

# FIRST THINGS

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH MINNEAPOLIS SEP/OCT 2016

current teaching series:

## “Why We Gather”

The city block where our community of faith gathers is being reconstructed over a 14-month period of time. The purpose of this teaching series is to provide a focused field of discovery and navigation during a season of disruption such that we are able to listen to God and one another during a season of change in order to refine our community's identity and mission for years to come.

A recent study titled, “How We Gather” describes six emerging themes with which most people today, religious or not, spend their time and resources in order to infuse their lives with meaning: “Community,” “Personal Transformation,” “Social Transformation,” “Purpose Finding,” “Creativity,” and “Accountability.” Over the next 14 months we are going to bring inquiry to the intersections of these six themes and the teachings of Jesus with the goal of more deeply understanding why we gather.

### The six themes include:

**Growing a Community Devoted to God, Neighbor, and One Another** (Valuing and fostering deep relationships that center on service to others)

**Choosing Personal Transformation** (Making a conscious and dedicated effort to develop one's own body, mind, and spirit)

**Caring for Others Through Social Transformation** (Pursuing justice and beauty in the world through the creation of networks for good)

**Finding Purpose** (Clarifying, articulating, and acting on one's personal mission in life)

**Creating a Beautiful Life** (Allowing time and space to activate the imagination and engage in play)

**Valuing Grace-Filled Accountability** (Holding oneself and others responsible for working toward defined goals)



## Volunteer Opportunities Ministry Teams

### Welcome Team

Meet, greet, welcome, handshake, high five, seek out the new and not-yet-connected, help build connections and create a warm and engaging community for everybody!  
**Commitment:** At least once a month. Arrive 15 minutes before worship and remain at the doors until 15 minutes after the service begins, ready to be present and engaged. 1-year commitment.  
**Lead/Contact:** Sara Wilhelm Garbers, SWilhelmGarbers@1stcov.org

### Parking Team

Play air-traffic control and help us with parking on Sunday mornings. There may or may not be flag-twirling, that'll be up to you!  
**Commitment:** Monthly rotation arriving 30 minutes before worship. 1-year commitment.  
**Lead/Contact:** Doug Vigoren, davigoren@1stcov.org, 612-927-3103

### Barista Team

Wake us up by making great coffee and showing great hospitality before and after our worship services!  
**Commitment:** Initial training. Monthly rotation, arriving 45 minutes before and staying 30 minutes after worship. 1-year commitment.  
**Lead/Contact:** Olivia Auell, itsauellgood@gmail.com

### Event Planning Team

Throw a party! Plan, organize, and implement special events related to our site redevelopment. (e.g. Ground Breaking, Rededication of the Building/Block, etc)  
**Commitment:** Meets as needed. Working group with expectation to participate in both planning and implementation. 1 year commitment.  
**Contact:** Joy Erickson, jerickson@1stcov.org

### Care Team

Care for the needs of the congregation through the ministry of presence. Opportunities include but are not limited to visitation and providing basic needs in crisis.  
**Commitment:** Initial training, biannual meeting, and ongoing engagement as needs and opportunities arise. 1-year commitment.  
**Lead/Contact:** Joy Erickson, jerickson@1stcov.org

### Children's Team

Help our children know they are the beloved by God through volunteering with our Children's Ministry. Opportunities are available for helping one time per month. Please contact Carma for more information.  
**Commitment:** Initial meeting to plan and then as needed.  
**Lead/Contact:** Carma Gjerner, cgjerner@1stcov.org, 612-927-3124

### Communion Setup Team

Prepare and clean up the communion elements for our monthly communion celebration in worship.  
**Commitment:** Once per quarter (every 3 months), arrive 45 minutes early to prep, stay 30 minutes after to clean  
**Lead/Contact:** Todd Bratulich, tbratulich@1stcov.org, 612-927-3122

### Communion Server Team

Serve communion elements to the congregation in our monthly communion celebration in worship.  
**Commitment:** Once per quarter  
**Lead/Contact:** Todd Bratulich, tbratulich@1stcov.org, 612-927-3122

### Transportation Team

Pickup and drop off our seniors, college students, and others with mobility needs in our community for Sunday morning services.  
**Commitment:** Driver's license and clean driving record required. Monthly rotation. Drive your own car or 15-passenger van, depending on demographic served.  
**Lead/Contact:** Brian Ogren, bogren@1stcov.org, 612-927-3126

### Usher Team

Smile and meet new people every week. Ushering is all about being a key point of contact in the worship space, handing out worship guides and passing the offering plate.  
**Commitment:** Arrive 15 minutes early for worship. Monthly rotation. 1-year commitment.  
**Contact:** Brian Ogren, bogren@1stcov.org, 612-927-3126

### Social Media Team

Post to Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook in order to build social networks and help form the online presence of our community.  
**Commitment:** Stay active on the inter webs. Connect once per quarter for strategy. 1-year commitment.  
**Lead/Contact:** Sara Lynn Wilhelm Garbers, SWilhelmGarbers@1stcov.org

## Volunteer Opportunities Task Forces

### Facilities Task Force

Attend to the active and ever-changing needs and opportunities of our multifaceted facility! Strategize and engage in all aspects of the facility, including aesthetics, safety, site management, development, and leaseholder.  
**Commitment:** Meets weekly on Wednesdays at 5pm. 6 month commitment  
**Lead/Contact:** Ezra Bartsch, ezrabartsch@gmail.com, 920-309-2500

### Communications Task Force

Develop and implement strategies for timely, consistent, and creative communication of the ongoing life and activity in and around our First Covenant.  
**Commitment:** Meets once a month. 1-year commitment.  
**Lead/Contact:** Sara Wilhelm Garbers, SWilhelmGarbers@1stcov.org

# LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

by Chris Fossum, Leadership Team Chair

## “Leaving a Legacy”

On August 7, 2016 a committed group of members voted to give the FCC Leadership Team the authority to enter into a ground lease with Community Housing Development Corp. to build approximately 160 workforce affordable housing apartment units. The Leadership Team continues the work of fine tuning the details of that lease—what will be built and what will be remodeled within our building because of the financial agreements being put in place. These details, as they are continually being developed, will be communicated to all.

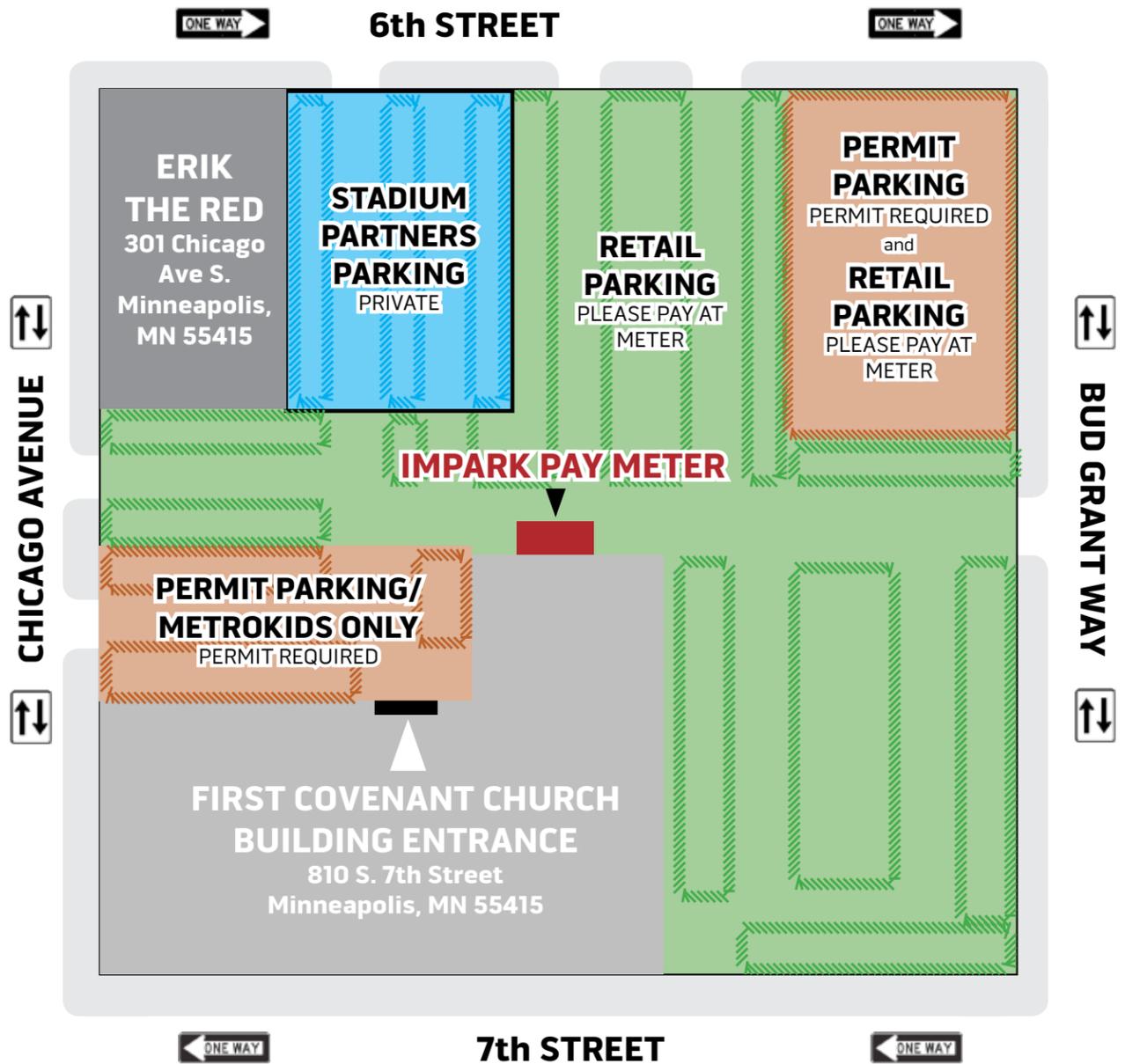
But in the midst of all the particulars of parking lot size and stalls, building façade designs, elevator overhaul, redesign of church heating—the list goes on and on—there is something bigger that we should all pause to consider. Even though we are hammering out dates, costs and deadlines, and striving for completion by the big Super Bowl of 2018, we are not just simply thinking about us, nor about the here and now. God is asking us to step into the waters of the metaphorical Jordan River not so much for us, but for the generations to come.

Imagine for a moment someday, many years from now, a young newly married couple finding generosity and community for the first time in a church, opening new space on their unique journeys with God. Someday, in the distant future, a broken hearted middle age divorcee grieves the death of his marriage, and at the same time encounters the unconditional and trustworthy love of a great God through a humble bible study group that surrounds him in his pain. Someday, there is an older woman who had climbed the corporate ladder only to find that the emptiness she had worked so hard to fill in her soul would instead be filled by the radical welcome she receives as she shares a meal with guests of our shelter who are experiencing homelessness. Someday, in the early evening, two mothers sit beside one another on the bench overlooking our church playground watching their toddlers chase each other down the slide, delighting in new friendship despite differences in dress, language, and culture.

In the midst of spreadsheets, shovels, dirt and gravel, there are the misty shadows of many stories yet to unfold, of people we still haven't even met, because of what we are doing today. In following God, one step at a time today, we are opening doors to God's ongoing plan of redemption and calling not only us but future generations to God. As we continue to work together in these upcoming days and months, may we keep our eyes on God and press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14).

# what's happening

## Park here... ...wait, where?



### In this exciting time of redevelopment on our block and the new US Bank Stadium, there are a few things to consider when parking at the FCC lot:

The lot will be available for parking during the month of September. We are still finalizing plans for the parking structure related to the housing development and will provide updates as soon as we have information, but as of now, parking will go offline October 1.

**FCC Visitors:** Parking is free for Sunday worship services and select church-sponsored events.

**Convenient Public Parking:** With proximity to US Bank Stadium, Hennepin County Medical Center, the light rail transit station, businesses, and restaurants, the First Covenant parking lot offers a convenient, central place to park for visitors to the city. The normal rate for daily parking in the retail portion of our lot is \$8/day.

It is important to pay attention to the Stadium Events that are listed in this edition of *First Things* because rates will increase for large events (typically \$10-50).

# around the building

## THE GOOD ARTS COLLECTIVE



Good Arts' **Ben Kelly**, makin' it happen.



The Good Arts Collective recently completed two big projects! The first of these is re-doing the floor which involved basically tearing up carpet and finishing the concrete below. The job ended up taking a lot of work, but the GAC team made it happen...AND the floor now looks amazing!

The second big project was the release of Brian Lenz's debut record "Short Stories" which was the first official full-length record to be produced in our recording studio, SideTown Studios. We had a wonderful release party this past month and there has been much celebration of Brian's work. You can listen to this amazing record at [brianlenz.bandcamp.com](http://brianlenz.bandcamp.com).

As we look ahead to fall, please plan to join us for the next ASE (Awesome Songwriting Event): September 26. It will be another wonderful night of music and art. You can stay informed about all of our going-ons by following us on Facebook or online at [goodartscollective.com](http://goodartscollective.com).

## MetroKids Early Childhood Education a day in the life of MetroKids

**MetroKids is committed to providing a strong early childhood foundation for all children.**

This mission is realized through promoting early learning through holistic programming and outstanding teachers who nurture every child's individual strengths. We understand that children are active learners. We teach through games, art, dramatic play, stories, music, learning centers, and indoor and outdoor play.

A picture of a flower or a goldfish may be worth a thousand words but to actually touch, see, smell and taste a flower a baby will learn and retain what a flower actually is. MetroKids teachers do a thoughtful job of bringing real life and experiences into the classroom.



# community life

## Homeless Shelter ESG Grant Update

After much learning through long and complicated processes, we are moving forward with a grant from the City of Minneapolis to make improvements to the space where we host our seasonal homeless shelter in partnership with Hennepin County and the Salvation Army. Thanks to tireless work from our shelter grant team (with notable mention to Katherine Johnson!), by the time this edition of First Things hits the press, construction will have already begun on the addition of an office, two showers, laundry facilities, flooring upgrades and security to the fellowship hall.

These upgrades come just in time for the launch of our seventh shelter season, and coincide with a revamp of the entire Hennepin County shelter system. As a part of that revamp, First Covenant's shelter will become the primary landing spot for young adults experiencing homelessness between the ages of 18-24 years. We are excited to have a new and improved facility to be able to welcome our young adult guests into! Keep an eye out on our website and weekly worship guides for opportunities to see the new space and serve in the shelter this upcoming season!



## Recap: Safer Together

A special thank you especially to Bill Woodson and Saran Sidime in leading this event, along with Frances Woodson, the members of CREJ, and all of the staff who came together to make this town hall a success! "Safer Together" brought together members of the larger community, law enforcement leaders, and members of First Covenant to discuss ways to increase trust and mutual respect between citizens and officers. The focus of the conversation was looking toward solutions and achieving increased understanding between the community and the police. The evening began with a variety of prepared questions, and progressed into a time of open Q&A from the floor. Bill (who moderated the event) asked the law enforcement leaders to engage with questions about the role of race in policing, the work that police departments are doing to improve the relationship between officers and the public, and how each department deals with officers who utilize excessive force. There were also many good questions from the audience related to restorative justice, relationship building, and understanding different communities. If you weren't able to attend, please visit our Facebook page where you will find a video recording from the event. Thank you again to Bill and Saran for their leadership and vision, the members of CREJ, and staff for all coming together to host this Town Hall.





# baptism 2016



*"Could there be anything more amazing than a community that rises out of the ashes to become a place populated by those who have embraced the difficult questions, realize there are no easy answers, and yet retain faith? No, there is nothing more beautiful to me. Thank you, beloved people of First Covenant Minneapolis. Baptisms 2016." - Holly Collison*

This past August 28 was an amazing night for our community, as we gathered at Lake Nokomis Beach and celebrated the baptisms of **Saran Sidime, Campbell May Johnson** and **Irie Ann Johnson**.

We also celebrated **Andrea and Ryan Hollingsworth, Barbara Newman** and **Nancy Plagman** as they became new members of First Covenant.

## stories from our community

### Saran Sidime

#### *A Story of Baptism and Life Lived in Exclamation Points!*

If you know me or have been around me, then you know that I live my life in exclamation points...and I mean full-on exclamation points. I've confirmed with my mom that this dates back to the day I was born. "I almost had you in a taxicab," she said. "You just couldn't wait to get here. As soon as the nurses laid me on the hospital bed, there you were!"

For further reference, "bouncing jelly bean" was the nickname I was given in high school. While volunteering for the American Red Cross in Greater New York, I received the "Sunshine Award," given to a volunteer who brightens the day for others; that was a legitimate certificate. So living out loud is what I do. I was born that way, literally!

Though smiling and laughing are almost like second nature to me, the history of my life and the circumstances I've survived should have me in a desolate state. But I believe my sorrows have left cracks in my soul that allows my laughter to ring a little louder and my compassion to run a little deeper. How can it be, to be so full of joy when you've known so much pain?

Khalil's Gibran's poem "On Joy and Sorrow," answered this question for me. Till this day, I cherish these words.

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.  
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.  
And how else can it be?  
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.  
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?  
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?  
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.  
When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.*

I never knew Christ until a year ago but I missed Him. I desperately yearned for him. On August 12, 2015 I finally met him, the love that had been wooing me all my life. The father I never had, the mother I could not have, the lover that wouldn't leave, the friend that would visit me in my sadness, the heart that would embrace me, and finally the God that never condemned me no matter how ugly my behavior. I am undone by this love, completely. And more importantly, my soul is quieted by it and in awe of its miraculous nature. What more can I do to say thanks than to lay my life down? To ask for more grace, more wisdom, more prudence, more compassion, more generosity and more love. Today, I am asking the Holy Spirit to indwell me.

As a first generation Christian, the battles during the past year have been many and there is a lot more to come. I am aware of this. Some of you prayed for me to make it through this past Ramadan, the Muslim tradition of a month long fast. It was not easy and still isn't to be the only Christian in my entire Family. Yet I count it all joy because this treasure I've found requires all I have and I choose to die to myself daily to maintain it.

I've known joy, I've known sorrow but I've never known a love quite like this. It adds absolutely no sorrow with it. It quiets my mind when self-doubt and noise want to creep in. It disciplines without judgment. It gives me purpose and direction for my life. It satisfies my every need and meets me right where I am, depth to depth. It sets my soul on fire so that I may live with passion and compassion and sharp intent. And above all, it sets me free to live a powerful life. This love is here to stay.

#### **What amazing grace!**

So on this day I meditate on the words of Psalm 103: 1-5  
Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you. With love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

*Amen Amen.*



# community life



## Work Life Series

During our most recent series on Work Life, we were able to hear from many community members, such as Pastor Joy Erickson (pictured with Pastor Todd Bratulich)



## CREJ

Community on Racial and Economic Justice and leadership team member, Bill Woodson, leads a discussion on Modern Policing during our July meeting (meetings are the fourth Sunday of every month)

## Kids Adventure Week - OOHTOPIA!

Oohtopia was a place to experience the wonder and delight of God's endless pursuit in loving us. We had a fabulous week coming around the children and inviting them to experience the love of God through the parables of Jesus, creating, exploring and playing. We had a wonderful group of children and an extraordinary awesome group of leaders, and all of you beloved ones who supported us with your prayers and generous giving!



# looking ahead

**Come have FUN with us!**  
One of the best ways to deepen relationships is to have fun together. This Fall we're cooking up a few fun events that the whole First Covenant community can enjoy! Whether you're young or old, flying solo or with friends or family in tow, you'll be glad you joined us on one of these excursions!

**Apple Picking at Afton Apple Orchard**

**Saturday, October 15**  
9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.  
Admission: \$4adults, \$3children  
Apples are priced by the pound

**Advent Art Party**  
Sunday, December 4  
8:30 a.m.  
in the Gym  
Holiday treats and fun for everyone!

**Snowy Saturday at Theodore Wirth**  
Saturday, February 11  
10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.  
Activity prices and rentals vary

Look for more info to come as dates get closer on our website and in the worship guide, or contact Carma Gjerner or Todd Bratulich with questions.

## Living the Book with Humility

**September 20, October 18,  
November 15, and December 20**  
6:00-9:00 p.m.

The Bible is the most popular and historically preserved book of all time and yet it is also the most misunderstood and mishandled book of all time. For this reason, Christ followers are urged to learn how to handle its content with humility and see it as the inspired and authoritative Word of God that points us to Jesus Christ and provides broad frameworks by which we are to live our lives rather than a technical blueprint designed to systematically provide answers for every question and dilemma that we face.

The Protestant approach to biblical interpretation is greatly influenced by the study of Scripture alongside tradition, reason, and experience. The Covenant denomination (that our congregation is a part of) asks their congregations to approach Scripture faithfully, communally, rigorously, charitably, holistically, and with a balanced commitment to grace, transformation and mission.

"Living the Book with Humility" is a four-part class intensive that will engage these matters of biblical interpretation and challenges participants to interact with one another about the conclusions and questions that have arisen from the history of biblical interpretation. Additionally, this class will propose a framework for understanding the complex controversial issues that have sifted the American church in the last 250 years: slavery and racial segregation, the role of women in church and society, and most recently—same-sex relationships.

Because of site redevelopment, the "Living the Book with Humility" class will meet at Pastor Collison's house in South Minneapolis on the third Tuesday of every month from September through December:

Please contact Pastor Dan Collison at [dcollison@1stcov.org](mailto:dcollison@1stcov.org) or 612-927-3123 if you are interested in joining the class.

More fun moments from a wonderful week in

# OOHTOPIA

Thanks to all our  
volunteers and  
incredible kids!!



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Covenant Church**  
MINNEAPOLIS

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**Dan Collison**  
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**Heather Albinson**  
Volunteer Visual Arts Associate  
halbinson@1stcov.org

## CALENDAR

calendar events are updated at 1stcov.org

**Sunday, September 4, 9:30 a.m. – Communion** Communion is one of the most poignant and ancient practices of the Christian faith that affirms the completeness of the work of God in Christ on our behalf. Whether new to Christ or renewed in Christ, we are all invited to the table of God to encounter the love and grace of Christ as we receive the elements (bread and cup).

**Sunday, September 11, after the service – All-church meal and congregational conversation** Join us for our monthly community potluck meal following the 9:30 a.m. worship service down in the gym. Bring your favorite dish (or two!). Everyone is welcome!

**Tuesday, September 20, 6:00–9:00 p.m. – Living the Book with Humility Class** "Living the Book with Humility" is a four-part class intensive that will provide a historical overview of biblical interpretation and challenge participants to interact with one another about the conclusions and questions that have arisen from that history. Additionally, this class will propose a framework for understanding the complex controversial issues that have sifted the American church in the last 250 years.

**Sunday, September 25, after the service – Committee for Racial & Economic Justice (CREJ)** Continually throughout scripture we see that God is concerned about justice. Come join us for conversation, action, and prayer as we seek to thoughtfully and practically engage issues of justice in our community and our world. All are welcome!

**Monday, September 26, 7:00 p.m. – Awesome Songwriting Event** Attention music lovers! The Good Arts Collective is hosting an Awesome Songwriting Event, and you're invited! Several musicians will be sharing their compositions, and we'll have the opportunity to hear their stories. Refreshments will be provided. Contact [goodartscollective@gmail.com](mailto:goodartscollective@gmail.com) for more info.

**Sunday, October 2, 9:30 a.m. – Communion** Communion is one of the most poignant and ancient practices of the Christian faith that affirms the completeness of the work of God in Christ on our behalf. Whether new to Christ or renewed in Christ, we are all invited to the table of God to encounter the love and grace of Christ as we receive the elements (bread and cup).

**Sunday, October 9, after the service – All-church Meal** Join us for our monthly community potluck meal following the 9:30 a.m. worship service down in the gym. Bring your favorite dish (or two!). Everyone is welcome!

**Saturday, October 15, 9:00 a.m. – Apple Picking at Afton Apple Orchard** Everyone is invited to enjoy the apple harvest and the gift of being together. We will meet at the church at 9 a.m. and drive to Afton Apple Orchard (which opens at 10 a.m.). Transportation will be provided. After lunch, we will return to First Covenant.

**Tuesday, October 18, 6:00–9:00 p.m. – Living the Book with Humility Class** "Living the Book with Humility" is a four-part class intensive that will provide a historical overview of biblical interpretation and challenge participants to interact with one another about the conclusions and questions that have arisen from that history. Additionally, this class will propose a framework for understanding the complex controversial issues that have sifted the American church in the last 250 years.

**Sunday, October 23, after the service – Committee on Racial & Economic Justice (CREJ)** Continually throughout scripture we see that God is concerned about justice. Come join us for conversation, action, and prayer as we seek to thoughtfully and practically engage issues of justice in our community and our world. All are welcome!

**Brian Ogren**  
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