful poinsettia. It is one of the prettiest I have ever had. I appreciate your thoughtfulness. May all of you enjoy a peaceful, healthy New Year.
- From Pastor Gary: I want to thank you for your gift to me at Christmas. I appreciate your kind thoughtfulness.
- From Beth Campbell: Thank you for your Christmas gift to me. I love working with the senior high youth group and I am blessed to be part of this church family!
- From Ruth Johnson: Thank you for remembering me at Christmas. As you know, I love being your "Churchmouse" and I am blessed to be able to serve you in this way.
- From "C," who has been receiving our kids' snack packs regularly and for whom the church bought Christmas gifts for her and her boys: Merry Christmas! Thank you so much for all the wonderful gifts. We really appreciate you and your church! We all feel so loved this morning.
- Former Pastor Jack Lundbom and his wife Linda have sent greetings. They are posted on the bulletin board outside the church office.

## Annual Meeting

- **Our Annual Meeting** will be held after worship at 11:30 a.m., on January 22, 2023.
- **Reports** to be included in the Annual Report on January 22, 2023, are due in the Church Office by January 6.

<p><del>Pastor</del>  <del>Entries into the church record and membership summary</del> (have)  <del>Financial Secretary</del>  <del>Treasurer/Budget Committee</del>  <del>M &amp; E Chair</del>  <del>M &amp; E Treasurer</del>  <del>Diaconate Chair</del> (have)  <del>Diaconate Treasurer</del>  <del>Trustee Chair</del> (have)  <del>C-E Chair</del> (have)</p>	<p>Sunday School Supt.          CHYG Youth Group          UNITE fund Report          D/C Youth Group  <del>Trailblazers Group</del> (have)          Pathfinders Group          Women Ministries Chair          WM Treasurer  <del>Nominating Committee (slate of officers)</del> (have)          Memorial Committee Treasurer          Investment Committee Chair</p>
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- Reports are needed from the following only if any unusual activity occurred in 2022

<p>Music Committee          Nursery Committee</p>	<p>Social Committee          Technology Committee</p>
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- **All boards and committees** are to meet before the Annual Meeting on January 22 to elect officers. Diaconate, Trustees, Christian Education, and Missions & Evangelism Boards must also appoint a representative to the Nominating Committee. *(If you were Chair of any Board or Committee in 2022, please convene an organizational meeting, before January 22, of that group even if you will not be serving with that group in 2023.)*
- **Auditors John Butkevich and Bill Dayton** must audit all financial records before the Annual Meeting on January 22. These include the **Church operating & savings/restricted accounts, Investment Funds, Women Ministries Fund, Missions & Evangelism Fund, Diaconate Fund, Memorial Fund, Sunday School Fund, Men's Ministry Fund** (have), and the **UNITE (formerly CHIC) Fund**.

## Youth Groups

**Pathfinders** is for students in Grades 1-3. The group generally meets on the third and fourth Sundays of the month, 4-6 p.m. Leaders are Linda Lawrence (lindae0824@gmail.com or 860 283-8726) and Brenda Tousignant (203 232-1525 or soxj269@aol.com).



1/8 4:00 Regular meeting

**Trailblazers** is for students in Grades 4-6. Trailblazers leaders are Jessica Bedosky and John Bedosky. If you have questions, need to register your student or want to help out, contact Jessica (203 910-0945 or jbed546@aol.com). Sessions are on the third and fourth Sundays of the month, 4-6 p.m. in the Potter's House.



1/8 4:00 Regular meeting  
 1/20-22 WinterJam Retreat, Pilgrim Pines

**D/C (Discipleship/Confirmation)** is for students in grades 7-8, a two-year journey of exploring who God is and what God means in our life. All junior high students are welcome to attend. The leaders are Sarah Morton and Pastor Gary. We meet 9-10 a.m. on Sunday mornings.



1/8 9:00 Regular meeting  
 1/22 9:00 Regular meeting  
 1/29 9:00 Regular meeting

**CHYG (Covenant High Youth Group)** is for all students in grades 9-12. Leaders are Jessica Bedosky, Beth Campbell, and Christie Grabherr.



1/6-1/8 WinterFest Retreat, Lake Champion, NY  
 1/22 4:00 Regular CHYG

## ***Kids Snack Packs***

We still distribute to at least 3 families weekly from the Information Desk in the Potter's House. The families receiving the bags are so appreciative of your generosity. •**Need:** Cheese sticks, fruit cups or applesauce, and lunch items (mac & cheese cups, Cup O Noodles, Spaghettios, Chef Boyardee, tuna/chicken salad to go).

## ***Banquet of Blessing***

- Need:** Canned soups, canned chicken, crackers, "to go" snacks, toilet paper.
- **No perishable foods.**
- **Check expire dates.** We can't give away out of date food.
- **No canned green beans or mixed vegetables.** We have plenty for now.

## ***Prayer Chain***

Contact Prayer Coordinator Mary Butkevich (860 514-4343 or marybutkevich@gmail.com) for prayer concerns and rejoicings.

## ***Meal Coordinator***

Providing a meal to someone during a difficult time is one way to show how much we care. If you know someone who might benefit, contact Sandy Dunn (860 483-2015 or daytondunn@mac.com).

## ***Crafty Fridays***

**Crafty Fridays:** Potter's House, 6:00-8:00 p.m. If you have a craft to do, bring it. If you don't have a craft but would like to visit and chat, that's okay! Contact Ruth Johnson (860 605-8040) for more information.

## ***Benevolence Needs***

Some in our church community are struggling financially. If you are able to, please consider supporting others in need by making an extra donation to the Pastor's Benevolence Fund. Use the special envelopes in the pews or write Pastor's Benevolence Fund on your envelope or check. Pastor Gary administers this fund.

# January 2023 (Rev)

12/31/2022)

Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24, 25

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1*</b> 9:00 Sunday School- (no D/C) 10:00 Worship & CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 11:30 PLANNED POTLUCK	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>  6:30 Prayer (Sanctuary) 6:30 Women's PM Study	<b>4</b>  6:30 NA (Fellowship)	<b>5</b>  6:30 NA Leadership (Gathering)	<b>6</b> 8:30 Men's Breakfast (lite) & Study (Fellowship)  Senior High retreat  6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's)	<b>7</b>  Senior High retreat
<b>8*</b> 10:00 Worship (COMMUNION)  CHYG returns from retreat  4:00 Trailblazers, Pathfinders	<b>9</b> 9:30 39ers Study (Fellowship)	<b>10</b>  6:30 Prayer (Sanctuary) 6:30 Women's PM Study	<b>11</b>  6:30 NA (Fellowship)	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 8:30 Men's Breakfast (lite) & Study (Fellowship)  6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's)	<b>14</b>
<b>15*</b> No D/C  4:00 Pathfinders	<b>16</b> MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY  7:00 Tres Dias Secretariat (Fellowship)	<b>17</b>  6:30 Prayer (Sanctuary) 6:30 Women's PM Study	<b>18</b>  6:30 WM Book Club (Potter's) 6:30 NA (Fellowship)	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 8:30 Men's Breakfast (lite) & Study (Fellowship)  Trailblazers Retreat/ Pilgrim Pines 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's) 6:30 Tres Dias Secuela (Fellowship)	<b>21</b>  Trailblazers Retreat
<b>22*</b> 11:30 Annual Meeting  Trailblazers return  4:00 CHYG	<b>23</b> 9:30 39ers Study (Fellowship)	<b>24</b>  6:30 Prayer (Sanctuary) 6:30 Women's PM Study	<b>25</b>  6:30 NA (Fellowship)	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 8:30 Men's Breakfast (lite) & Study (Fellowship)  6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's)	<b>28</b>
<b>29*</b>	<b>30</b> 9:30 39ers Study (Fellowship)	<b>31</b>  6:30 Prayer (Sanctuary) 6:30 Women's PM Study	*Sundays: 9:00 am Sunday School and D/C (Confirmation); 10:00 am worship; 11:15 Fellowship <b>Sunday worship services</b> are recorded and posted on the church website ( <a href="http://covchurchthomaston.org">covchurchthomaston.org</a> ). Worship bulletins, including announcements, also are posted on the church website.			



**Volunteers: . . . through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13b**

Coffee Fellowship sponsored by: Missions & Evangelism Board\*\*

**\*\*Only beverages are needed and are provided by the church. If you provide a snack, at least one that is gluten-free, please.**

NURSERY			ALTAR FLOWERS			LAY READERS:		
1/1	Margrit Saghafi Britta Saghafi	2/5	1/1	Poinsettias		1/1	Cantata	
1/8	Patricia Vigeant Megan Campbell	2/12	1/8	Communion, none		1/8	Peggy Schwetz	
1/15	Gina Whaley Lauren Whaley	2/19	1/15	Linda Lawrence		1/15	Jessica Bedosky	
1/22	Sue Sundell Erik Sundell	2/26	1/22	Deb Melvin		1/22	Gina Whaley	
1/29	Christy Barrett Savannah Acevedo		1/29			1/29	Ann Ryan	
			2/5	Communion, none		2/5		
			2/12	Linda Chandon		2/12		
			2/19			2/19		
			2/26	Cathy Fredlund		2/26		

**Sunday School Staff**

K &-Pre-K Patricia Vigeant, Grace Duke	3-4 Ruth Hopkins Drew Conlon		
1-2 Lori Vigeant	5-6 Margrit Saghafi		

**Youth Staff**

CHYG (Grades 9-12) Jessica Bedosky, Beth Campbell, Christie Grabherr	D/C (Grades 7-8) Sarah Morton, Pastor Gary Freimuth	Trailblazers (Grades 4-6) Jessica Bedosky, John Bedosky	Pathfinders (Grades 1-3) Brenda Tousignant, Linda Lawrence
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**Birthdays and Anniversaries**

Birthdays				Anniversaries	
1	Gordon Decker	10	Jamie Weisman	28	Andrew Grabherr
2	Lauren Whaley	11	Judy Elwood	29	Wayne Hurlbert
3	Craig Morton	16	Mary Butkevich	29	David Roaix
6	Denise Merrill	19	Jim Tillow		
9	Jon Weisman	24	Morgan Sanson	1	Sandy & Darrell Blshop

**Connections:**

- Interim Pastor and Congregational Care Pastor: Gary Freimuth (study) 860 283-9146, (c) 860 307-1547, (h) 860 283-4540, or ggfreimuth@optonline.net
- Church Chair: John Bedosky: jbedosky@outlook.com or 203 770-5304
- Treasurer: Lori Vigeant: lori\_a\_vigeant@sbcglobal.net or 860 484-4941
- Office "Churchmouse" Ruth Johnson: cmouse@covchurchthomaston.org or 860 605-8040 (Office: 860 283-5071)
- Meal Coordinator: Sandra Dunn; 860 483-2015 or daytondunn@mac.com
- Prayer Coordinator: Mary Butkevich; 860 514-4343 or marybutkevich@gmail.com