

The Covenant Contact

May 2024

Belonging



God created us to belong, both to him and to one another. But our pride drove us far away, both from him and from one another. Now Jesus is bringing us back, both to him and to one another.

Maybe you won't know what the Heidelberg Catechism is, unless you grew up in a Presbyterian church or in a church that emphasizes Reformed theology. It's a Protestant confessional document formed as a series of questions and answers, used in teaching Calvinist (as in John Calvin) Christian doctrine. The very first question is "What is my only comfort in life and death?" The answer has always stayed with me: "My only comfort in life and death is that I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ."

The rest of the answer goes on to explain the gospel – that when Jesus died and paid the price for our sins with his blood. It's a beautiful expression of a powerful truth: we belong to God. For a Christian, this means submission and surrender to the Lord's will for our life. But it also means being in a relationship with him that is reciprocal. This is expressed in both the Old and New Testament by way of "covenant" – where God initiates with us and we respond.

In other words, God is not a far-from-us, pie-in-the-sky God that isn't involved in our lives. He initiates with his love, with nudges from the Holy Spirit, with his Word, and in a variety of other ways. This part of our faith, belonging to God and being in a responsive relationship with him, seems to be a little easier for us to live out than that second part of belonging expressed in the Bible: that we belong to one another.

Romans 12:4-5 reminds us of this:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Paul explains what it looks like a few verses later: *Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.* (v. 10). Later it says to bless, to rejoice with, to live in harmony. In other places, like Romans 15, Paul exhorts us to accept one another, to admonish one another. In 1 Corinthians and Galatians, we are called to care for and serve one other – and also not to bite and devour each other, or pass judgment. In Colossians, we are told not to lie to one another, in James, not to grumble against each other – I could go on and on. It's all over Scripture how to live as those who belong to one another. But that does not make it easy. It just means we are compelled and called to do so by the One we belong to.

I want to be clear about what this is and isn't. It means our American individualism is something we must set down. This is part of our culture in this country, and, while there are so many things to love and celebrate about being American, living as though we don't belong to one another and that what we do doesn't affect one another is a lie. We must set down that lie.

Belonging to each other shouldn't be something to fear. The heart of our denomination lies in four words: "We are better together." To truly live that out, it's worth examining the Scripture ("Where is it written?") to see all the ways it's prescribed for us to live in community with each other. Though it's hard and even scary, it's also better, because we believe in a God who wants what is better for us.

In Christ, Pastor Stephanie

(More Scriptures on this: John 13:34, Romans 14:13 and 19, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11, Romans 15:5-7, Galatians 5:13, 6:2, Colossians 3:13 and 16, 1 Peter 4:9, 5:5, Philippians 2:3-4, Hebrews 3:13, James 4:11, 5:9 and 16. And all of Romans 12 and Ephesians 4.)

Sanctuary Screens

Last June we approved installing screens in the sanctuary and plans are moving forward. While funds have been coming in, we still are approximately \$3,000 short of what we need to complete the project (equipment, wiring, software, etc.). The total project will be about \$10-11K. We want to do this the right way to maximize usage for music, presentations, sermon support, and much more. So that everyone can have a part in this project and to help unify us as we move forward, please consider giving towards the project. Any amount will be appreciated. Mark your gift for "Technology-Screens." Contact John Bedosky, Jay Fredlund or Pastor Stephanie for questions.

Christian Education

- **Zumba** (exercises set to lively music) with a licensed instructor are in the Potter's House, starting May 6, 6:00 pm-7:00 pm, and running for 5 weeks (5/6, 13, 20, 6/3, 10). Each session is \$8 per person. Contact Mary Butkevich for more information or to ask about possible child care.
- **Vacation Bible School:** The CE board is forming a committee to plan VBS for the week of August 12. Contact a member of the CE board (Mary Butkevich, Grace Duke, Brenda Tousignant, Drew Conlon, Patricia Vigeant, Susan Sundell or Ruth Hopkins) if you are willing to help plan for VBS. Thank you.
- **Sunday School:** We need a few more Sunday school teachers for the fall. While it's several months away, we need to plan ahead to be sure all our classes are fully staffed. If this is something the Lord is nudging you to do, contact a CE board member (see above). Thank you.

Summary: Board Meeting of April 14

The new Purpose Team, pulled together by the Diaconate to consider the church's purpose has begun meeting.

General Fund offerings through 14 weeks are \$51,075.56. This is over anticipated budget because the church has received two large unusual donations to the General Fund totaling \$9,000. Quickbooks is moving to an online format only. We are gathering what's required to migrate our records to the online system by May 31.

The Trustees have been authorized for an amount over their repairs budget to pay for repairs due to a water leak in a classroom ceiling and to address future needs in 2024.

Any future requests to hold services (such as funerals or weddings) which are officiated by a pastor other than the church's own will be authorized or denied by the Church Board.

The Diaconate is making some changes to the order of worship. A request to reinstall the American flag in the altar area has been denied as not being in accord with having everything in the altar area direct all our worship toward God. The church will hand out free water for the town's summer music program in the Seth Thomas park. The pew Bibles will be replaced with new ones using the same version in Pastor Stephanie's sermons. The congregation may donate toward the new Bibles. The old Bibles will be offered to the congregation; any left unclaimed will be donated.

A Vacation Bible School committee is being formed for VBS the week of August 12, format and structure to be decided by the committee. The last day of Sunday School is June 9.

Carnations be given to the church's women on Mother's Day. Sue Sundell will attend UNITE in Ohio in the summer with two of our youth. A church picnic is planned for August. The CE Board is considering changes to the Sunday School program. Offering a Zumba class is still planned.*(continued)*The M&E Board plans a second parenting meeting on August 9, perhaps on coping skills; how to know children are having problems; school issues, and how to navigate them; possibly at a location

outside the church. The church will be open from 9 a.m. to noon on Thursday, May 2, the National Day of Prayer. The Teen Challenge Adult group will return on June 23.

Items for the WM Mother's Day collection for Carolyn's Place are due by May 5. Another book swap is planned for Saturday, May 18, as well as the annual graduates' dinner in June.

Plans finally are in place to install the TV screens in the Sanctuary. Fundraising will be done through June 2, equipment purchased by July 15, and the system used in worship by September 1. Volunteers, including some of the youth, will be trained to run the system and the software. Some funds already have been donated, with about \$3,000 still needed. Additional equipment in other locations will be addressed after the main parts of the program are working.

Pastor Stephanie and Mary Butkevich will represent the church at the East Coast Conference annual meeting in Manchester on April 26 and 27.

The Prayer Chain list will be revised. Members will be asked to respond affirmatively if they want to continue on the list. People who do not respond will be dropped.

John Bedosky, Chair

Diaconate

Your Prayers Requested: Please keep praying for the Church Purpose Team, which is working on discerning the Lord's voice in the work he is setting before us. Your prayers are an important contribution to this process. Contact Cathy Fredlund with any questions.

Women Ministries



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

- **Kitchen Detail:** Tuesday, May 7, at 9:00 am.
- **Book Swap:** Bring a book. Take a book: 10:00 am on May 18 at Cathy Fredlund's house.
- **Book Club** next meets on Tuesday, May 21 at 6:30 pm in the Potter's House. The book to read is ***The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*** by Jonas Jonasson.
- **Backyard Picnic Potluck:** Monday, June 3, 6:00 pm at Ann Ryan's home. Bring a dish to share!

Missions and Evangelism

- **Teen Challenge will be visiting on June 23:** This is a service of hope and second chances. Many in our society struggle with various kinds of addictions. Reach out to those in your circle of influence who may benefit from this service and invite them! More information to follow on Teen Challenge and what they do for adolescents and adult men and women.

Youth Groups

Pathfinders is for students in Grades 1-3. Leaders are Brenda Tousignant and Lori Vigeant.



Trailblazers is for students in Grades 4-6.

We need a leader for this group

D/C (Discipleship/Confirmation) is for students in grades 7-8, a two-year journey, exploring who God is and what God means in our life. All junior high students are welcome to attend. Leaders are Pastor Stephanie and Jessica Bedosky.



Sunday mornings, 9:00 am

CHYG (Covenant High Youth Group) is for all students in grades 9-12. The leaders are Beth Campbell, Sue Sundell, and Gina Whaley.

5/10 6:30 Regular CHYG (Fellowship Room)
5/19 4:00 Regular CHYG



CHYG UNITE: 7/15-19/2024 @ Bowling Green State University, OH. Contact Beth Campbell or a member of the CE Board to say you plan to go (UNITE Registration must be done by the church as a group).

Liturgical Dance is for girls in grades 1-8. The leader is Jessica Bedosky. Practice times vary and are in the Sanctuary.



5/31 4:30-6:00
6/1 9:30-11:30

Banquet of Blessing

- **Need:** macaroni & cheese (the kind you don't need to buy milk & butter for), crackers, snack/granola bars, gallon storage bags, sandwich bags.
- **No perishable foods. Check expiration dates** We can't give away out of date food.
- **No canned green beans, mixed vegetables or vegetarian vegetable soup right now.**

Prayer Chain

Contact Prayer Coordinator Mary Butkevich 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.

Crafty Fridays

In the Potter's House, 6:00-8:00 pm. 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.

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



May 2024

(Rev 5/1/2024)

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
<p>*Sundays: 9:00 am Sunday School for Grades Pre-K-6 and Discipleship/Confirmation for Grades 7-8 10:00 am Worship; 11:15 Fellowship Sunday worship services are recorded and posted on the church website (covchurchthomaston.org). Worship bulletins, which include the weekly announcements, also are posted on the church website.</p>			1	2 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (Church open 9:00-2:00) 6:30 Bible Study (Potter's House) 7:30 NA Subcommittee (Gathering Room)	3	4
5* Carolyn's Place items due 11:30 M & E (Youth Rm)	6 10:45 39ers (Fellowship) 6:00 Zumba (Potter's House)	7 9:00 Kitchen Detail 6:30 CE (Gathering Room) 6:30 Prayer (Church Office)	8 6:30 NA (Fellowship)	9 6:30 Bible Study (Potter's House)	10 CHYG 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)	11
12* MOTHER'S DAY 11:30 Diaconate (Conf Rm)	13 10:45 39ers (Fellowship) 6:00 Zumba (Potter's House)	14 6:30 Prayer (Church Office)	15 6:00 Purpose Team (Conference Room) 6:30 NA (Fellowship)	16 6:30 Bible Study (Potter's House)	17 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House) 6:30 Tres Dias Secuela (Fellowship)	18 10:00 WM Book Swap (Cathy Fredlund's)
19* 11:30 Church Board (Gathering) 4:00 CHYG	20 10:45 39ers (Fellowship) 6:00 Zumba (Potter's House) 6:30 Tres Dias Secretariat (Fellowship)	21 6:30 WM Book Club (Potter's House) 6:30 Prayer (Church Office)	22 6:00 Purpose Team (Conference Room) 6:30 NA (Fellowship)	23 6:30 Bible Study (Potter's House)	24 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)	25 9:30 "Chosen" Group (Esme's & Ruby's)
26* 11:30 Trustees (Conference Room)	27 MEMORIAL DAY	28 6:30 Prayer (Church Office)	29 6:30 NA (Fellowship)	30 3:30 Children's Sewing Lessons (Fellowship) 6:30 Bible Study (Potter's House)	31 4:30-6:00 Liturgical Dance (Sanctuary) 6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)	(6/1) 9:30-11:30 Liturgical Dance (Sanctuary)

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

Coffee Fellowship sponsored by: Diaconate **

****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:		
5/5	Gina Whaley Lauren Whaley	6/2	Courtney Ayer	5/5	Communion, none	5/5	Ann Ryan	
		6/9	Cathy Fredlund Haley Morton	5/12		5/12	Ted Ryan	
5/12	Sue Sundell			5/19		5/19	Liz Montambault	
		6/16	Patricia Vigeant Megan Campbell	5/26	Ruth Johnson	5/26	Peggy Schwetz	
5/19	Christy Barrett Savannah Acevedo			6/2	Communion, none	6/2	Dawn Roaix	
		6/9		6/9		6/9	Dave McClay	
5/26	Lori Vigeant	6/23	Gina Whaley Lauren Whaley	6/16		6/16	Jessica Bedosky	
				6/23		6/23	Gina Whaley	
		6/30	Mary Butkevich	6/30		6/30	Ann Ryan	

Sunday School Staff

K &-Pre-K Grace Duke	3-4 Margrit Saghafi	7-8 (D/C) Pastor Stephanie, Jessica Bedosky
1-2 Lori Vigeant	5-6 Ruth Hopkins	

Youth Staff

CHYG (Grades 7-12) Beth Campbell Sue Sundell, Gina Whaley		Trailblazers (Grades 4-6)	Pathfinders (Grades 1-3) Brenda Tousignant, Lori Vigeant
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Liturgical Dance (Girls, grades 1-8) Jessica Bedosky, Peggy Schwetz, Britta Saghafi

May Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays	13 Elin Saghafi	26 Drew Conlon	Anniversaries
1 Nick Samela	14 Terry Breen	26 Ruth Johnson	14 Michele & Bill Dayton
4 Stan Hurlbert	15 Amy Bond	28 Cathy Fredlund	17 Jen & Nick Samela
5 Linda Chandon	17 Stephanie Nelson	28 Cheryl Morton	28 Jessica & John Bedosky
7 Gunnar Barrett	22 Willow Bothroyd	29 Jamie Saghafi	29 Kim & Tom Duffany
7 Alexa Sanson	22 Beth Campbell	31 Michele Dayton	
12 Ryan Hurlbert	25 Liz Montambault		

Connections:

- Pastor: Stephanie Nelson: pastor@covchurchthomaston.org or 860-283-9146 (study)
- Church Chair: John Bedosky
- Diaconate Chair: Cathy Fredlund
- Treasurer: Ken Hopkins
- Office "Churchmouse" Ruth Johnson: cmouse@covchurchthomaston.org
Office/Kitchen: 860-283-5071
- Meal Coordinator: Sandra Dunn
- Prayer Coordinator: Mary Butkevich