

Our Newsletter

A PUBLICATION OF C.C. HANCOCK AND COVENANT UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES

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February 2 is Groundhog Day, a day when local dignitaries will gather at dawn on Gobbler's Knob in Pennsylvania, to receive Punxsutawney Phil's proclamation about the end of winter and the coming of spring. It's a fun affair that has spawned a cottage industry of special events surrounding the day. It even became the centerpiece of a movie of the same name.

In the movie, Bill Murray plays Phil Connors, a TV weatherman who, while covering the annual Groundhog Day ceremony, is caught in a time loop. He repeatedly relives the same day, Groundhog Day. He can't break the cycle until he learns how to be a better person by getting in touch with his feelings and the feelings of others. In the end, he does learn and there is a happy ending.

An astute viewer of the movie begins to understand what Phil Connors needs to do to break the loop, but the character just doesn't get it! Over and over again, he relives the day without learning his mistakes.

Art imitates life. We, too, can find ourselves in a loop of repeated patterns. We do the same things again and again and question why nothing changes. We wonder why we can't catch a break! On some level we know we need to modify our actions; yet, we irrationally hope for a different result without making the necessary adjustments.

Christianity is all about transformation as it calls us to new life in Jesus. Our faith leads us to self-examination and reflection. It asks us to claim who we are and decide what is most important to us.

One way to get help on your journey of faith is to be a part of a small group of people who you can draw close to, close enough to share who you really are. This kind of trust group does not form overnight; it takes time and not every group is right for every person. This is why the church tries to offer a variety of small group opportunities.

As we approach Lent, I encourage you to participate in a small group. It might be one affiliated with the church or maybe a para-church group. It might be an existing group or it could be a new group you help to form. You might even consider hosting a group of your own that will begin by studying *Grounded in Prayer* during the Lenten season.

I encourage you to create a new cycle of drawing close to God through a small group that will help you grow spiritually. If you need help locating or starting a group, feel free to ask any of the pastors for assistance, we will be glad to help.

Grace & Peace, *Pastor Jim*

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It asks us to claim who we are and decide what is most important to us.

Church Family News

Hospitalized: Irene Bepete at Springfield Hospital.

At Home: Kurt Feldman, Beth Folkomer, Jim Parmiter, Dean Roth

Married on January 5 at Covenant Church: **Kathryn-Cristina Dinkelacker** and **Samuel Segal**. Following their marriage, Kathryn and Sam are changing their last name to Swan.

Received into membership at Covenant on January 20: Bill Hermann.

In Memoriam: Evelyn Fisher Gill – December 6, 2018
Mary E. Wagner – January 5, 2019

Christian Sympathy is extended to Nan Armond following the death of her sister, Jane Huber, on January 2; and to Lisa and Jessica Pologruto following the death of Lisa's sister and Jessica's aunt, Suzanne, on January 11.



Notes of appreciation

"It was sure a wonderful surprise to receive the altar flowers for my birthday. I am truly blessed to be a member of Covenant Church. Thank you so much." – Gilda Myers

"What a wonderful surprise I had the day after my birthday! The flowers are so beautiful and in a place where I can see them from every place in my "living" room! I can never thank you enough for sending them to Plush Mills, they have made many other people smile and enjoy seeing them. As the flowers have reached their peak I've given some of the aides a rose to take home. They're spreading more pleasure and happiness than just for me. Thank you for such a wonderful gift."

"May God bless each and every one and may the days ahead be the best." Sincerely, – Nan Armond

"I want to thank Covenant for sending the lovely flowers for my 96th birthday. The arrangement with red roses and baby breath is still lovely. Thank you." – Mavis Berdan



Dear wondrously generous people of Covenant United Methodist Church,

Thank you so much for your spectacularly generous donation of toys for the children living in the Eliza Shirley Shelter. They were given out by Santa at our annual Christmas party at Arch Street United Methodist accompanied by some carol singing, which was a big hit.

You were so generous that we were also able to take many toys to the Nationalities Service Center, 1216 Arch Street, where refugee families received them. They were so grateful to have gifts for their children for the holidays.

You have made many children and their families happy. Thank you.

Gratefully yours,

Margaret Harris

Arch St. United Methodist Church, Philadelphia



- **BOY SCOUT SUNDAY:** Boy Scout Cub Pack 240 meets at Hancock Church. They will attend services and host brunch for the congregation on **Boy Scout Sunday, February 10**. The Scouts cook and serve a wonderful meal after worship. Please let the Hancock office know if you would like to attend so the Scouts can get a count.
- **MISSION TRIP:** The Hancock Mission Team will be in Mexico from February 17 through February 24. They will be there helping to build a church for local families. As always, they are taking supplies with them to distribute to school children. We are asking for donations of yellow #2 Ticonderoga pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners, white socks, and toothbrushes. Look for the specially-labeled suitcases in both Hancock and Covenant Churches and place your donated items there.
- **LUGGAGE FUND:** When those Mission Trip donations are packed and taken with the Team, the extra luggage fees get expensive. To help cover the cost, Hancock is holding a bake sale to raise some extra cash. Many thanks to Judy Young for providing delicious baked goods. There will also be special RED envelopes in Hancock's narthex if you would like to make a cash donation to the luggage fund.
- **MANY THANKS** from the Clergy and Staff for the very generous Christmas gifts. It is our pleasure and honor to serve such a kind and loving congregation.
- **WINTER FOOD DRIVE:** Your donations of non-perishable foods will help keep the local food bank stocked through the cold months. You may bring items at any time.

From Pastor Janet K. Hess, Associate

As I write this, suddenly it is only a few weeks until I and three others from this area will leave for Getsamani, Mexico on our mission trip. Under the auspices of Discovery Service Projects (based in Doylestown), we will join others in constructing a church for an established congregation. The church will be built of cement blocks, reinforced with rebar, and covered with a cement roof, and it will be strong enough to serve as a hurricane shelter.

We will take with us, in our luggage, toothbrushes, children's white socks, Ticonderoga pencils, erasers and sharpeners. These items will be given out in "goodie bags." Additionally we will take with us 50 "Food Bags." These tote bags are available for \$12 each and decorated here before we pack them. In Mexico the bags will be filled with rice, beans, corn meal, and powdered milk, and given to the hungry. The contents of one bag will feed a family of four for one week. BAG DECORATING will take place at Hancock Church, on Sunday, February 3, at noon. Contact Pastor Janet for more information.

We are thankful for your support: prayers, donations of items, purchasing and decorating food bags, contributions to second bag luggage fees.

February 17-24 – Mexico Mission Trip

Volunteers: Pastor Janet Hess, Nancy Thomas, Janet Barrow, Gladys Wiesenborn

Small Group

At Riddle Village (where I live), I am blessed to teach a weekly Bible Study on Thursdays, at 1 p.m., in the Studio. During February our theme is the Book of I Peter. ALL ARE WELCOME.

Pastor Janet Hess announces her retirement

After 36 years of serving in appointive ministry, the Rev. Janet K. Hess has announced she is re-retiring at the end of the conference year. She first retired in 2005, but soon answered the Bishop's call to serve the CC Hancock Church in Springfield. Now, after 14 years of service at Hancock (one of which was split with Covenant), she has decided the time is right to again retire at the end of the conference year.

The members of both CC Hancock and Covenant wish Pastor Janet all the best in this new phase of life. Before her re-retirement becomes official, we will celebrate her ministry among us.

Thank you, Pastor Janet, for your years of faithful service to Christ through the ministry of the United Methodist Church!



Special Session of the CC Hancock Church Conference

A special session of the Hancock Church Conference has been called for **March 10** to discern and vote on the future of the church. This will be a very important meeting and every professing member is invited to attend with both voice and vote. The meeting will be chaired by our District Superintendent, the Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm and will be held following the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

February Worship Services at Hancock

CC Hancock Sunday morning worship at 10:30 a.m.

February 3 we will have the opportunity to draw close to Jesus through the sacrament of Holy Communion as we continue to discern God's will for the Church.

February 10 is the day Pastor Kevin will lead a service of consecration for our mission team headed to Mexico. Be sure to be present to bless Pastor Janet and the team as they prepare to share the good news of Jesus Christ and build a new church in Mexico.

February 17 Pastor Jim will be preaching a message about happiness based on the Beatitudes as recorded by Luke in the 6th chapter. Are you happy? Realize God intends for you to be happy!

February 24 Pastor Kevin returns to bring the message of the day as we continue to discern the way forward both for the denomination which will be meeting in General Conference and the way forward for CC Hancock Church in particular.

March 3 is Transfiguration Sunday. Our gospel reading will be from Luke 9:28-43a, which tells the story of Jesus' encounter with both Moses and Elijah on a mountain top. The story ends with a warning that Jesus will not be with the disciples forever in an earthly sense. What does this story have to say to us today?

February Worship Services at Covenant

Covenant Sunday morning worship at 8:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.

On the Christian calendar we are in the “season after Epiphany”, otherwise known as “Ordinary Time” when the liturgical color is green. This is one of two ordinary seasons. (The other is the “season after Pentecost” or what we often call “Kingdomtide.”) This season of ordinary time ends when the Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday, which falls on March 6 this year. For the rest of this season our preaching schedule will focus on the “Lectionary” readings rather than a sermons series.

February 3 our focus will be on Luke 4:14-30. We will be exploring the dangers of simply following the crowd and ignoring what is right in the sight of God. We will also have the opportunity to draw close to Jesus through the sacrament of Holy Communion.

February 10 will give us the chance to see how Jesus sometimes encounters us in the ordinariness of life. In the reading from Luke 5:1-11, Jesus encounters a couple of fishermen, engages their services to preach from their boat and then helps them with a record haul of fish. While Jesus may not climb into our boat, how can we recognize his presence in the ordinary times of our lives?

February 17 is Boy Scout Sunday at Covenant. Not only will we welcome the members of Troop 512 and their families into our midst, we will also celebrate the baptism of Logan McManus, son of Kyle and Laura McManus, during the second service. This service will be led by our own Eagle Scout, the Rev. Kevin Rutledge.

February 24 our featured gospel reading will be Luke 6:27-38 where Jesus preaches a powerful message about how we ought to live. How would life be different if each of us lived in accordance with this teaching? Are we willing to give it a try?

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Covenant Building Project Update

As of this writing ATT is making progress on the new church tower on the Kingswood building that will conceal all the electronics of the new cell tower. New steel is being attached to the existing structural steel that supports the roof. This will be used to secure the tower to the building.

Additional good news to share is that the first three months of rent has been received and should be on track to arrive each month.

The permits for the elevator and other renovations have been applied for and are winding their way through the system. We are hoping to break ground in early February. The first thing scheduled is digging the foundation for the new elevator; if the weather is unfavorable for digging, work will begin on the inside of the building.

Dinner/Auction Cancellation

The Annual Dinner/Auction will not be held this spring because of the schedule for the renovation of Fellowship Hall. Watch the newsletter and the bulletins for other events we are planning to promote fellowship and to raise funds to support our ministries and missions. If you have items for the auction, don't despair – the team is working on alternatives. Please contact John or Gail Hodge if you have any questions.

Retirement Announcement

After 25 years of faithful service as Covenant's Data Management Coordinator, Barb Cadge is retiring on March 28. While we will miss her and her gifts in the church office, we are happy to know she will still be part of the Covenant congregation. The Staff-Parish Relations Team is planning to honor Barb at a reception on March 24, following the 10:45 service.

We are looking to fill this position with someone who has bookkeeping knowledge and attention to detail, able to work up to 15 hours per week. Resumes should be sent to Barb Ellixson at bee6231@msn.com. Please share this job posting with others you know who may be interested.

My Calling! Middle School Mission Trip

Calling all Middle School Students! This year we will be heading back to Yardley, PA for our middle school mission trip **July 14-18, 2019**. Last year we visited nursing homes, food banks, farms, and even groomed some horses that are used with special needs children. We will join over 100 other students from the area to live out our calling to be a blessing to others. This year, we are looking at the possibility of going tubing after the mission experience ends on Thursday morning. I don't know the full price yet, but I wanted to make sure you got this on your calendar!
– Pastor Kevin

New Year, New You

Now that we are moving into the second month of this year there may be some resolutions you thought of and said to yourself before last year came to an end. Maybe these resolutions center on making changes in your mental, physical or spiritual life.

Have you or are you contemplating a new way of living? Thoughts on where to start or what to do to make this happen can be challenging and often times daunting. It seems sometimes we spend more time making excuses why we can't do it or delay doing it until eventually we talk ourselves out of the things we really do desire.

If this sounds like you, don't give up hope; we've all been there. I am here to encourage all of us who are or have been in this position so many times and once again find ourselves standing at the same crossroad.

It is never too late to invest in you. Feed that desire to

create a better version of yourself – one that creates a

new sense of wellbeing, power, and purpose, one that defines your life in ways better than you could possibly imagine.



Here at the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Greater Philadelphia we have experienced counselors who are available to assist you on the journey. Whether you are looking for self-improvement, or dealing with issues concerning anxiety, depression, loss and grief, bereavement, age transitions, relationship issues, marriage and family issues, or other concerns, we are here willing and available to help you in any way you need.

So, give me a call and I will be more than happy to connect with you. My name is Ms. Valerie Latney and my number is (610) 981-1288. Let's explore what a new year and a new you can look like.



February Life Center Dinner

Every night of the week volunteers from area churches, synagogues, and temples provide a hot and nutritious meal to the residents of the Life Center in Upper Darby, as well as those in need in the surrounding communities. Covenant Church is privileged to participate in this evening meal program. Our next time to provide and serve dinner at the Life Center is **February 8**.

We can use your help! There are many ways to participate with different levels of time commitment. If you like to cook, you can prepare a casserole (recipe and pan will be provided) or bake brownies at home. You can help by buttering loaves of bread or buying bags of salad mix or iced tea. You can supply items such as peanut butter, jelly, snacks, or apples for the "To Go Lunches" that we also provide. We also need volunteers to make 30 lunches on Thursday, February 7, and six to eight volunteers to transport and serve the dinner on February 8. To help, sign up in Wesley Hall or at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080b4fa5a922a13-february1>

A HEARTfelt thank-you...

The 2018 "Gifts from the Heart" project was a pleasing success! Thanks to your generosity, this Christmas season a total of \$1,680 was distributed to these mission ministries: **Appalachia Service Project** (\$325), **Life Center of Eastern Delaware County** (\$285), **Nutrition Promotion Consultancy Service in Nepal** (\$365), **Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry in Prospect Park** (\$415), and **Mpasa Congo Pediatric Clinic** (\$290).

Huge thanks to all who participated and gave these meaningful gifts to loved ones, friends and co-workers. Many people from all walks of life will be helped as a result of this project. What a wonderful way to celebrate the birth of our Lord!

Please know if you are ever interested in card for a different occasion – birthday, anniversary, or other special events – please contact the church office. We will be happy to prepare special cards as requested. Thank you again ... YOU have helped to make a difference!



Preschool registration underway

Covenant Nursery School and Children's Morning Out are currently enrolling for our 2019-200 school year. If you or someone you know is interested, please call for more information at 610-328-9085.

Dawn Hanrahan, Director

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible school will be coming quickly. We are considering the weeks of July 8-12 or July 22-26. Although we are uncertain exactly what the state of construction will be on the whole campus, we do know for sure we will not be able to use Epworth rooms in our rotations. The VBS themes this year vary and some are better than others.

We have seen a steady decline in participants over the last three years and perhaps it is time to break the VBS mold. There are other format options we might consider if we have the help.



First: we could do VBS in the Park over a weekend or on multiple Saturdays. We would set up shop in a local park and invite everyone to participate in the games, lessons, and snacks. The benefit of this type of program is that it literally pushes us out of our comfort zones and into the community.

Second: we could do a family missions-based VBS. I know many of the families who participate in our VBS participate in other church VBS programs during the summer. This keeps their children entertained and gives them some time each day to get things done. A family missions approach to VBS has children and adults from a family go to a location and do mission work together. A colleague of mine from seminary switched to this model and while she saw a decrease in the total number of participants, those who were involved had a greater sense of spiritual growth than formats of years past.

Third: other ideas that you might dream up and present as an option. Sometimes it is good to break the mold and dive into the unknown. If you have a heart for children and seeing their faith begin to bud and blossom, you would be the perfect person to help VBS become something that leads to a deeper love of Jesus in both the participants and the leaders. Please contact me with your thoughts. – Pastor Kevin

Education Classes for all ages at Covenant Church

Sundays, 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

Nursery and Preschool (3 and under)
New Testament (pre-K – 1st grade)
Old Testament (2nd – 5th grade)
Middle/High School (6th – 12th grade)
Adult Short Course
Wired Word (adult study on current events)

Room 12 Epworth
Room 23 Epworth
Room 23 Epworth
Room 4 Kingswood
Room 2-3 Kingswood
Library

REVIVAL! – The Wesleyan lifestyle for today

How are you doing with your New Year's resolutions? Have you been eating healthier, exercising more? How about the health of your spiritual life? The Adult Short Course continues its exploration of the practice of discipleship for today using Wesley's nine "means of grace", or ways to get closer to God. All are welcome any Sunday at 9:15 a.m. through March 17 in Room 2 of the Kingswood Building.

Wired Word

All adults, post-high school on up, are invited to stop by the Covenant Church Library each Sunday at 9:15 a.m. for Wired Word--where we engage in thought-provoking and stimulating discussions about current events and relevant Scripture passages. In other words, how do we translate our Christian worldview into what's going on in the world we live in? How can we as Christians not only respond to current news, but how can we even influence it for the cause of Christ? If you're interested in giving Wired Word a try, just email Keith Bratz at wkbratz4@verizon.net, and each Thursday you'll receive that week's lesson. Or simply stop by the Library at 9:15 on Sunday. We hope you will join us!

The Midweek Study Groups

The Tuesday morning and Thursday evening study groups are always open to individuals from both our churches and the community.

The Tuesday group meets at 10:00 a.m. in Covenant's Wesley Hall, which is the gathering area adjacent to the sanctuary. It can be accessed without steps from Saxer Avenue; or, for those parking in the Covenant parking lot, through the courtyard and up two steps.

The Thursday evening group meets at 7:00 p.m. for study; however, you may choose to come at 6:30 for dinner. The dinner portion is open to everyone, whether you are part of the study group or not. This group meets in Room 2 of Covenant's Kingswood Building, the building located closest to the main portion of the parking lot.

Both groups are currently studying *Scripture and the Wesleyan Way*. For the Lenten season both will be exploring *Grounded in Prayer* which will tie in with the Lenten sermon series. Feel free to join either group on a short-term basis.

A Lenten Challenge

What would it feel like to know you are supporting life-changing ministries by setting aside a tenth of your income for the work of the church? Have you ever wondered how some people are able to give a tenth of their income to their church? This Lenten season Covenant Church will offer you a chance to participate in a challenge to tithe.

As a spiritual discipline for the Lenten and Easter season we are challenging everyone to offer a tithe (a tenth) of their income to the life-changing work of the church. The challenge is for just 90 days, beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 6, and continuing through Pentecost Sunday, June 9. If at the end of the 90 days, you don't feel you have been blessed or believe you can continue tithing you can feel free to resume your normal giving pattern.

As we approach Ash Wednesday please prayerfully consider your Lenten spiritual discipline. Will it be giving up something for Lent, will it include tithing to the work of Jesus Christ?

More information about the challenge will be offered in the March newsletter, in the weekly Update, as well as in weekly bulletins.

February

BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Dianne Pearce
- 2 – Jeannine Hurlock, Rebecca Hurlock, Logan Walters, Harry Yohn,
- 3 – Lucas Gluck, Danielle Hathaway, Chris Joiner, Smedley Ruth
- 4 – Pete Bunting, Nathan Ridgley
- 5 – Carol Jean Kenney, Barb Plank
- 6 – John Cutrufello, Karlei Mullen
- 7 – Barb Trakimas, Karen Williams
- 8 – Dan Apostolu
- 9 – James Sirleaf
- 10 – Stacey Rosser
- 11 – John Genzel
- 12 – Julia Bingaman, John Byrnes, Lucas Keiter, Dana Olive, Barbara Questa
- 13 – Georgia Apostolu, Emilee Arabea, Joseph Dieterle, Doug Hook, Ted Kemp, Allison Ranck
- 14 – Jack Hodges, Josh Miller, Nathan Salla
- 15 – Marisa Torh
- 17 – Jeanne Memoli
- 18 – Florence Mackiewicz, Ruth Van Leer
- 19 – Christian Hajjar
- 20 – Hope Ammerman, Kathie Smith
- 21 – Rita Doyle, Bob Drumheller, Steven Whitmore
- 22 – Blake Berquist, Dick Heintz
- 24 – Link Tanzio, Cara Vought
- 25 – Nancy Bonadio, Jared Plank
- 26 – Mark de la Vergne
- 27 – David de la Vergne, Beverly Grant, Christie Strayer
- 28 – Amy Dougherty, Matthew Gluck
- 29 – Alice Pacitti

Campfire Church Report

Campfire Church ran from September 23 to December 23. During that time, we met outside through mid-October and had around 48 unique individuals attend. On December 23, we made the difficult decision to take a break. This was due to declining attendance and a need to regroup and determine what is next. In the meantime, this is what we learned and how it relates to starting new services at Covenant:



- People are looking for alternative worship styles that give them a chance to participate in the service through conversation.
- People are looking for alternative worship where they are singing songs that sound like what they hear on the radio.
- It takes a core group of people to launch a service. It is unlikely that a new group of people who are not committed to the church in any way will be committed enough to plan and launch a new worship service. A core group of people from Covenant and Hancock who are passionate about helping people experience the love of Jesus Christ is needed to plan, launch, and then invite people to a new service.

Campfire church is/was a great experiment to try to reach people with an interesting service. Due to various reasons, including football season, we were unable to get lasting traction with new faces. Support from Covenant and Hancock started out incredibly strong as we began with an attendance of 24 and 30 people in the first two weeks. However, once that support waned, it was difficult to convince new people that something God-inspired was going on when attendance suddenly dropped to 8-9 people. Any future service will need to build up this core group of people who will pray together, plan together, invite others together, worship together, and even play together. There are many options for what Campfire Church can become. If you want to be a part of this conversation, please reach out to me at kevin.rutledge@covumc.com

Blessings,
Pastor Kevin

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Our Newsletter



February 2019

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**Your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.**

Psalm 139:14, NIV

