THE NEW COVENANT CONNECTION

www.newcov-church.org
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SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO PASS THE BALL

A Word from Your Pastor

Dear friends,

God chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. I Corinthians 1: 28

Very few people have made a bigger splash in their chosen profession than Michael Jordan. He entered the NBA in 1984 and averaged 28.4 points as a rookie. He led the league in scoring four of his first six seasons - but *he lacked what he wanted most - a championship.* Interestingly, when he began scoring fewer points and depending more on others, he finally got what he coveted.

In life, we all tend to want to be masters of our destiny in every situation. But too often we discover the reality that not all of life is under our control. A child's illness. Company problems. A downturn in the stock market. Conflict among neighbors and friends. Churches shrinking in membership.

The good news is that with TRUST IN GOD we are never powerless or helpless. The Apostle Paul was a formidable character: He had his day's equivalent of two doctoral degrees (law and theology); he was a religious zealot who followed the letter of the law to a "t" (Phil. 3: 6); he came from a wealthy and influential family (Phil. 3: 5). But it was when he discovered that ALL his efforts and abilities weren't enough that he truly became a powerful force for God. He helped launch the Christian faith and turn the world upside down.

And that's why he was quick to understand that, "whenever I am weak, then I am strong through Christ" (2 Cor.12: 10). That's why this great orator would point out, "My teaching and preaching were not with words of human wisdom that persuade people but with proof of the power that the Spirit gives" (I Cor. 2: 4).

God has blessed each of us with gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. But God also created us with the need to depend on him and each other consistently. Sometimes the GREATEST CHALLENGE in our lives is NOT TO TRY HARDER, BUT TO TRUST MORE IN GOD TO GUIDE US.

Over the past few months, as I have tried to discern how to have adequate health insurance while at the same time saving

~ *continued* ~

JANUARY 2024

A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR..1

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A Note From Our Pastor (Continued)

some money for the church, by going on Medicare and getting a supplement rather than continuing with the P.C.U.S.A.'s Board of Pensions health insurance. My head has reeled at listening to talking heads all telling me the opposite of what another one just told me. It has been difficult to discern the best path to take, and yet, I truly feel like God was leading me forward but I need to TRUST him completely and also seek wisdom from some of you.

Now my decision has been made and the church will save over $9,000 as a result and I believe somehow - someway - I will manage with God's help. But I have to tell you how grateful I am to be your partner in ministry. Because we have learned how to work together effectively, we are a strong team for God in this place and in this time. And I am full of gratitude and appreciation for this opportunity.

I want to share a poem with you that I came across recently which gets to the bottom of my recent feelings of thanksgiving for our ministry together. Thank you dear friends.

Your partner in ministry,

Carol

Tapestry of Joy...A Gift of Friendship
by Kimberly Rinehart and Georgia Rettmer

Because of you, I walk upon a rainbow trail and feel a song of laughter in my heart.

Because of you, I know comfort of a companion and the love of a friend.

Because of you, I've learned to speak with my heart and find peace in the healing power of silence.

I have seen more sunsets, made more memories, and felt more alive than I ever dared to believe possible.

I count our friendship as a gift to be treasured, and a blessing to be shared.

And I can reach out knowing that a caring heart will somehow always find me.

With you, I see how God can weave many different lives together and create a tapestry of joy.

And just because of you the sun feels warmer and small worries seem to fade...

For you have a way of showing me the things that really matter,

~ continued ~

A Note From Our Pastor (Continued)

I can see myself grow stronger in the presence of our friendship, and I'll be forever grateful just to have you in my life.
Your laughter warms my spirit like an old familiar song and your thoughtfulness surprises me with joy.
Our friendship always gives us room for honesty to grow and our fears can find a place to safely rest.
The times we spend together are like footprints in the sand washing gently into memories all too soon...
...and like the gentle winds of autumn, like the tenderness of spring, the seasons of our friendship will surround us.
When I think of all the people who have helped my heart to grow, my grateful thoughts will always be of you,
For our lives have grown together, our paths have intertwined and left the colors of our hearts forever changed.
And my silent prayer will always be that somewhere in their lives... everyone will have a friend like you.
I know true friendship is a gift that lasts forever and the quiet hands of time will make us strong.
Because of you, I dare to share my dreams and follow them... believing...
And my heart will always have a special place to feel at home.

Friends at NCPC -
I am very thankful for YOU!

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5 Our Daily Bread	6
7 Deacons' Mtg; Communion w/ special offering for ODB	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Trustee Mtg.	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Session Mtg.	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 Annual Congregational Mtg.	29	30	31			

EVERY SUNDAY—CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESUMES ON 1/7 @ 8:30 AM; WORSHIP AT 10 AM FOLLOWED BY FELLOWSHIP;
EVERY TUESDAY – CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN-PERSON AND ON ZOOM @ 10:30 AM
BELL CHOIR—CHECK WITH JENNY FOR DATES/TIMES

1/1 Donald Cooke's Birthday

1/5 First Friday @ Our Daily Bread

1/7 Baptism of the Lord Worship w/ communion & ODB Special Offering
Deacons' Meeting

1/12 Marcy Murphy's Birthday

1/14 Worship - 2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Trustee Meeting
Dorothy Burkley's Birthday

1/16 Alice Megonigal's Birthday
Ethan Stoecker's Birthday

1/21 Worship - 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
Session Meeting
George Wright's Birthday

1/28 Worship - 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Epiphany 1/6

Baptism of the Lord Sunday, 1/7

Officer Ordination/Installation Date TBD

Fellowship

DECEMBER

Christmas Wine and Cheese Party was held at the Shields' home and a great time was enjoyed by one and all. About 30 people attended and all the food was greatly appreciated. Some people enjoyed a wine tasting and everyone loved the time of fellowship and good food. Happy New Year!

JANUARY

We have 2 special events in January in addition to our regular Fellowship Times following worship. They are:

EPIPHANY OPEN HOUSE AT THE HOME OF THE FISHERS

202 Aberdeen Way, Townsend
Odessa National
Sunday, January 7th 2 - 5 PM

POST EPIPHANY OPEN HOUSE AT THE HOME OF PAT WRIGHT AND BARBARA MONTAZELLA

4110 Laughton Lane,
The Ponds at Bayberry South
Middletown
Saturday, January 13th 4 - 8 PM

COME ONE AND ALL AND ENJOY TIME TOGETHER!

Worship

THE ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SEASONS WERE ENJOYED BY ALL!

Many thanks to all who helped make our Advent and Christmas seasons beautiful and enjoyed. Thanks to those who decorated our sanctuary and Fellowship Building, our Advent Wreath speakers and candle-lighters, to our Lay Leaders, bell ringers, singers and drama folk. You all helped to touch our hearts and minds as we prepared for the birth of Christ and then welcomed him anew.

We had two wonderful services on Christmas Eve. At the 10 am service, we were honored with a medley of Christmas hymns by Bin and Linda Lee. In the evening, we had two pieces by the Bell Choir and a solo by Cheryl Shields along with communion and the candle lighting closing.

Please consider joining your friends to help ***un-decorate our sanctuary and Fellowship Building after worship on Jan. 7th***. Thanks for your help!

JANUARY IS FULL OF RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

Epiphany JAN. 6TH

Epiphany is the celebration of God's self-revelation to the world in Jesus Christ. The word "epiphany" means "appearance" or "manifestation" of God and has roots in the word for sunrise or dawn. In particular, we celebrate the revelation of God's promise and purpose to the nations of the world, as the magi came from the East to worship to the Christ child, and God's covenant of grace is extended to all who believe the good news of Christ Jesus. The symbolism of light is important: not only because of the star that guided the magi, but as it relates to the bright dawning of God's self-revelation in Christ.

Baptism of the Lord Sunday — JAN. 8TH

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus presents himself to John to be baptized in the Jordan. The heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove and we hear the voice of God: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (see Psalm 2:7).

At this festival of the Christian year, we not only remember Jesus' baptism, but we celebrate our own: the baptism we share with Christ. Accordingly, this Sunday is an appropriate time to celebrate the sacrament of baptism or the reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant. It also foreshadows the season of Lent, as Jesus was immediately driven into the wilderness for 40 days after his own Baptism.

We will also observe the Lord's Supper.

Outreach Ministry

Moving Forward With The Love Of Christ

The church and her people move forward toward meeting needs in the community. Pastor Carol and I will continue our *Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary* course, *Specialized Training in Community Engagement and Ministry Facilitative Leadership*. Unit 3 is scheduled for January through March. We are learning new ways to facilitate while moving in the community.

The possibility of continued growth in our community is predicted to continue for at least five more years. If true, Middletown will be larger than Wilmington and the largest community in Delaware. Now we see the construction in our own back yard.

Our two-food truck event in October was such a success that we will move forward to continue it. The Deacons plan to schedule the event on second Wednesdays in April, May and June. This is a wonderful way to reach out to the community in our parking lot. We can meet and listen to their needs and interests.

When a scribe asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the first all?" Jesus replied … *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these".*

These foundational commandments are at the heart of Jewish theology and life. It is clear that to love God and loving our neighbors are much more important than performing religious rituals.

All are invited to join in `Moving Forward in 2024 with the Love of Christ.'

Praise the Lord for opportunities to proclaim Jesus and his love!

Outreach Elder,

Beverly Cook

Love in Action

Clerk's Report

The Session's regular Stated meeting was held on December 17th. Danielle Sawyer's request to return her membership to New Covenant was accepted by the Session in a unanimous vote. This increases our official membership to 51.

The calendar for the Presbytery meetings for 2024 is as follows:

Bay Retreat: March 1-2 (Dewey Beach)
May 18th
September 21st
December 3rd

The Session approved the final budget for 2024 as presented by Barbara Bookhart, Stewardship/Finance Elder. In addition, it was approved to have Treasurer Paul Willbanks issue a check to pay the Per Capita bill for 2023 which had not yet been paid. The Per Capita assessment for 2024 will remain at $30 per member x (51).

Since Pastor Carol's status was changed from "Installed Pastor" to "Pastor" at the December Congregational Meeting, it is now up to the Session to vote on her terms of call after they vote to approve her as our Pastor. All of this occurred at the December meeting. In addition the Session voted to approve Paul Willbanks as Treasurer and Pat Wright as Clerk of Session for the 2024 year and the 2024 Communion Calendar.

The next session of Vital Congregations, with Pastor Nate Phillips will be held on Sunday, January 21st.

Our Annual Meeting will be January 28th following worship.

Yours in Christ,

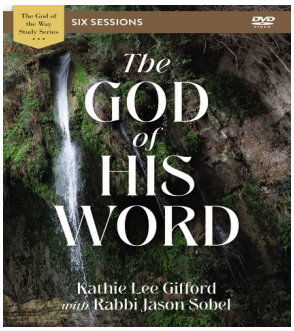
Pat Wright, Clerk

ALL ARE

WELCOME HERE

Christian Education Report

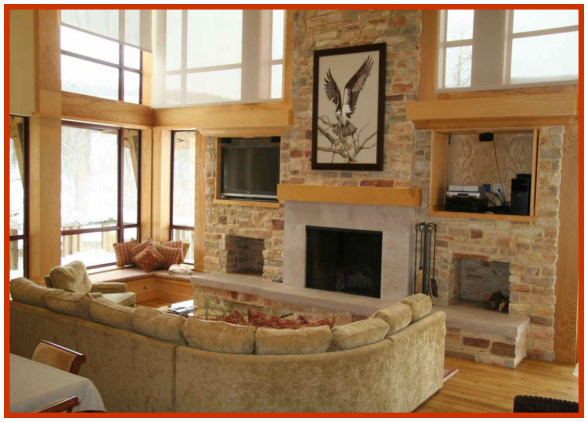
Weekly Christian Education Classes



We are on our final lesson of this series and will resume our Sunday morning (8:30 am in-person) and Tuesday morning classes (10:30 am in-person and by zoom) on Jan. 7th. The group seems to enjoy learning together and we are always open to have new people join us. We are currently seeking to discern our next curriculum. Let Jane or Carol know of your suggestions.

Grow your faith by ensuring the soil is rich and healthy - add lots of sun and rain - pray and study scripture - learn from your sisters and brothers - and share your knowledge and experiences with others.

If you are interested in participating in the planning of next year's Women's Retreat, contact Donna Casey and join the team. In any case, Save-the-Date for the retreat - April 19-21, 2024 at NorthBay Retreat Center in Elk Neck State Park.



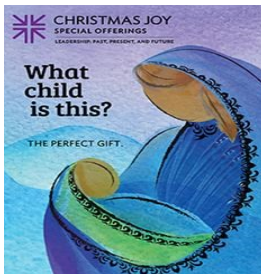
Mission Report

Our Daily Bread: We served 146 meals on First Friday, December 1st. We switched to our winter menu, Grilled Ham and Cheese sandwiches and hot soup and will use that menu through the spring. The Our Daily Bread Fund continues to cover the cost of preparing the meals.

Neighborhood House: We collected donations of nonperishable food items during December and we will continue to collect the following items that are in particularly short supply: Personal hygiene products [bath soap/body wash; toothbrushes, toothpaste, diapers (both adult and infant/child sizes), brush, comb, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion. (please, standard sizes not travel size)]; Toilet paper, tissues, paper towels; Peanut Butter and Jelly (medium size jars); Pasta and Pasta sauce; Tuna and Tuna Helper, hamburger Helper; Cereal; Mac and Cheese, canned meat, Spam; Pancake mix and syrup, snacks, cookies etc. In January we have the **"Souper Bowl"** campaign. Neighborhood House will be collecting soups of all kinds, cans, jars, packages, etc. You can bring your contributions to church and place in the Neighborhood House box. Jane Adams will deliver them during the month.

The Operation Christmas Child Thank you to all who gave shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse this past year. We anticipate an even greater response in 2024. We are planning a new event in 2024 - Christmas in July where we will actually pack some boxes. If you're out shopping, please be on the look-out for items we can pack. We can store them until July and really have a nice assortment of items to add to the shoe boxes! Should be a fun event!

The Christmas Joy special offering was received during the month of December.



We received $364. This offering goes to the Presbyterian Mission Agency to help the Board of Pensions' Assistance Program (50%) and to assist in leadership development and education at Presbyterian related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. (50%)

Frog Corner

F.R.O.G. CORNER: *Forever Rely on God*

Don't forget the meaning behind the acronym **R I B B I T :**
Revere, **I**nvite, **B**less, **I**nspire, and **T**rust in the Lord.

A Sunday School teacher began her lesson with a question, "Children of Christ, what do we know about God?"

A hand shot up in the air. "He is an artist!" said a kindergartener.

"Really? How do you know?" the teacher replied.

"You know - Our Father, who does art in Heaven"

It's a bit silly, but our five principles encapsulate the essence of the young kindergartener's innocent yet profound wisdom about God as an artist.

Revere: To revere the Lord is to hold Him in the highest esteem, just as we admire a great artist's masterpieces. Our hearts should swell with awe and admiration for God's creation, from the grandeur of mountains to the delicate intricacy of a butterfly's wings.

Invite: Much like an artist inviting us into their gallery, God invites us into his divine presence. He beckons us to seek him, know him, and experience his love and grace through prayer and worship.

Bless: God, the ultimate artist, blesses us with the gift of life and the beauty of his creation. God paints the world with colors of joy, love, and hope, showering us with blessings each day.

Inspire: Just as great art inspires us to see the world differently, the Lord's teachings inspire us to live better lives. His words in the scriptures guide us toward kindness, compassion, and understanding.

Trust in the Lord: Finally, we must trust in the Lord, as an artist trusts their vision. We must have faith that God's plans for us are perfect, even when we cannot see the full picture.

In the eyes of a child, God is indeed an artist, and the RIBBIT acronym reminds us to **revere** God's creations, **invite** God into our lives, count our **blessings** from God, be **inspired** by God's teachings, and **trust** in God's divine plan. Just as a painting tells a story, these principles weave a beautiful narrative of our relationship with the Almighty Creator.

Blessings,

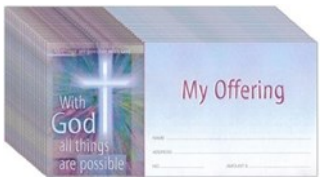
Georgia

Office Administrator

Trustee Report

The Trustee Meetings are open to all and is normally scheduled each month on the 2nd Sunday of each month following worship. Our next Trustee Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, 14 Jan 2024.

We are still looking for someone to take on weed whacking the parking lot with all the grass.



For 2024, you will be seeing plain envelopes to be used as your "Pledge Envelopes" in lieu of the professionally printed Pledge Envelopes at a higher cost and very few people used them. These envelopes will be marked and have a space for your Name, Date, Dollar amount, Check Number or Cash, and the purpose on each envelope. The purpose being, general offering, special offering for a purpose, Deacons Fund, Our Daily Bread, just to name a few.

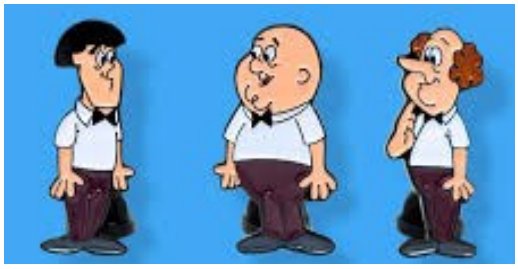
A new heater for the Sanctuary has been received and it has been installed. This is to replace one that is no longer serviceable. Keep in mind that some of our heaters are more than 20 years old and they do wear out.

The noise problem in our Fellowship Room is still a "Work in Progress", in that from all indications from church members and organizations that use our church, the noise problem has been reduced, we are in the next step to try and complete this issue. A Task Force consisting of Pam Leeson, Judy Cooke, Pat Wright, Barbara Montazella, and Carol Fisher met and have come up with the next phase of solving this problem. A few of them will be meeting with the trustees on 12/31 to finalize the plan. Then we will proceed.

The silk fence around our church property is in some area's about 5 feet inside the other property owners side and another area is about 20 feet inside their property. By looking at the silk fence, it will give you an idea as to where our Church Property line is.

On behalf of our trustee's, we would like to Wish Each And Every one of you a very Happy New Year!

Your Friendly Trustees,
Al Grimminger, Bill Shields, and Bob Megonigal



Personnel & Finance

CHRISTMAS LOVE OFFERING FOR OUR STAFF

We had a wonderful response to the Love offering for our staff and were able to gift them a generous gift for Christmas in appreciation for their service all year long. Thank you to all of you and especially Judy Cooke who was able to collect this offering while I was out of town. Although Pat Wright is unofficially on "our staff" we wanted her to know how much her volunteer work in the office is appreciated, so we gave her a gift card for her service. Thanks Pat!

We worked with the congregation and session to change the call for our pastor and adjusted her salary to recognize her getting her own medical insurance. We pray that this will be the right path for her and appreciate her willingness to help the church save some money.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year of ministry in 2024 with a staff that helps us attain our God-given potential!

Pam Leeson, Personnel Chairperson

A NOTE FROM OUR STAFF: *Please accept our thanks for your generous gift in the Christmas Love Offering. Each of us feels blessed and well appreciated! Thank you one and all!*

FINANCE

2024 Budget – The Stewardship Team, including Pastor Carol, Paul Wilbanks, Tom Kimble and me, met to discuss the budget for 2024. The budget presented to Session had income at $111,816, expenses at $127,964 leaving a deficit of $16,148.

Giving Envelopes – It was decided not to incur the cost of purchasing envelopes as we have done in the past. Pat Wright and I created a template for the giving envelopes and have printed new envelopes which are located in the back of the church. Feel free to take as many as you need.

Per Capita – Per Capita is a fee we pay the New Castle Presbytery for every member in our church. The fee for 2024 is $30 per member. Anyone willing to give to pay his/her per capita would be greatly appreciated. If you do choose to pay it, please note that on the envelope/check. Jan 21st is Per Capita Sunday.

Many thanks to you all,
Barbara Bookhart, Stewardship Chairperson