

# FIRST THINGS

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH MINNEAPOLIS MAY/JUN 2017

## Lend your voice at our Town Hall Meetings!

**Sundays, April 30 and May 7**

First Covenant Church is an urban Christian community in downtown Minneapolis that seeks to be a diverse, multi-generational, urban Christian community that is a place of learning and transformation for all kinds of people. In a time where church attendance is waning and the Christian faith is experiencing upheaval and reformation, our community seeks to grow through intentionally organic means. By *intentional* we mean a thoughtful and thorough approach to organizing and catalyzing meaningful community. By *organic* we mean the process whereby we move with the rhythms of 21st century people by creating a third space that is agile and available.

One truly unique aspect of the First Covenant community is the fact we own a facility and valuable land in downtown Minneapolis. Since the very beginning of the church's re-birth in 2009 it was obvious that our building and block were a gift given to us in order to be given back to the community. Over time we have discerned an integrating theme of "The Healing Block" that is the basis for entering into an array of partnerships that support human flourishing broadly and contextualized community good specifically.

What does all this mean for our ongoing and future aspirations for growth? The Leadership Team invites congregational members and attendees to participate in two special Town Hall Meetings that will include a brief presentation of a new strategic plan for growth and extended time for congregational input. These meetings are scheduled for **Sundays, April 30 and May 7, 11:00 a.m.–noon** in the Lounge. Childcare will be available, and if you would like to help with childcare, please contact Carma at [belovedcarma@gmail.com](mailto:belovedcarma@gmail.com). Please join us!

## "Why We Gather"

### current teaching series

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 #4:

##### **Finding Purpose**

**May 7: Holy Listening**

**May 14: Shared Purpose**

**May 21: Being Single**

**May 28: Guiding Children**

**June 4: Vocation as Our Life Themes**

#### Segment #5:

##### **Creating a Beautiful Life**

**June 11: Sabbath**

**June 18: In Search of Beauty**

**June 25: Healing with Help**



Are you interested in connecting with others from First Covenant in a low-key setting? Then join us for the launch of Saturday Suppers! Dinners will be hosted for 6-9 people at someone's house. Dependent upon the host, guests may be asked to bring a dish to share. If you are interested in hosting OR in attending, please contact Pastor Sara at [swilhelmgarbers@1stcov.org](mailto:swilhelmgarbers@1stcov.org). **And mark your calendars for the first Saturday Supper: Saturday, May 20.**



### celebrating women's history month

at First Covenant

Women's History month included programming related to conversations about faith and gender, a skit featuring Kadija as she wrestled with issues of race AND gender, poetry, and more! We are grateful to be a community of faith that honors the life of all of us as people made in the image of God.



# LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

by Katherine Johnson  
Leadership Team Vice Chair

A seemingly simple question was asked at our adjourned annual meeting on March 12: *What is it that the leadership team of First Covenant does?* Our constitution states the purpose of the leadership team in this way: *The Leadership Team shall be responsible for building, maintaining and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the congregation and for directing and overseeing all ministries and business affairs of the church.* The practical answer to the question raised is less simple. It's a question that is open to interpretation and an answer that will vary depending on who you ask.

For me, the question prompted two immediate thoughts. One, as a leadership team, we need to do a better job keeping members of our community informed. And two, there is something missing, something important to community members that the leadership team may not be addressing. In other words, the question I heard was *Why isn't the leadership team addressing this?* (replace *this* with any number of topics that people might consider to be the responsibility of our leadership team.) *What is and isn't being explored, discussed, decided at monthly leadership team meetings?*

These questions were fresh in my mind when members of the leadership team met the next day at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The discussion ranged from passionate to productive to painful, yielding two immediate actions.

We agreed that one way to improve communication and transparency would be to share leadership team meeting highlights with the congregation no later than the week following our meetings. That step was put into practice in March with distribution of leadership team meeting highlights to all community members. The most recent highlights were distributed April 18. If you didn't receive the highlights but would like to, let any member of the leadership team know, and we will add you to the distribution list.

Part two, discovering whether members feel there something the leadership team is not addressing, will be explored in a couple ways. On **Sunday, April 30 and Sunday, May 7** during third hour, we will host Town Hall Meeting that will include a brief presentation of new strategic plan for growth and extended time for congregational input. While our primary focus will be on growing our community, all input is welcome. If needed we will schedule additional meetings for discussion.

Any time you have a question or concern, you can bring it to Leadership Team Chair Chris Fossum, Vice Chair Katherine Johnson, Pastor Dan Collison or any member of the leadership team: Jim Albinson, Carina Aleckson, Scott Barsuhn, Kevin Frazell, Bill Woodson.



## GOOD ARTS COLLECTIVE

**GAC has been growing... and we are loving it!**

Two new members have joined the ranks: actor and photographer Hillary Olsen, and local theatre producer Damon Runnals. They are immensely talented and bring a great spirit to the team. With a current membership of 14, GAC hopes to keep increasing the number of members as they grow to accommodate more diverse artists and a super handy elevator.

The past couple months have boasted some great highlights. For starters, the Red Room has been the venue for all sorts of artistic projects, including the filming of a new indie film titled "Out Of The Eater" directed by Bethany Ayshe starring GAC director Benjamin Kelly. Look out for that film in the coming months. GAC member Jourdan Myers debuted her music project JØUR with a show at First Avenue. Her latest single "American Nightmare" can be heard online now.



### April 28 "Good Egg"

Responsible Meg has always taken care of her bipolar younger brother Matt. But when she decides to get pregnant — and have her embryos screened for bipolar disorder — is she taking the idea of "being responsible" too far? A funny and surprising play about bioethics, siblings, and the limits of unconditional love.

### May 12 "They Sang What?!"

A theatre review of singers finally performing those lovely theatre songs that juxtapose their personalities. Come hear your favorites tunes through new unlikely characters.

Check out [goodartscollective.com](http://goodartscollective.com) for the latest.



## First Cov celebrates Earth Day!

There is a sacredness in every natural thing on this planet. The air, water, land, people, animals, all of us. When we remember that sacredness and treat each other in ways that reflect minds who fully remember this sacredness, we live in a world where our voices speak confidently and compassionately for those, like our earth, who have no "audible" voice, bringing us back to harmony with creation. Many of us have forgotten how to hear these "silent voices". When we cry out for change that protects the environment, we can relearn how to hear and in turn begin to know ourselves more deeply and connect with our Creator.



Earth Day this year was April 22. As a reflection on our role with the environment and the connection it has to our call as Christ-followers, First Cov participated in Earth Fest at Elliot Park on Thursday, April 20th. We hosted a pop-up thrift store with clothing donations sourced directly from our community! The donated clothing was available to guests at the festival free of charge. We will also had a mending table to help guests spruce-up worn clothing, as a way of sharing how our clothing consumption and maintenance is a crucial component of sustainability.

We did this because when we participate in recycling our clothing through buying second-hand, mending old clothing, and donating to organizations that give our garments to other who may be of need, we keep textile waste out of the landfill, something that accounts for 11 million tons of waste in the U.S. alone each year.

If you are interested in joining in with sustainability efforts at First Cov and/or are looking to know more, please feel free to email Maddy Bartsch at [saltothenorth@gmail.com](mailto:saltothenorth@gmail.com).

## MetroKids Early Childhood Education



**MetroKids** exists so that all children in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area have access to excellent early childhood education. MetroKids promotes early learning through holistic programming and outstanding teachers, nurtures every child's individual strengths, and supports families. MetroKids gives children the academic, social, and spiritual foundation for elementary school—and life.



## Just Mercy Book Club

We're a group of readers who want to open our minds and hearts to books that will inform and change us. We meet on the last Thursday of every month, from 6:30–8:00 p.m. at Open Book Minneapolis (1011 S Washington Ave, Minneapolis). This group is open to all who want to learn more about issues of race, justice and more.

**Please join the Just Mercy Book Club group on Facebook for current information.**

## Team World Vision

### Team World Vision Update

We so far have a six-person team running for 1st Cov in events this summer! 600% more than last year! Four are planning to run the Twin Cities Marathon ("The Most Beautiful Urban Marathon In America") in October, and two others are choosing alternative events and will do fundraising as well. There is still time to join the team, run the marathon (October 1), the half-marathon (August 5), or an alternative event that fits your abilities and time commitments. Being a part of this team (rather than doing it on your own) is an amazing experience! As it says on the back of our ORANGE shirts "Go farther together for vulnerable children worldwide"

### Global 6K for Water

Saturday, May 6 is the Global 6K for Water. Nick has set up a page for a First Covenant run, and an event on the 1st Cov group run page. This is a walk/run/stroller/pet-friendly event; we had a good turnout last year, in spite of the cold weather (last year it was in March!).

# looking back

## Holy Week at First Covenant

Over the course of our three services this week, visual artists in residence **Lisa and Heather Albinson** created a piece that pulled inspiration from a variety of sources surrounding the themes of journey, transformation, and mystery.



## Thanks for participating in Homeless Day on the Hill!



Friends and members of First Covenant joined with others from the Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness (DCEH) this past month to attend Homeless Day on the Hill. More than 800 people showed up to speak with legislators about programs and policies that affect people experiencing homelessness, as well as the need for affordable housing. Over 50 participants from DCEH congregations came out, including 20 from Street Voices of Change, a group of people experiencing homelessness that are meeting in a number of congregations (including FCC) to work on issues of homeless advocacy. Thanks to all who came out in support!

# BOWLERAMA!

Thanks to the more than 50 beloved bowlers who came out to Memory Lanes for a memorable day of pin-crashing, high-fiving, pizza-eating fun! Congrats to our trophy winners, including **Rachel Darling** (pin punisher), **Olivia Auell** (holy roller), **Claire** (lil' pin), **Jim** (the dude), as well as all of our beloved bowlers!



# looking ahead



**Saturday, May 13**  
**9:00 a.m.**

Every year after the shelter season ends, volunteers put on their aprons and head for Fellowship Hall, where our kitchen gets its "spring cleaning". Ovens, fridges, countertops, dusty ledges, pots and pans all get a good scrubbing. It's fun... really! Want to help? Contact Doug at [dvgoren@1stcov.org](mailto:dvgoren@1stcov.org).

"1K Saturdays" are periodic service days in which we give half a day to clean and provide light maintenance of our facility, saving the church approximately \$1,000 (or "1K") each half day of service. All you need to do is show up and all materials will be provided. Thank you!

ALL-CHURCH CAMPING TRIP TO

## Cleary Lake Regional Park



COME - HAVE A REST

**Friday and Saturday,**  
**August 4-5**

Join us for a night of camping, s'mores, and all sorts of outdoor fun at Cleary Lake Regional Park in Prior Lake, MN. We have a group campsite reserved, so all you need to do is bring yourself, a tent or camper, and some food to share! All ages and experience levels are welcome. Need camping equipment? We've got you covered! Look for registration details/form in the worship guide soon, or contact Todd Bratulich at [tbratulich@1stcov.org](mailto:tbratulich@1stcov.org) for more info.



**Kids Adventure Week 2017**

# MooVANA

**July 10-13, 6:00-8:15 p.m.**

**"For in Christ we live and move and have our being." Acts 17: 28**

On a warm summer night children from our church community and kids from the Phillips neighborhood and Hope Academy gather to experience the love of God-KIDS STYLE! There are four amazing nights of experiencing the ADVENTURE of following Christ and the generosity and BIGNESS of God's love. Children are invited to "taste and see" that the Lord is good through fabulous worship, captivating drama for all ages, creative art, playing, hands on exploring, reflecting and practicing prayer.

Our theme "MooVana" will invite kids to join the Apostle Paul as he goes on some wild boat adventures, visiting various islands, teaching about the gift of God's love and inviting others on a spiritual journey. Once again our gifted and passionate actors and actresses will invite us to open our eyes and heart to the wonder, mystery and awe of the "good news." Through a variety of learning stations children will discover ways to connect God's story to their story and continue to be transformed by God's love and discover their divine DNA as God's beloved.

Our church community has a rich tradition of coming around our children and leading this week. Thank you to many of you who have shared your gifts and presence with our children. Kids Adventure Week is a time set apart for kids, but there is also a gift for grown-ups to be a part of something that gives birth to our sense of wonder and reminds us that children have a unique way of inviting and leading us to experience God's grace and love.

This year we are inviting you to get involved in this awesome week through your financial gifts, time and prayers. We are in the midst of raising \$3250. to sponsor 50 children to be involved with the week. \$65.00 covers the cost for one child. Please consider sponsoring a child or two. Every gift is valued and important and all contributions are tax-deductible.

In a few weeks you will have the opportunity to sign up to volunteer for the many hands and hearts that are needed for this week to happen. Whether you have a specific gift like welcoming others, or preparing and serving food or leading games, or capturing the essence of the week through photography, or leading worship, or caring for children, or leading a small group, or helping kids explore science, create art, pray and explore Bible stories-everyone is welcome and needed! You can sign up either through contacting Carma, or in the lobby of our church at the MooVana table.

If you have questions or need more information about volunteering or giving please contact Carma Gjerner at [cgjerner@firstcov.org](mailto:cgjerner@firstcov.org).

# 9TH ANNUAL ABRAHAMIC DINNER OF TRADITIONS

On Wednesday, March 15, Pastor Dan Collison was a keynote speaker alongside Jewish Rabbi and Muslim Scholar. The following is an excerpt of Pastor Collison's presentation:

I have been asked to answer the question "How does the Christian faith instruct us to respond to discrimination, bullying, and hate speech and action?" The answer to that question is simply and profoundly grounded in what Jesus said to all followers of God: "Above all other things, love God and love your neighbor like yourself." Everything in the Christian faith is measured by how well we do those two things. The instruction is as clear as the sun on a cloudless day, and made brought to a fine point when Jesus clarified these two greatest commandments with the Parable of the Good Samaritan that teaches us our neighbor is everyone regardless of race, creed, lifestyle, or nationality. So, tonight, I could just read that passage of Scripture, provide a few inspirational illustrations and applications based upon the Parable of the Good Samaritan and sit down.

This is a strange time for American Christianity, though, because that which is plain and obvious about Jesus and his teachings doesn't seem to influence how some American Christians think and behave these days. It's kind of like the internet meme that was circulating when refugee misinformation and rancor exploded in the 2016 election cycle:

The meme is an illustration of the Good Samaritan story and looks as if it's taken from a 1950's illustrated children's Bible. Except, bloggers added commentary with arrows pointing to the characters in the painting saying "These guys are not the heroes of the story" when pointed at the two hyper religious people who walked by the beat up man who was left for dead on the road. And another arrow pointing toward the Good Samaritan saying, "This guy is the hero of the story... You want to be this guy."

And, because this was also aimed at elected officials, the primary mem caption is: BIBLE SCHOOL PRIMER FOR GOVERNORS DURING REFUGEE CRISIS." This is Christians reminding Christians about who they are supposed to be.

Welcome to Christian faith in America, because we are not a monolith here or anywhere around the world. This is important to remember at the 9th Annual Dinner of Abrahamic Traditions. In our time, Christian's lament that it is Christian leaders who are teaching and instigating violence rather than warning against it. And, I am here to tell you that Christian to Christian conversations about discrimination, bullying, and hate speech and action are difficult and frequent. When a President of a large private Christian University encouraged the student body to carry guns in order to arm themselves against Muslims there was a massive effort to point out how non-Christian and even anti-Christian that rhetoric was.[2]

And, when another famous Christian leader of an organization named "Samaritan's Purse" after the Parable of the Good Samaritan said publically and with astounding irony that "Jesus' command to love and welcome the stranger did not mean the US should welcome more refugees and that such matters are not a biblical issue," other Christians rose up with dissenting open letters and an outcry against such profound hypocrisy.[3]

And, like a woman who advised a friend in a bad relationship to "flip the script," Christians have turned to Jesus' method of flipping key theological scripts in this strange time where some Christians don't act like Christians. I am going to let you in on two flips of the script as a means to answer tonight's question:

Script Flip #1: Shifting from "Righteousness as Being Right" to "Righteousness as Being in the Right Place"

Script Flip #2: Shifting from "Difference as Being a Threat to Difference as Being Sacred"

"Righteousness as being in the right place" and "difference as being sacred," those are two key script flips among many that I believe are necessary for Christians to be more awakened to love of God and love of neighbor such that when discrimination, bullying, and hate speech and action take place, we have an internal moral compass that reacts swiftly with justice and love to resist such wrongs and lead broader society in a Christ-like reconciling and healing narrative.

Thank you.



## CALENDAR

calendar events are updated at 1stcov.org

**Monday, May 1, 6:00 p.m. – Discovering First Covenant** Interested in becoming a member? All are welcome at First Cov, but in order to vote on important matters, you must be a member. We invite you to consider attending a class about membership, which Pastor Dan Collison will lead. Attending does not commit you to membership. For more info, please contact Dan Collison (dcollison@1stcov.org or 612-927-3123).

**Saturday, May 6, 8:00 a.m. – Global 6K Run for Water** Join Team World Vision as they run to provide clean water! Contact Nick Cross at nhcross@gmail.com to get involved!

**Sunday, May 7, 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, May 7, 11:00 a.m. – Town Hall meeting** The Leadership Team invites congregational members and attendees to participate in a special Town Hall meeting, which will include a brief presentation of a new strategic plan for growth and extended time for congregational input. Childcare will be available.

**Saturday, May 13, 9:00 a.m. – 1K Saturday: Kitchen Cleanup** Every year after the shelter season ends, volunteers put on their aprons and head for Fellowship Hall, where our kitchen gets its "spring cleaning". Contact Doug at dvigoren@1stcov.org.

**Saturday, May 20 – Saturday Suppers kickoff** If you're looking to connect with other First Covenant attendees in a casual environment, sharing a meal is a great way to start. We'll be kicking off our Saturday Suppers on May 20. Email Pastor Sara at swilhelmgarbers@1stcov.org to get connected!

**Sunday, May 21, 11:00 a.m. – Arts & Crafts group** Join us for our Arts and Crafts get-together in the lounge. We will order lunch from Jimmy Johns. Welcome to all knitters (beginners welcome), crocheters, scrapbookers, colorers, quilters, etc. Bring your own supplies.

**Monday, May 22, 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).

**Thursday, May 25, 6:30 p.m. – Just Mercy Book Club** We're a group of readers who want to open our minds and hearts to books that will inform and change us. Join us from 6:30–8:00 p.m. at Open Book Minneapolis (1011 S Washington Ave, Minneapolis). This group is open to all who want to learn more about issues of race, justice and more.

**Sunday, May 28, 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!

**Sunday, June 4, 9:30 a.m. – Communion**

**Sunday, June 11, 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, June 18, 11:00 a.m. – Arts & Crafts group**

**Sunday, June 25, after the service – Committee for Racial & Economic Justice (CREJ)**

**Monday, June 26, 6:00 p.m. – "The Deep End: Six Vital Explorations of Faith" class**

**Thursday, June 29, 6:30 p.m. – Just Mercy Book Club**

## RECURRING EVENTS, CLASSES & SERVICES

**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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