

# FIRST THINGS

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH MINNEAPOLIS

JAN/FEB 2017



Throughout Advent our visual artists in residence, **Lisa and Heather Albinson**, meticulously strung yarn across giant looms to create a canvas on which, the final Sunday of Advent, the congregation added their mark. We were invited to interact with the canvas of white yarn, and to contemplate, as we wove pieces of fabric, roving, and string into the piece, how we can birth hope in the world, just as God birthed hope in Jesus.

As we meditated on specific people and situations where we desired and asked God to help us be hopeful, the canvas began to fill with all sorts of shapes and colors—a reflection of who we are as a community and how we have set our hearts and minds to birthing the hope of Christ into our world. Finally, these pieces were overlapped—the red piece, with its viewing portals, and our community canvas, which the viewer could see from many angles depending on where you stood.

As Advent hope reminds us: We are the bearers of hope, just as Christ modeled for us. And through their art, Heather and Lisa reminded us of the embodied reality of hope, Emmanuel- God is with us, and we are called to follow after Christ as we bear hope in our world.

## 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.

### Segment #3:

#### Caring for Others Through Social Transformation

Pursuing justice and beauty in the world through the creation of networks for good

February 5: Disability

February 12: Race and Privilege

February 19: Incarceration

February 26: Relationship to Other Faith Traditions

March 5: LGBTQ

March 12: Violence

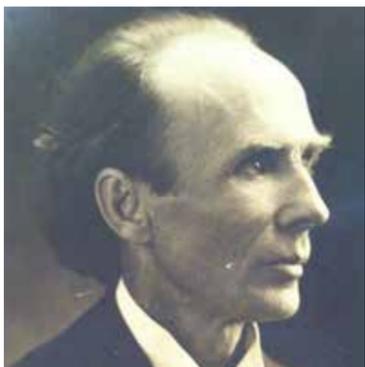
March 19: Sustainability

March 26: Poverty



On December 17, the Star Tribune published an article on Erik August Skogsbergh, the founding pastor of the Swedish Mission Tabernacle...now known as First Covenant Church! You can read the article in its entirety at the link below:

<http://strib.mn/2hGPSwV>



## THE DEEP END:

Six vital explorations of faith

Are you ready to dive deeper into your spiritual journey? Join an popular educational opportunity led by Pastors Dan Collison, Sara Wilhelm Garbers and Todd Bratulich. “The Deep End: Six Vital Explorations of Faith”

January 23 - June 26  
(once a month on the fourth Monday of the month)  
6–9 p.m.

Here is what is being said about the class:

“This class was a very meaningful experience to me and should be experienced by as many people as possible”

“I was deeply impressed by the class's preparation and research, but yet it was still very accessible.”

“I'm going to take it again!”

“The Deep End” will help you ask (and answer) six essential questions:

“Who has God made me to be?”

“How will I be spiritually formed?”

“How do I deal with difficult matters?”

“How is Christian mission possible in our culture?”

“How can we form Christian community in a globalized world?”

“What does it mean to be a leader?”

These three-hour, intensive learning experiences will provide a very candid look at the some of our most important and pressing questions and quandaries. There will be optional readings and written reflection assignments for each session. The course will include a combination of interactive teaching, dialogue, video, and other media. Please contact Pastor Dan if you are interested in participating (dcollison@1stcov.org or 612-927-3123). Jump into the deep end of your faith.

# LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

by Chris Fossum, Leadership Team Chair

Welcome to the new year! No matter how we felt about 2016, we are stepping into 2017 with renewed hope and excitement. God is still on the throne and is still calling us into God's redemptive plan.

On a practical note, at our January meeting we elected our officers for the year: Chris Fossum, Chair; Katherine Johnson, Vice-Chair; Scott Barshun, Administrative Officer; and Jim Albinson, Treasurer. Bill Woodson will continue as the Leadership Team representative on the Nominating Committee.

Work on the Site Redevelopment has been moving much slower through the holidays. The business world is regrouping after the election and re-looking at adjustments as they go into 2017. Thus, God has FCC in a holding pattern as contracts and financing get hammered out. We are also getting into the deeper levels of construction design and the practicality of developing a working budget. At this time much of this is in the hands of others—and we wait. At times it feels frustrating but we also trust in the goodness and direction of God—and we all know from life experience that waiting on God is a spiritual discipline worthy of our efforts.

Thus, as we said in the last issue of First Things, the Leadership Team is taking this time to spend much of our efforts working with our ministry staff on intentionally recasting our essence and re-envisioning our calling going into the next five to ten years. And for this, we covet your prayers. Not only is it a challenge to listen to God, but it takes true effort to really slow down and listen to each other with honesty and compassion. Being a church is way more than just bricks and mortar and financial spreadsheets. It is being honest with ourselves and each other regarding our beliefs, our convictions, our purpose and our passions. Although many of us think about passions as that which grabs us and excites us, the word is actually derived from the Latin, *pati, passio*—to suffer. It is where our hearts feel deepest, and actually hurt. In that way the conversations, if they are to be real, involve emotional struggle. We must listen very carefully and speak ever so slowly so as to grow through and uplift, rather than to cause further pain. We must continue to grow in our ability to be open, holding ourselves with peace and humility, gifting each other with presence and acceptance, so that we can move into change and growth.

I have said this before: God has called together an exceptional group of leaders at First Covenant who are willing to take the risk to be vulnerable and honest—open both to influence and be influenced. And at times we still struggle. So, as we continue on this journey of re-discovery and re-definition, your support as a community with prayers and encouragement continues to be of critical importance. We are walking into 2017 with hope and trust in each other and a God that never fails. Let us together continue to explore what God is up to!

**Thank you to the congregation of First Covenant for “adopting” and supporting four MetroKids families with beautiful gifts during this Christmas Season. Your kindness and generosity is very appreciated. With a missional partnership between MetroKids and First Covenant, many lives and families will continue to be warmed and celebrated.**

# what's happening

introducing...

## Sara Wilhelm Garbers ...Pastor of Connections!

**As of January 1, we officially welcomed Sara Wilhelm Garbers to our pastoral leadership team in her new role as Pastor of Connections.** Sara has been a part of our community since January of 2013, and has been an integral part of our teaching team since that time. Her new role will include continued involvement with preaching and teaching, but is expanding to focus on connecting the community with one another and with the mission of First Covenant by fostering relational spaces for authentic points of connection while also strategically implementing the mission of First Cov through our collective efforts.

Many of you know Sara, but for those who don't, here's a bit of an introduction: Sara and her spouse, Andy, live in St. Louis Park, having recently returned to Minneapolis from Chicago where she completed coursework for her Ph.D. in Ethics/Theology at Loyola University Chicago. In addition to her pastoral work, she is a part of the faculty and leadership at United Seminary, volunteers as a sexual assault advocate, and is writing her dissertation on developing a new feminist political theological ethics of memory in view of survivors of sexual violence. She loves spending time with friends and family, decorating, eating, jogging, and most of all...just hanging out with her favorite human and partner in life (PIL), Andy Garbers.

Sara has long been passionate about justice and the life of faith, and seeks to develop and articulate notions of faith that move us deeper into loving God, ourselves, and our neighbors. Sara shared that becoming a part of the pastoral team at First Covenant is the fulfillment of a life-long dream. Join us in welcoming Sara to her new role!



# new members

This fall we were thrilled to receive an amazing new group of members:

- Florkime Paye**
- Ashley Aamot**
- Andi Tauer**
- Kori Shelden**

You are leaders of strength, passion, and conviction, and we couldn't be more honored to be a part of First Covenant with you! For those who don't know, membership is an important way that you can influence the future direction of the church. Membership is a part of our charter as a faith-based non-profit. If you consider First Cov home and want to talk further about what membership is and if you want to be a part of influencing our future in this intentional way, please contact Pastor Dan Collison at [dcollison@1stcov.org](mailto:dcollison@1stcov.org).



# upcoming events



## “Off the Streets” Super Run at Target Field Saturday, February 4, 9:00 a.m.

First Covenant is joining a number of local churches and non-profits concerned with human trafficking to participate in the “Off the Streets Super Run” at 10am on February 4th at Target Field. 100% of proceeds go toward fighting human trafficking among youth in our city. This 5k walk/run is open to runners and walkers of all abilities! To learn more or to sign up, visit [www.offthestreets5k.com](http://www.offthestreets5k.com). Want to run with others from First Covenant? Meet us here at church at 9am, park for free, and we'll ride the train over together to the race. Contact Pastor Todd Bratulich at [tbratulich@1stcov.org](mailto:tbratulich@1stcov.org) for more details.



## Tubing at Theodore Wirth Park Saturday, February 4, 2:30–5:00 p.m.

Join us for some winter outdoor fun at Theodore Wirth Park! Bring a sled for free sledding or rent a tube and try your luck on the tubing hill. We'll have hot cocoa, fun treats, and lots of laughs together! Look for more details to come soon.

# advent reflection

Thank you for joining us on  
*Christmas Eve!*



## “Mary Had a Baby”

MetroKids  
Early Childhood Education

### Christmas Pageant



On December 8, 2016, the MetroKids families celebrated the birth of Jesus through the eyes of the children. The Busy Bears and Rockin’ Robins (Preschoolers) did a fantastic job of memorizing their story lines and the verses to “Mary Had a Baby” and “Joy to the World”. The children felt very special in their costumes.

The Leap Frogs (Toddlers) walked into the Sanctuary singing “Jingle Bells” and ring those bells they did! While singing “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” the Little Lambs (Infants) who were the “Stars” of the show came on to the stage in their star bright T’s.

It was a very special night! As with every year, there is nothing more special than celebrating Christmas through the eyes of the children.

## THE GOOD ARTS COLLECTIVE: OLIVER HOLIDAY and the CINNAMON SABOTAGE



2016 brought a lot of good things to the Good Arts Collective: great new members and some wonderful opportunities. Part of cultivating a collective means always finding new and creative ways to reach people and share the joy of art. This year’s second annual production of “**Oliver Holiday & the Cinnamon Sabotage**” was a big success. Together we learned, loved, and found some clues all in the spirit of Christmas. Keep checking [goodartscollective.com](http://goodartscollective.com) for updates and new things to come in the new year.

## Advent wakeup



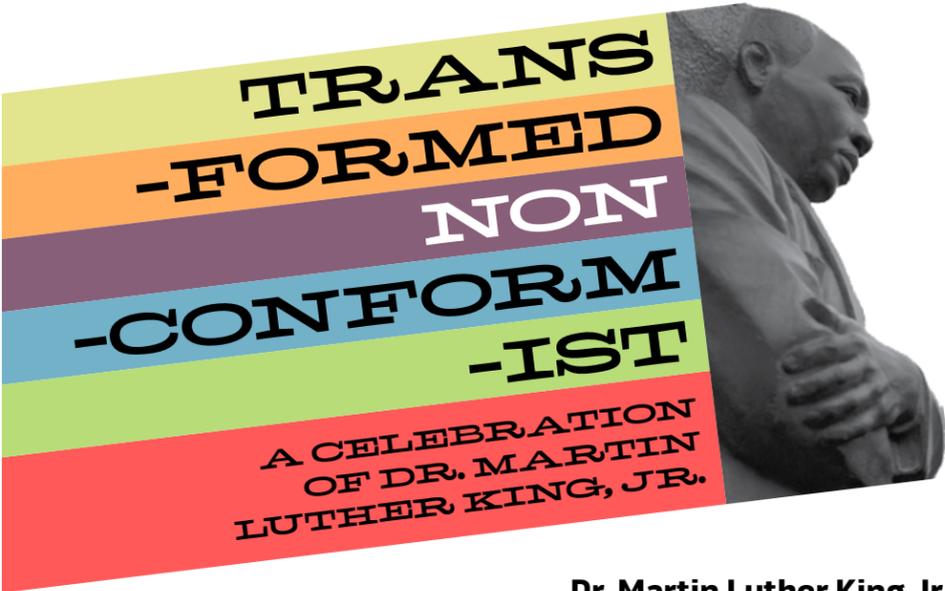
### While We Wait: A Recap

Waiting can be so hard, especially when you are waiting for something wonderful. Christmas is a wonderful season, celebrating Christ’s birth, but it can also be a crazy and hectic time. This Advent, a group gathered on each of the four Mondays to prepare themselves and experience Advent in a very different way than the normal hustle and bustle of Christmas. They used the book, **While We Wait: Living the Questions of Advent**, by Mary Lou Redding to look at some biblical figures we don’t necessarily think of when we talk about advent Advent... such as Tamar, Ruth, Mary, Zachariah, Elizabeth, and the Maggi. Together they read scripture and wondered about these people in Christ’s genealogy and their experiences. They journaled with words and art as they reflected on how these Biblical experiences related to real-life struggles.



Additionally, the group practiced centering prayer at every gathering. So often when we pray, we speak to God without listening. In centering, or contemplative prayer, we open ourselves to sit with God, to listen, and simply to be present to God. This is a practice that takes time and the group grew in their ability and comfort in sitting silently and being open to God’s presence. Consider joining us next year for our Advent series study!

# looking ahead



## Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

is one of the most celebrated figures in modern history, and the only Christian pastor for whom we honor a national holiday. Yet, we tend to forget that Dr. King's challenge to the systems and institutions of power in America included the American Church, which in large part either perpetuated or sat idly by while many of our sisters and brothers suffered under segregation and violence. Today, it is clear that while Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had an inspiring dream, over 50 years later we are far from its realization. Race relations have come to a head in our country, exposing the deep pain of our racial history, the deep roots of American racism which endures still today, and the need for deep transformation and healing as we look toward the future. Dr. King's example and challenging words to the church in America are needed now more than ever!

Join us in worship on **Sunday, January 15 at 9:30 a.m.** for a look at the life and call of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a self-described "transformed nonconformist". Through song, story, and the sermons of Dr. King himself, we will explore our own call to carry on King's legacy and work for racial justice. Then, join us after the worship service for our monthly **Committee on Racial and Economic Justice at 11 a.m.**, where we will get a chance to process Dr. King's poignant challenge as a faith community.

### Check out these other MLK holiday events around town:

#### MLK Holiday Breakfast

Minneapolis Convention Center (or watch live-stream on TPT)  
Monday, January 16, 7:00 a.m.  
mlkbreakfast.com

#### Interfaith Action MLK Breakfasts

Various Locations  
Monday, January 16, 7:00 a.m.  
interfaithaction.org

#### Luther Seminary MLK Celebration: Guide My Feet

Olson Campus Center, St. Paul  
Monday, January 16, events from 8:30 a.m.–Noon  
www.luthersem.edu/lifelong\_learning/events/community/mlk.aspx

#### Minneapolis Parks & Recreation MLK Celebrations

- Powderhorn Park - 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., free lunch & activities for all ages! [ppna.org/upcoming-events/martin-luther-king-jr-celebration/](http://ppna.org/upcoming-events/martin-luther-king-jr-celebration/)
- Central Gym - 3:00-4:40pm, program and soul food dinner!
- Rev. Dr. MLK, Jr. Recreation Center - 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
Keynote address, musical performances, awards presentation, etc...  
[www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities\\_\\_events/events/rev\\_dr\\_martin\\_luther\\_king\\_jr\\_celebration/](http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities__events/events/rev_dr_martin_luther_king_jr_celebration/)



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# CALENDAR

calendar events are updated at [1stcov.org](http://1stcov.org)

**Sunday, January 1, 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, January 8, 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 fellowship hall. Bring your favorite dish (or two!). Everyone is welcome!

**Sunday, January 15, 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!

**January 20–21, 2017 – Winter Retreat** The Sabbath Retreat will be 24 hours of slowing and holding the sacred gift of your life with God. We will be retreating at the Franciscan Retreat Center located in beautiful Prior Lake, MN. Please contact Carma Gjerner for more information.

**Monday, January 23, 6:00 p.m. – “The Deep End: Six Vital Explorations of Faith” class** This three-hour intensive learning experiences provides a very candid look at the some of our most important questions and quandaries as a diverse, multi-generational, urban Christian community. Please contact Pastor Dan if you are interested in participating (dcollison@1stcov.org or 612-927-3123).

**Saturday, February 4, 9:00 a.m. – Off the Streets Super Run** First Covenant is joining a number of local churches and non-profits concerned with human trafficking to participate in the “Off the Streets Super Run” at Target Field. This 5k walk/run is open to runners and walkers of all abilities! To learn more or to sign up, visit [www.offthestreets5k.com](http://www.offthestreets5k.com). Contact Pastor Todd Bratulich for more details.

**Saturday, February 4, 2:30–5:30 p.m. – Snow Tubing/Sledding at Theodore Wirth Park** Join us for some winter outdoor fun at Theodore Wirth Park! Bring a sled for free sledding or rent a tube and try your luck on the tubing hill. We'll have hot cocoa, fun treats, and lots of laughs together!

**Sunday, February 5, 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, February 12, 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 fellowship hall. Bring your favorite dish (or two!). Everyone is welcome!

**Sunday, February 26, 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, February 27, 6:00 p.m. – “The Deep End: Six Vital Explorations of Faith” class** This three-hour intensive learning experiences provides a very candid look at the some of our most important questions and quandaries as a diverse, multi-generational, urban Christian community. Please contact Pastor Dan if you are interested in participating (dcollison@1stcov.org or 612-927-3123).

# RECURRING EVENTS, CLASSES & SERVICES

**Monthly Group Runs** First Covenant runners of all abilities are welcome to join a new monthly group running group. Join us the first Saturday of every month in the First Covenant parking lot for a morning jog by the river. We'll decide on distance that morning and brunch after!

**United International Christian Fellowship (UICF)** meets every Tuesday evening and Saturday evening from 6:00–9:00 p.m. in the lounge.

**Twin Cities Christian Legal Aid (TCCLA)** is offered the first and third Wednesday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

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