COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Please click here to view Covenants Worship Service, Sunday, Dec. 06:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCkRp1t3MnecoYXnds4X03A

THE COVENANTER

December 06, 2020

Member NE GEORGIA Presbytery, Synod of the South Atlantic, General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

As the Christmas season approaches with the New Year 'just around the corner' practicing generosity to help others brings delight to our hearts and to the holiday season. Someone has said, "The best way to catch the spirit of Christmas is to give it to someone else."

To help us restore life-giving balance, Covenant offers alternatives, so that giving can once again become the sign of the season which celebrates the gift of God's serving love, born in a stable in Bethlehem long ago. Below are descriptions of the special opportunities to give.

On page 2 of the publication are other benevolent opportunities to support along with a list of special offerings received during the year for your planning. If you wish you can make your check payable to: Covenant Presbyterian Church and designate how you want your contribution to be used.

Opportunities to give during Advent/Christmas

MEALS ON WHEELS - to be received in the month of December and at both Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion services sponsor persons who receive a daily meal through the "Meals on Wheels" program. The annual cost (including food & expenses) to provide meals for one person is $1,848.00. Last year's offering enabled Covenant to support 7 older Athenians for this year. The congregation is encouraged to give generously as a way to participate with our members and friends making deliveries: Jim and Jere Bowden, Marilyn Brown, Phil Hale, Phil & Linda Koehler, Dorothy & Jim Newland, Caren Snook, and Heide & Juergen Wiegel. **Consider making a special gift in honor or in memory of a loved one.**

FAMILY PROMISE—Each year Family Promise of Athens (formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network of Athens) collects Walmart, Kroger, Target, and Visa gift cards of any amounts to distribute to our guests and recent alumni so they can shop for Christmas presents for their children. If you are looking for ways to make a difference this holiday season, this is one suggestion. Family would like any cards donated in their office as soon as possible to allow ample time to distribute them to the families. They can be mailed to: Family Promise of Athens, P. O. Box 581, Athens, GA 30603.

CHRISTMAS GIFT CARDS FOR FAMILIES IN NEED: Congregational is collecting donations for the purpose of buying gift cards for families in need this Christmas. If you would like to contribute to this cause please send by December 18th to Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1065 Gaines School Road, Athens, GA 30605 and designate for Covenant Christmas Gift Cards. *Thank you!*

Outreach Ministries or Local Community

Homeless Shelter - ecumenical ministry to provide lodging and food.

The Ark - an ecumenical referral agency which advises and helps those in need.

The Athens Area Emergency Food Bank - ecumenical agency to feed the hungry. (see the Feed My Sheep table)

Jubilee Partners - a community of Christians who provide food, lodging and help for refugees and immigrants.

Habitat for Humanity - ecumenical efforts to build homes for those in need.

Our Daily Bread - Soup Kitchen at First Baptist Church downtown supported by many church and agencies which provides a hot noon meal daily to people in need.

Project Safe - a shelter or home to provide a refuge of safety, lodging, and community for women who have been abused physically or psychologically.

Interfaith Hospitality Network - Athens Area Churches unite to assist homeless families who become guests of the hosting congregation for one week at a time. Donations are used for supplies for overnight lodging and meals. Covenant currently provides services for IHN four times a year.

Covenant's Emergency Food Pantry- on a weekly basis **with the help from volunteers,** enables food insecure families to receive staples and frozen foods, many times to bridge the gap between food stamps and/or other assistance.

2020 Murphy Davis Christmas Packages for Georgia's Death Row- for over 30 years Murphy Davis made sure that every prisoner on Georgia's death row received a box of Christmas gifts that included essentials like socks, writing tablets and knit caps, as well as nuts, cookies and other holiday treats. All levels of donations and sponsorships are welcome. Sponsor a complete package for $75. Visit www.newhopehousega.org to donate online or mail a check payable to New Hope House, P O Box 1213, Griffin, GA 30224. Presented through a partnership between New Hope House, Open Door Community, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Atlanta; and Central Presbyterian Church, Atlanta.

Athens Nurses Clinic—is a 501©(3) non-profit health care clinic providing free evaluations, treatments, and education for acute and chronic medical and dental conditions to uninsured low-and -no income resident s of Athens-Clarke County and the surrounding communities. ANC is located at 240 North Avenue, Athens, GA 30601

People Living in Recovery—is a peer led recovery community organization (RCO) dedicated to coning together so that participants can share stories of hope in addiction recovery. PLR is located at 240 North Avenue, Georgia 30601. (yes they are in the same building downstairs from the ANC)

Graduates ZOOM Christmas Luncheon

Tuesday, December 8 at 12:30pm

Let's share our favorite stories about Christmas memories and our hopes and dreams for the coming year!

For a ZOOM invitation please contact Rindy Trouteaud at rindy@tgrouteaud.com. The link will be emailed to you on Monday, December 7th.

Presbyterian Women's Bible Study

Presbyterian Women will meet on ZOOM at 9:30 **Thursday morning, December 10**. We are happy that Pastor Mark will lead our Lesson 4 on "Lamenting Death" as we discuss several Bible passages. Is there a difference between lamenting and mourning? How do we remember those who have died? Come join us in discussion! Karen will be our ZOOM lady - thanks to her and Pastor Mark!

Advent

... a time of waiting in silence and stillness as the evening shadows lengthen

... a time of anticipating the birth of the baby of Bethlehem, God's coming to us in human form

... a time of preparing room in our manger-hearts for the gift of salvation

This Advent season there are some creative ways you and your loved ones can deepen your journey through this pandemic-laced wilderness of waiting. One of the most intriguing ways we will provide for you on a weekly basis is an interactive website called, *Advent Living Rooms*. This unique and fun offering is a gift of the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda, Presbyterian Church in Canada. Designed by Rev. Tori Smit, Regional Minister of Faith Formation, this website will delight you as connect with Living Rooms that open up seasonal stories, recipes, crafts, adventures, and music. So, here are the practical details.

Each week of Advent we will provide you with a web link and screenshot to one Advent Living Room. You may find these weekly links and Living Room screenshots on the church website, www.covpresathens.org, and our restructured church FaceBook page, Covenant Presbyterian Church of Athens, GA. To upload the link, all you will need to do is to copy and paste the link onto your browser. By clicking on the link you will be taken directly to the Living Room and will be able to interact with it.

Now, for a little bit about the Living Rooms.

Each Living Room looks very similar, but not identical; watch the Christmas tree each week and see how it is transformed. The white board on the living room wall will let you know what week it is as it invites you to click on the candle on the fireplace mantle first. This candle will open up to a video of a bible story that will shape the theme and activities for that week. These weekly stories come from *Young Children and Worship* by Sonja Stewart and Jerome Berryman, with each story building on the previous one as we travel on our way to Bethlehem.

After hearing the story, you can then click randomly around the room. The nativity set will reveal daily devotions making use of scripture and/or the *Spark Story Bible* with additional prayers and wondering questions. A musical instrument opens up to a new song and papers on the floor will reveal the words to lengthier songs for everyone to sing along. The mixing bowl on the table will take you to recipe for the travelers that week, and the cup with pencil crayons offer up a fun craft. And finally the window over the couch takes everyone outside for an adventure together.

And with that, here is the link and screens for the week of December 6: https://bit.ly/3f6QdUZ

May you and your loved ones experience the joy of anticipating and preparing for the Love-that-comes-down-at-Christmas in the season of waiting!

Before you know it, the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany will be upon us, and our ministry teams are busy planning creative ways to deepen our understanding of the significance and transformational possibilities of these seasons. In the season of the pandemic, we are hoping to build on our connections as a family of God, so in the next few weeks we will include articles in the newsletter and on our website about worship, learning, mission, and fellowship opportunities for your participation.

Our immediate need, however, is for help enhancing our Christmas Eve virtual worship service. To that end, we are asking that you take a photo of you and your family members/friends holding lighted candles while standing in front of a "Christmasy scene", such as a Christmas tree, wreath, etc. Use a cellphone or other device, and make sure that you hold the cellphone or device HORIZONTALLY so that your images fit our YouTube screen.

PLEASE SEND YOUR PHOTOS BY DECEMBER 18th.

We will include your photo in a montage set to music ("Silent Night", "Joy to the World") concluding the Christmas Eve virtual worship service. We ask that you send these DIGITAL photos to our "tech guy", Bob Trouteaud, either by e-mail, bob@trouteaud.com, or by texting, 404.405.6085. If you need assistance taking these photos, please contact Karen Wetherington and she will either answer your questions, refer you to someone who can answer your questions, or arrange a time for a volunteer to take your photograph.

Wednesday afternoons beginning in January 2021, 4-5 p.m. "Radical Spirit" Feeling burnt-out from life, strung-out from social media, and put out by a society that always wants more from you? Beloved nun and social activist Joan Chittister, who appeared on Oprah's Super Soul Sunday, offers a practical, character-building, and inspirational guide to help you take control of your emotional life and redirect your spiritual destiny.

Joan Chittister, whom Publishers Weekly calls "one of the most well-known and trusted contemporary spiritual authors," is a rabble-rousing force of nature for social justice, and a passionate proponent of personal faith and spiritual fulfillment. Drawing on little known, ancient teachings of the saints, Sister Joan offers a practical program to help transform our thinking and rebel against our fears, judgments and insecurities.

"Freedom from anxiety, worry, and tensions at home and work, comes when we give ourselves to something greater," she argues. "We need to seek wisdom rather than simply facts, to think before speaking, and in turn create respectful communities." With a series of twelve simple rules for healthy spiritual living, Chittister not only reminds us, but pleads with us, to develop enduring values by shifting our attention to how God wants us to live. This book will teach you how to accomplish this. Rindy Trouteaud will facilitate this ZOOM gathering after the Thanksgiving holiday on Wednesdays, 4-5 p.m. The starting date will be announced, and if you'd like to purchase the book "Radical Spirit", you may call the church office to place your order or you may buy your book from Amazon.com. A number of price and format options are available. (Books are $10 each)

Dear Fellow Covenanter –

The Cov Presby Session hopes to implement a fundraising effort to create a financial base for installing a renewable, site-producing, electrical energy system using solar panels.

Ideally, the committee to lead this effort would feature interested members from the Building and Grounds MT, the Climate Change Awareness Task Force, the Finance MT, and the Green Dream Team. Members of these groups have been invited to take part, so now may be the moment to expand this opportunity to other interested parties.

Would you be willing to serve? If so, please alert me at your earliest convenience via e-mail at: richreav@uga.edu.

Participants will become equipped to explain about as well as answer questions for members and friends of Covenant relating to the:

- Project costs and component parts associated with the system
- Benefits of such a facility, in terms of long term carbon footprint reduction as well as financial savings from on-site electricity production
- Size and location options for this solar panel array;
- Completion time frames for necessary elements of the undertaking, and how these phases relate to payment of needed pledged
- Ongoing relationship with the church's current electricity supplier, Georgia Power

In this current era when energy consumers are being asked to examine their utilization choices, the Covenant Session believes the opportunities presented by employing a solar panel installation option should no pass by unexamined.

Kind regards, *Rich Reaves*, Co-Chair, B&G MT

Please let me know if you would like to purchase a beautiful Poinsettia for the worship center in honor or memory of family or friends. Please email Karen at kwetherington@covpresathens with the name/s and in honor of or in memory of and send a check for $10 with poinsettias in the memo portion. If you would like to drop your $ off by the office we are open Tuesdays, 10am—12 noon and Fridays 10am—4pm. Thank You!

Prayer Concerns: Shirley Hunt moved to Roswell Rahab in Roswell; Anne Page with a hip infection and in hospice care at Avery Place; Ginger Davis-Beck doing some better after cancer treatments; June Meyer's niece doing much better; Pauline Marshall at Highland Hills #112; and for our Nation; for our food insecure neighbors.

Shirley Hunt would love to hear from her church family while she is in rehab. Cards can be mailed to: Roswell Rehab, Attention: Shirley Hunt, 1109 Green Street, Roswell, Ga 30075

Daily Bible Readings

Please read your Advent Devotional

"*A Song In Our Hearts!*"

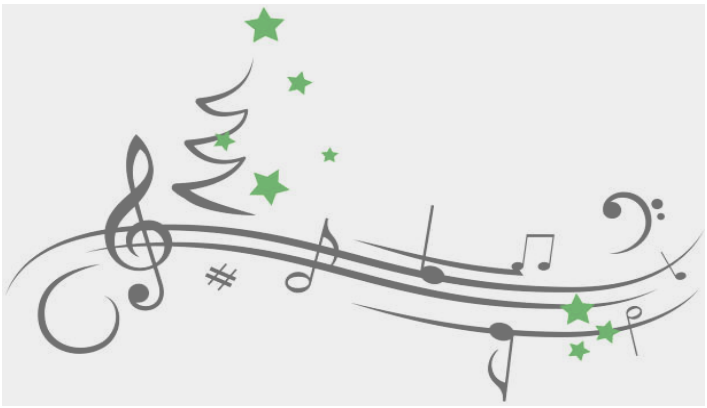
2020 Advent Devotional - Covenant Presbyterian Church - Athens, GA (covpresathens.org)

If you would like a hard copy please let me know at kwetherington@covpresathens.org.

Little Food Pantry –

We encourage you to help us keep our Little Food Pantry stocked with pop-top single serve canned goods that do not require cooking, peanut butter, packaged crackers, healthy snack items.

Small individual personal hygiene items (ie: soap, deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste, and shampoos) in a zip lock bag with a granola bar of some kind is also needed. Please remember everything must be sealed (air tight) to prevent ant infestations...*Please no raisins*.



HOW TO GIVE. There is a new online giving option through the Presbyterian Foundation at this link http://covpresathens.org/wp/contributions/ . Or you can click on this link www.covpresathens.org and click on online giving. And as always you can mail your check to the church office. Thank you for your faithful giving!

FINANCIAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR TO DATE - Week #23
Anticipated Pledges $199,038.47

Actual Pledges—$201,873.23

Thank you for your faithful giving!

'Tis the season to do GOOD (and be jolly!) How about getting a jump on your Christmas shopping by purchasing an Equal Exchange Christmas packet of coffee, tea, and hot chocolate? Your purchase will delight your loved ones AND you'll help our hardworking farmers and their families who depend on the Equal Exchange folks to buy their products at a fair price.

Here is a list of items that are available:

Coffee both ground (drip) and a few decaf $7.50 each

Congo beans $10 each

Green Tea with Ginger, Chamomile, Peppermint, and English Breakfast tea $4 each box

Hot Cocoa Mix (regular or spicy) $5.00 each

Chocolate bars ($3.00 each) can be ordered

Simply make a selection of desired products and call the church office, 706-548-2756, with your order. Volunteers will package your products and have a bag ready and waiting for you to pick up on Tuesdays, 5-7 pm and Thursdays, 1-4 pm. A food pantry volunteer will hand your order as you drive through the church parking lot.

Any questions please contact Sandy Whitney at sandrawhitney08@gmail.com.

Jesus said, "You give them something to eat."

Covenant's Emergency Food Pantry

Members, and friends of Covenant have been giving generously of their time and talents to the Emergency Food Pantry. As you can imagine, the need is great.

*the **Tuesday Food Pantry hours** are **5PM-7PM**. This is being done with the thought that there may be people who work and are also in need of assistance from the Food Pantry. There also may be volunteers who work but would like to volunteer. The Thursday Food Pantry hours will remain the same: 1PM-4PM. A hearty THANK-YOU to the many volunteers who help feed our neighbors.*

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

STAY SAFE—If there is any reason at all that you should NOT physically volunteer-consider the following:

Make a financial donation to the Food Pantry by sending a check to Covenant and write "food pantry" in the subject line. (*You could send it in at the same time you send in your pledge).*

We can use grocery bags (paper or plastic), and small boxes to pack the food. If you call the church, someone could even come out to your car and get it.

If you are able to physically be present as a volunteer:

Click the link below for an easy sign up or call or email Betsy Pless 540-1719 bppless@gmail.com

You can just sign up for 1 day, or for multiple days. You can also share the 3-hour time slot with 2 friends!

HOW TO SIGN UP: Please sign up for Covenant Food Pantry!

Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:
1. **Click this link** to go to our invitation page on SignUp.com: https://signup.com/login/entry/611848298042

2. **Enter your email address:** (You will NOT need to register an account on SignUp.com)
3. **Sign up!** Choose your spots - SignUp.com will send you an automated confirmation and reminders. Easy!
Note: *SignUp.com does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact me and I can sign you up manually.*

Check out Online Athens report on Covenants Emergency Food Pantry Ministry:

https://www.onlineathens.com/photogallery/GA/20201123/PHOTOGALLERY/112309993/PH/1?fbclid=IwAR3-uZv5qyR09_zOQf06il7MJG4uQAByVnfWP8FKSZAZd2qm-t6mCtUieAk

The Congregational Care Ministry Team invites all bakers and would-be bakers to help us share the love of God with our hungry neighbors this holiday season. We would like to give containers of home-baked cookies to our friends visiting our Food Pantry on Thursday, December 17 and Tuesday, December 22. If you would like to share your "flour-y, sug-ar-y" gifts and talents with our most vulnerable neighbors, please bring your packaged cookies, a dozen to a bag, to the fellowship hall the days before our distribution dates so that our wonderful Food Pantry volunteers can hand them out. You may want to call the church office to make sure that someone is on hand to receive your cookies.