

THE COVENANTER September 20, 2020

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

Please click here to view Covenants Worship Service, Sunday, September 20:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCKRp1t3MnecoYXnds4X03A>

Prayer Concerns: Don & Julie Bowers former neighbor recovering from COVID-19; Shirley Hunt and Bill Lindstrom struggling with health issues: traveling mercies as Marie, Josh and Bert drive 5,000 miles out to California and back; Our Nation, for protesters, police, elected officials and church leaders; John, Mary Sue, & Elizabeth Brewer with health issues; for those who are affected by the COVID-19 illness, as well as their caregivers, our healthcare professionals, government leaders and those who are working around the clock to minimize the impact of this virus; Ginger Davis-Beck undergoing cancer treatments; Anne Page at Avery Place #145; Pauline Marshall at Highland Hills #112; Anna Holshouser got a "thumbs-up" report on her heart following a post-surgical check-up

Daily Bible Readings September 21—27

M - Psalm 130

T - Esther 1:1-4, 10-19

W - Psalm 32

Th - Exodus 17:1-7

F - Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

Sat - Philippians 2:1-13

Sun - Matthew 21: 23-32

Sunday, Sept. 27. we welcome Christin Johnson Norman as guest speaker. Christin is a minister member of the NEGA Presbytery. Before returning to Athens she served as a pastor in Sacramento, CA. Currently she is the director of Children's ministry at Oconee Presbyterian. Christin is married to Will Norman the pastor of Presbyterian Student Center at UGA.

COVENANT
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"A Song in Our Heart!"

Advent Devotional 2020

One of the common refrains that we've been hearing a lot during the pandemic is, "I have no idea what day it is anymore!" Our sense of time and our daily rhythms have gone up in smoke, even if the virus has not.

All of which means that we might as well be talking about Advent, right? Believe it or not, it really is time to start thinking about that beautiful season of anticipation and waiting, a period of weeks when we really can reclaim each day and look for hints of God's presence.

For many years, Covenant has marked Advent by listening for God's Word through your voices and your words, all compiled into an Advent Devotional booklet. This year's Advent Devotional is entitled "A Song in Our Hearts," which somehow seems fitting since the necessity of social distancing this year has made it impossible to sing our songs of faith in person, and in the sanctuary.

Once again we are asking all who wish to contribute a reflection to sign up for one day during the Advent season. This year the text for some days will feature a passage from scripture while others will be a hymn or spiritual. If you would like to write in response to one of these song options, Karen will email you the lyrics to the song listed. Most come from our Glory to God hymnal, so if you have a copy at home you can access the verses directly.

Thank you in advance for contributing to our journey of hope, a journey propelled by God's Spirit and the songs of our hearts.

Click on this link to signup: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084AA5AA22A20-asongin>

The Re-opening Task Force met via Zoom last night (9.17.20) to continue the important conversation of how and when to regather at Covenant. Since the last meeting, we have added insights from Covenant's own Grace Bagwell Adams, PhD, Assistant Dean for Outreach & Engagement, Health Policy and Management, and Edward Boland, MD, family practice physician in Augusta who, after many years of working in family medicine and preventive medicine and public health, serves in an advisory capacity to the Presbytery's COVID Task Force. Tracking local COVID data continues to be of primary importance to our work. As you all know, last week was a sobering one on the COVID scene in Athens. The cases at UGA shot up dramatically. Thursday's Banner Herald (9.17.20) reported that this week has seen a sharp decline in positive cases reported, though the infection rate is still quite high. As we consider our readiness at Covenant to return to in-person worship, an important reminder is not to over-play the low incidence nationwide among all people, but rather to look at the number of cases in age groups. The number of COVID cases goes up dramatically (over younger age groups) at age 40, and significantly again at age 60 and up. We do not have local data that would allow us to examine the number of cases or hospitalizations by age group. Certainly, the medical community has informed us that older folks, and those with compromised immune systems, are at greatest risk. The meaningful metrics for us are new case rates, case positivity rates (percent of positive cases among all those tested), and steady downward trends for at least 14 days. We are looking for case positivity rates to fall below 5%. We have been following the progress of a COVID vaccine and the important question is when we can look forward to a vaccine that is rolled out in quantities that trickle out to the general population. Many high-profile scientists seem to concur that we cannot count on a vaccine until late Fall or Winter, one year from now. Rich Reaves provided an update on Covenant's HVAC system and the potential need for modifications that would make our air safer to breathe. He has been consulting with Stiles Heating and Air and Jordan Air to evaluate our facility and air flow system. While there are still questions to be answered, the focus is on ionization and filtration systems vs. an ultraviolet illumination system along with ionization and filtration capabilities. Factors that make it a challenge to answer these questions include the size of the gathering areas, the ability to open windows and leave them open, the number of people gathering, etc. We are all thankful for the time and research that Rich continues to commit to these important questions. While the COVID-19 cases are still quite high in Clarke County and it is clearly not advisable to gather for in-person worship, our task force discussed the possibility that there may be Covenant folks who would like to gather in small groups around a shared interest. We already have a few such examples of this with the small community band that practices at the Covenant basketball court, the handbell choir, and the quartet and quintet. There may be other interests that would bring small groups together for fellowship. The key guidelines would be small groups of 10 or fewer, meet outside if possible (while weather is nice), wear a mask, sanitize hands, and practice social distance. We are requesting that the Session examine that possibility and offer feedback. If they believe that the concept does not introduce too much risk, conversations could begin soon to tap interest. If anyone has such an interest in putting a small group together for the purpose of fellowship, or other shared interest, please contact Mark for more information. All of us are urged by the medical world to get the regular flu vaccine this Fall. There will be an even greater importance this fall and winter placed on keeping our hospitals open for COVID-related critical care. Some of the symptoms of the two viruses overlap, but the COVID virus is behaving much more aggressively and leaving long-term damage to some of the bodies it invades. When a good COVID vaccine is available and most people choose to get it, it will make a difference in protecting us in the years to come. In the meantime, we should all get the regular flu vaccine this Fall. So, while we are not ready to gather in person for traditional worship, we hope that we can begin to find other meaningful ways to stay connected "in Covenant." Let it not go without note that we so appreciate the team effort among our pastors, musicians, and tech support to provide outstanding, creative and meaningful worship services every week, even during a global pandemic. Praise be! *Respectfully submitted by Julie Bower, chair Task Force includes: Mark Harper, Rindy Trouteaud, Chris Wilson, Rich Reaves, Jennifer Frey, Tamara Stam, Pam Knox, Julie Bower*

Dear members, the Session Nominating Committee needs your help!

We currently have two members who have graciously agreed to be nominees for the upcoming 2020 class of Elders. ***We are in need of two more.*** We ask that you please prayerfully consider serving Covenant in this manner. ***If you are willing to be a nominee please contact one of the Nominating Team members ASAP.***

Helen Epps

eppshelen@gmail.com

Patti Huberty

pattih720@gmail.com

Bill Barstow

webarstow@gmail.com



The Journey Class (Church School) is gearing up to choose new topics and explore possible books to read. If you would like to be added to the email discussion list and receive Zoom video links to join in on Sunday mornings at 9:45am please email Valerie Stone (informal group secretary) at [valeriefreystone @ gmail.com](mailto:valeriefreystone@gmail.com).

Covenant just received shipment of a new digital grand piano for the sanctuary. The acoustic grand is replaced and needs a new home. It is a Baldwin grand piano built in 1942, a stellar era of American piano production. The cabinet is in excellent shape as is the frame, metal plate, and sound board. About 10-14 hours of maintenance and some new parts are required to achieve ship shape condition. Once in good shape, its current market value is in the neighborhood of \$4500.00. A consistent climate environment will go a long way to maintain the upgraded condition of the instrument.

The piano's dimensions: length 7 feet; width—5 feet

The worship ministry team is directing this initial announcement about the piano to Covenant members only. Inquiries may be directed to Dick Zimdars at 706-354-8381 or zpear@bellsouth.net



TUESDAY Morning Zoom Book Study: *Surely Goodness and Mercy: A Journey into Illness and Solidarity* by Murphy Davis

NEW DATE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 at 10aM

Facilitated by Mark Harper

The book may be ordered from

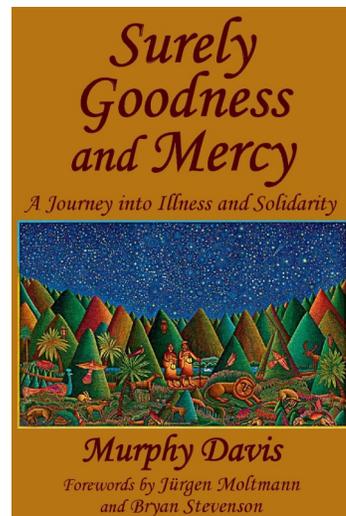
The Open Door Community

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While we originally advertised this class to be held on Wednesdays, we learned that was a busy day for many. So now let's try Tuesdays at 10 a.m. beginning on September 22nd. To Zoom in we will need your email address, which you can forward to either Mark Harper at mharper@covpresathens.org or Karen Wetherington at kwetherington@covpresathens.org. Books can be ordered directly from the Open Door Community (information above). Or if you would prefer, the church office can order a copy for you; just give us enough advance notice so the books can get here on time for our first class. I look forward to this time together!

About the book: Murphy Davis is a Presbyterian pastor and life-long advocate for the poor. After being diagnosed with Burkitt's lymphoma in 1995, Murphy began an unexpected journey into a deeper solidarity with those who are vulnerable and on the margins of our society than she ever imagined. As another Presbyterian pastor, Nibs Stroupe, has written, "*Surely Goodness and Mercy* takes us down into the soul of one woman battling for her life, and out into the soul of our unjust and absurd American healthcare system. It testifies to the power and necessity of community. This book will inspire and convict us, as it takes us on a searing and redemptive journey of one person fighting for her life and then finding her life in the most unexpected places."

An article as written by Mark Harper for the Life & Work Magazine, The Church of Scotland.

[The Coronavirus Diaries: Testing Positive](https://www.lifeandwork.org/features/features/view/477-the-coronavirus-diaries-testing-positive) - the Rev Mark Harper, a pastor with the Presbyterian Church (USA) describes receiving a positive test for Covid-19, followed by a negative in 'a long season of grief, lament and exhaustion'

<https://www.lifeandwork.org/features/features/view/477-the-coronavirus-diaries-testing-positive>

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON ZOOM STUDY at 4pm next class 9/23

Falling Upward, A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life
by Richard Rohr

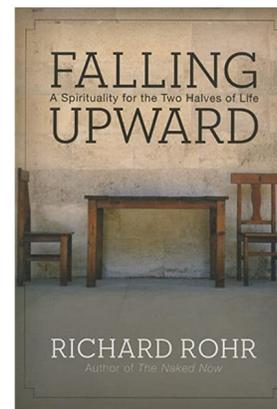
Facilitated by Rindy Trouteaud. The book may be ordered from Amazon.com, various prices depending on format and whether you purchase it new or used or the Bookstore at the Center for Action and Contemplation, store.cac.org.

About the book

In *Falling Upward*, Fr. Richard Rohr, Franciscan priest and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, seeks to help readers understand the tasks of the two halves of life and to show them that those who have fallen, failed, or "gone down" are the only ones who understand "up." Most of us tend to think of the second half of life as largely about getting old, dealing with health issues, and letting go of life, but the whole thesis of this book is exactly the opposite. What looks like falling down can largely be experienced as "falling upward." In fact, it is not a loss but somehow actually a gain, as we have all seen with elders who have come to their fullness.

This message of "falling down" - that is in fact moving upward - is the most resisted and counterintuitive of messages in the world's religions, including and most especially, Christianity. In this book, Rohr offers a new paradigm for understanding one of the most profound of life's mysteries: how our failings can be the foundation for our ongoing spiritual growth. Drawing on the wisdom from time-honored myths, heroic poems, great thinkers, and sacred religious texts, Rohr explores the two halves of life to show that we grow spiritually much more by doing wrong than by doing right. With rare insight Rohr takes us on a journey to give us an understanding of how heartbreaks, disappointments, and first loves of life are actually stepping-stones to the spiritual joys that the second half of life has in store for us.

Consider joining us for conversations about living the abundant life Jesus promised his followers. To do that we will need your email address so that you can Zoom in on Wednesday afternoons; [please send that to Rindy Trouteaud at rindy@trouteaud.com](mailto:rindy@trouteaud.com).



Our children's Sunday School program gets underway this week, and we begin by



looking at ways we can partner with God in caring for creation. Each preschooler and elementary school aged young person received this week a Rally Day bag containing Sunday School materials for the next month. We begin with the first creation story found in Genesis 1 about creation, *Separating the Waters*. Each packet contains story cards for coloring, and families are encouraged to access the church website, covpresathens.org for a playlist of additional activities. This playlist will be updated every week so make it a habit to check the website every week for creative ways to help your child grow in faith. Next week we will add a playlist of youth group activities for our middle schoolers and high schoolers!

Covenant's Emergency Food Pantry

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

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.

Some of our Volunteers!



Sandy Whitney, Chris Wilson & Sue Loegel

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.*



For the month of August 467 people were served from the Covenant Food Pantry. (163 were children and 56 were Older Adults.) Thank you to all the staff, volunteers and financial support that makes this ministry possible.

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 #11
Anticipated Pledges \$95,192.31
Actual Pledges \$105,274.65
Thank you for your faithful giving!



Little Food Pantry – We continue to seek out new and faithful ways to respond to the needs of the food insecure and homeless friends in our community. UGA students built a Little Food Pantry on our church campus. It is located outside the doors of our fellowship hall. Little Food Pantries are scattered throughout Athens, and their purpose is to respond to the emergency food needs of hungry folks. 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 and jelly, 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 to prevent ant infestations...*Please no raisins.*



The Covenant coffee closet still has lots of coffee, tea, and hot chocolate ! Although the regular office hours and services are suspended, the church is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays for the Food Pantry from 1 - 4 PM. *Please call the church office at 706-548-2756 and place your order and when you would like to pick it up. A food pantry volunteer will hand your order as you drive through the parking lot.* In this time of uncertainty, let's not forget the hard working farmers and their families who depend on the Equal Exchange folks to buy their coffee at a Fair Price !!!

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



If you need a helping hand or (just someone to reach out to you) during "Sheltering in Place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, please contact Congregational Care Ministry Team and we will do our best to be of assistance. Let us know of your needs by either calling Luanne Rigsby at (706) 769-1066 (home) or (706) 224-3828 (cell) or emailing her at luannerigsby@gmail.com or Don Bower at dbower@uga.edu.