

Covenant Call

November 2020 Newsletter

FOOD FOR THOUGHT By Pastor Dan Milford

The elk were bugling at what seemed to be just a few dozen yards from us when we pitched our tent on a clear and moonless night with stars twinkling all around. Nadia, Austin, and I made camp at an altitude of 9000 feet in a saddle between two peaks along the crest of a mountain range. From that glorious vantage point, we could see to the east much of the green valley we had just hiked through. To the west we could see forever, it seemed. There was almost no sign of human life in any direction. Five miles of hiking and 2000 feet of elevation gain had put separation between us and all others in this part of the Lincoln National Forest in New Mexico. With stomachs full, it was time to store our food and go to bed on this first night of a planned three-day hike.

Warned in advance about the presence of bears, we had brought a “bear cannister”—a hard plastic cylinder that bears could not open. Much of our food would fit there, but not all. After the bear cannister was filled and sealed, I pitched it into a bush where I hoped it would go undisturbed until morning. We hung the remainder of the food in a tree. That food seemed less secure. It was low enough a large bear could probably swat it down and close enough to the branches above that a racoon or possum could probably get it. What kinds of animals would try to come for it in the night? Exhausted, I drifted off to sleep quickly, but not without some uneasiness about what might become of our stored food.

When the sun rose, I left the tent to check on our supplies. We had burned a lot of calories climbing with our packs to this point. It would take a great deal of energy to get back to our van. What if our food was gone?

It occurred to me that for most of human existence we have waged war against the other living organisms with whom we share the planet. Any food we had left over had to be protected from everything from fellow carnivores to mice, insects, bacteria, and fungi. Clay pots, storage rooms, salt, canning jars, and other developments helped, but the battle continued. I found myself feeling grateful for refrigerators, metal cans, glass jars, and even plastics. I have never woken up in the morning wondering if I would have to hunt for my breakfast. Stored food has been the modern miracle I have always taken for granted.

Stored food is not without its dangers, though. Because they were desperately in need of the seed and stored food that only Pharaoh had during the seven years of famine, the Egyptians first used all their money to buy seed and food, then gave all their livestock, and finally sold their land and themselves to Joseph as slaves to Pharaoh to get the seed they needed to survive. In short, Joseph used stored food to ultimately enslave

the Egyptians (Gen. 47:13-26). Later, it would be the Hebrews who were enslaved to the Egyptians. God sought to break this pattern of slavery and domination when he freed the Hebrews and led them into the wilderness.

God’s plan began with getting rid of stored food. Gathering more manna than others did not lead some to having more than they needed. Saving manna for the next day only resulted in it being filled with worms. Working on the Sabbath was likewise fruitless. Neither harder work nor greater frugality allowed any of the Hebrews to “get ahead” of their neighbors, build up stores of food, and make others beholden to them. (See Exodus 16.) They simply had to learn to depend on God day by day.

A few days in the wilderness taught me to be grateful for the ability to store and preserve food. Scripture teaches me to trust in God and only ask for “daily bread” (Mt. 6:11) and keep my heart open to all those who walk this journey of life with me.

At the end of the day, the ability to store food isn’t the problem. The human heart and our ways of living in community are what need healing. As we learn to view all others as children of God and remember that our love for God is necessarily expressed as love for others (1 Jn. 4:19-21) new possibilities emerge. Improved storage abilities can lead to broader distribution and greater sharing of the daily bread that all need for life. Shared food can become an expression of shared commitment, hospitality, and concern rather than stored power, leverage, and influence. The genuine expressions of love and support Christians render to one another within the family of faith through a shared casserole, potato salad, batch of cookies, or loaf of bread can be broadened into efforts to ensure that God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).

On a mountaintop, the heavens seem to open and great dreams can be dreamed. The valleys of daily life present constant obstacles and distractions, but also are the place where dreams can become reality. May I never look quite the same at the pantry or refrigerator...or an individual or community facing hunger or deep economic need.

Grace & Peace, Dan



Covid-19 In-Person Worship Protocol

WHEN WILL COVENANT OPEN FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY?

Our goal is to open on November 8, and we are finalizing all logistics to be ready for in-person worship. We have exchanged the two previous metrics we were watching to one comprehensive one focused on Bexar County. It shows the “Risk Level” for the City of San Antonio and can be found here:

<https://covid19.sanantonio.gov/About-COVID-19/Dashboards-Data>

“**Low**” or “**Moderate**”—We will have in-person worship available.

“**Steady**”—We will evaluate and determine if it seems wiser to continue or discontinue in-person worship in the sanctuary.

“**Severe**” or “**Critical**”—We will not have in-person worship available.

DO I NEED TO WEAR A MASK?

- In consideration of others and in keeping with community mandates on masks, [we are requiring you to wear a mask](#) while on our campus.
- Worship leaders will be masked except when speaking.

DO I NEED TO PRE-REGISTER TO ATTEND WORSHIP SERVICE?

- No, however you will be required to check in upon arrival and complete the COVID-19 screening.

HOW WILL WE MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING DURING SERVICE?

- **Parking:** Parking will be limited to the south parking lot (next to 410) and entrance into the sanctuary will be limited to the entry at the covered drop-off. We will dismiss through a different path (south egress door) by rows so paths will not cross and exits will not be crowded.
- **Entrance:** Entry will be marked with tape at 6-foot intervals to insure proper social distancing.
- **Seating:** Ushers will seat you as you arrive on alternating rows (filling in from the front to the back), and we will make sure seats are filled so that you do not have to step over or by someone already seated. Families with children will be seated on aisles. We will seat people at least six feet apart unless they came together in the same car or are from the same household.
- **Greetings:** As much as we would like to give hugs and shake hands, due to our greater desire to maintain the health and safety of our Covenant family, we will not have these times of greeting until further notice.
- **Departure:** After the service, ushers will direct worshipers to exit through the south (410 side) exit near the chancel area and pulpit.

HOW WILL I BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN WORSHIP?

Participation in the service will be different as long as we are dealing with the pandemic. Below are some of the changes.

- **Singing:** Since singing creates greater risk for all, we will not have congregational singing during the services. We will “sing in our hearts.”
- **Liturgy:** Spoken responses will be used.
- **Communion:** We will continue observing communion on the first Sunday of each month and will have individually, pre-packaged elements for those participating in-person.
- **Offering:** We will place a plate on the communion table for people to give offerings as they depart. We will also continue to receive checks through the mail and gifts via Zelle.
- **Children:** We will provide Ziploc bags with coloring pages and crayons for children and will continue to have our “Young Disciples’ Time”. Children will be asked to remain in the pew with their parents.
- **Fellowship:** We will not serve coffee or refreshments until further notice.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I SHOULD WORSHIP FROM HOME?

- **Safety First:** While we greatly desire to worship together with each of you, the safety of our entire Covenant family is of paramount importance. We also wish to respect the desires of each individual and family in choosing whether to join us in person or remain worshipping online.
- **Feeling Sick or Recently Exposed?** If you or someone in your family has had a fever, cough, feel ill, have traveled, or been asked to quarantine by a medical or government official in the last 14 days, we appreciate your willingness to stay home and help protect others.
- **Higher-Risk Categories:** If you are in a higher-risk category due to advanced age and/or pre-existing condition(s), we urge you to continue to worship with us online.
- **Online Worship Continuing:** We will continue to offer a livestream of both services through Facebook and later post the reading of the scriptures and the sermon to YouTube and our website.

WHAT CLEANING MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE?

In addition to regular cleaning procedures, we will sanitize the seats and wipe down surfaces and doors after each Sunday service.

- We will sanitize the restrooms throughout the morning.
- Hand sanitizers can be found at strategic locations throughout our campus and can be used by anyone at any time.
- Please remember to frequently wash your hands, and if you or anyone in your family is not feeling well, please stay home.



“Racism & the Mission of the Church”

Led by
Pastor Dan Milford & Father Cleophas Kukeya

Mondays, October 12th – November 30th
6:30pm – 8:00pm

This fall, Pastor Dan Milford and Father Cleophas Kukeya will be facilitating conversations on racism and the mission of the church.

Here’s a brief description of the class:

We know that the history of our country includes the genocide of Native Americans, enslavement of people from Africa and their descendants, internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, and many other things rooted in racism. But those things happened a long time ago. How does racism influence how I think, how I respond to others, how we as churches carry out our ministries and our life in community? What might we need to notice in ourselves and our congregations? How might we need to change in order to more fully live as God’s people at this time and in this place? With America walking through a time of racial reckoning in 2020, this class invites members of Covenant, Epiphany, and the general public to join for crucial conversations in which we seek to grow in our understanding of racism, its impact on our lives, and how we as individuals and the Church are called to respond to it.

Zoom Meeting ID: 810 6050 7386

Passcode: 684136



RACISM AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

**Be Encouraged. Be Joyful.
You are loved!
From the Ryder Family**



Volunteers Needed

Decorating the sanctuary for Christmas while maintaining Social Distancing - I'm sorry if it's too soon to think about decorating for Christmas when we haven't even had a chance to rummage through our children's Halloween candy bag, but we're near the end of October and the first Sunday in Advent is November 29, 2020. I hope to have enough volunteers for this task, so I want folks to have enough time to check their calendar and reply to the request for volunteers.

We will decorate on Saturday, November 28th at 8:30 a.m. Please reply to me via email:

k1p2yarn@yahoo.com or text 210.621.7074
by Friday, November 13th. To maintain social distancing we will have to limit the number of volunteers to 8 maximum. Thank you, Martha Flores

Join us for a time of

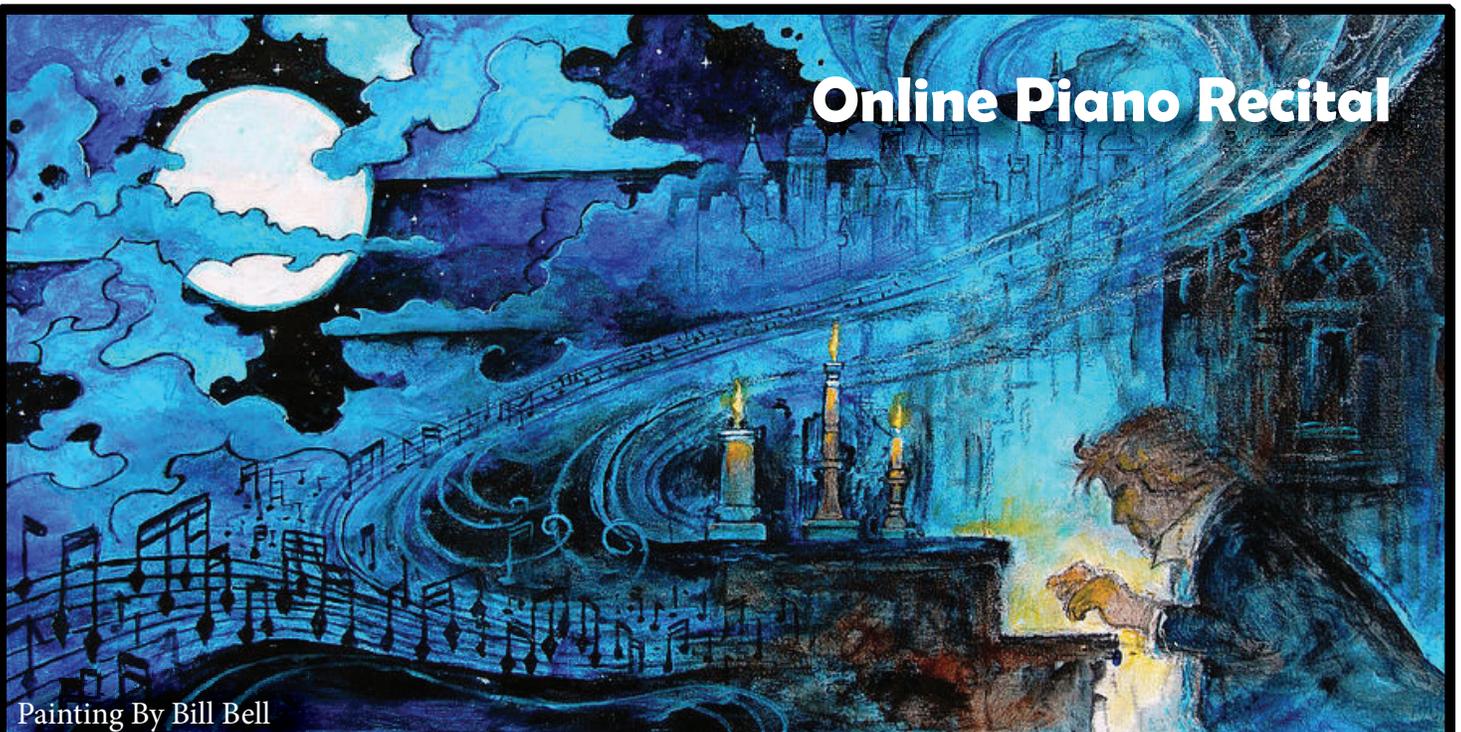
Thanksgiving

Worship Service

Sunday, November 22 - 7:00PM

Worship In-Person or Online via Facebook

Online Piano Recital



Painting By Bill Bell

Join us for an **Online Piano Recital** with Dr. Mark Alexander. Please invite your friends and family, and tune in to Covenant Presbyterian Church's Facebook page **November 14th at 1:00pm**. Program will include the Moonlight Sonata in honor of Beethoven's 250th Birthday and other works by Scarlatti and Rachmaninov.



Thank you, Covenant family, for supporting our food pantry. We will be starting up again in 2021 with a complete redesign, including potentially handing out food twice a month--once on a weekday and once on a Saturday. Does that change your ability to volunteer? Will you shop? Build bags? Hand out food? Look out for more information in January 2021.

A great thing happened in our community recently. On October 4, members of the Covenant Missions team sorted through our Food Pantry and donated our many items to the Women's Club of Castle Hills who were holding a food drive for the SA Food Bank. You see, some of our food stores were about to expire and we needed to get them to the Food Bank where we knew they would be used quickly. We were happy to take those items to the Women's Club food drive to show our appreciation for what they are doing for the wider community. All in all, our teamwork was a win-win-win situation, especially for the hungry families.



Sample Pledge Cards for 2021

We will provide you with pledge cards for Consecration Sunday.

Take One Step Up...For Christ and His Church

Check One

_____ A number of our families have **Stepped Up to giving 10%** of their income to the church. I/We would like to join them. Our estimate of giving for the coming year is \$ _____ per [] week [] month [] year.

_____ I/We cannot give 10% right away, but would like to **Step Up towards that**. An initial estimate toward this goal is: \$ _____ per [] week [] month [] year.

Name: _____ Spouse: _____
Circle One: Dr. / Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. Circle One: Dr. / Mr. / Mrs. / Ms.

Address: _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

His/Her Cell Phone: _____ His/Her Cell Phone: _____

Estate Planning

_____ I/We would like to receive more information about giving through estate planning.

Mission Pledge Card

*In Order to Share God's Love with the wider world,
I/We plan to give the following amount to Christian Ministry.*



This pledge will be allocated to Missions by the Covenant Presbyterian Church's Mission Committee. Please make your check(s) payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church and write "Missions Pledge" in the Memo (For) line of your check.

Annual Amount Pledged: _____

Name: _____ Spouse: _____ Address: _____

City _____ Zip _____ Home Phone: _____ Email: _____



CELEBRATE WITH JOY

By: Louise Ward

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

Heraclitus of Ephesus is credited with the familiar saying “the only constant in life is change,” which means that this axiom has been evident since the fifth century B.C. The year 2020 has certainly provided further examples in everyone’s life. Each of us could make a long list of routines that have changed, from buying groceries to working and learning from home to worshipping God.

Over the past 8 months many people have adapted readily to Zoom meetings, curbside pickup, and wearing masks. We have faced and met challenges from drive-by birthday and graduation parties to live-streamed church services and waiting to have our temperatures taken before we can go into work. The list goes on and one with so many remarkable examples of our creativity, resourcefulness, and resilience.

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me
My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him. (Psalm 28:7)*

As we move toward the end of this remarkable year some daunting challenges await us. Although Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions are not compatible with safety protocols and social distancing, there are so many new ways we can celebrate the meaning of these holidays.

I will praise God’s name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. (Psalm 69:3)

This may not be the year for the entire extended family to gather at one house, but each branch could write a page to be compiled in a gratitude journal to be copied for everyone or presented to one special person. Let your heart be guided by gratitude for God’s blessings.

You may not need to cook a 20-pound turkey, but one option is to donate 2 10- pound turkeys, each with the makings of a dinner, to a food drive working to make sure everyone has a special meal this year. Or, go ahead and cook that 20-pound turkey, de-bone it, and freeze the meat in portions to be used for a future family or church gathering or to use when someone needs a friend to bring dinner.

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body
you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)*

We all have so many memories and expectations of the Christmas season. It can be hard to think about letting some traditions go, even for just one year. We know the joy of the season is for the birth of Christ. Even without large gatherings, we can feel and express that joy. Donate to groups that spread Christmas cheer. Play your favorite music. Read your favorite verses. Pick up an Advent study guide. Watch a holiday movie, concert, or church service with a friend – either distanced in a large enough room or each from your own home with a Facetime or Skype connection. Organize your favorite Christmas recipes into a booklet to send electronically or in the mail.

Although we enjoy our family and community traditions, if we focus on the deeper meaning of the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons we can celebrate with joy no matter the circumstances.

NEW Adult Sunday School Class Begins October 25th!

Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy

Sunday Mornings @ 9:00am*

Led by: Karl Hays & Scott Simpson

WHO BETTER TO FACE THE GREATEST EVIL OF THE 20TH CENTURY THAN A HUMBLE MAN OF FAITH?

As Adolf Hitler and the Nazis seduced a nation, bullied a continent, and attempted to exterminate the Jews of Europe, a small number of dissidents and saboteurs worked to dismantle the Third Reich from the inside. One of these was Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a pastor and author.

This study is based on the book *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas. It looks at both strands of Bonhoeffer's life—the theologian and the spy—and draws them together to tell a searing story of incredible moral courage in the face of monstrous evil. Metaxas presents the fullest accounting of Bonhoeffer's heart-wrenching decision to leave the safe haven of America to return to Hitler's Germany, and sheds new light on Bonhoeffer's involvement in the famous Valkyrie plot and in "Operation 7," the effort to smuggle Jews into neutral Switzerland.

We invite you to join us on Sunday mornings, beginning this coming week (October 25th) at 9:00am for an opportunity to explore Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life. Each week's lesson will feature a video led by Eric Metaxas. Discussion will be led each week by Karl Hays and Scott Simpson.

October 25th – “What is the Church?”

November 1st – “Living in Christian Community”

November 8th – “Religionless Christianity”

November 15th – “Come and Die”

November 22nd – Further Discussion

To join us via Zoom, please use the following information:

<https://zoom.us/j/91235912696?pwd=MUlvU1JtZW1BWGlncWZlcXpqSTBpdz09>

Meeting ID: 912 3591 2696

Password: 723266



Growing in Grace & Gratitude Sundays @ 9:00am

Our Children's Sunday School class features the curriculum, "Growing in Grace & Gratitude", which helps transform the lives of children and those who love them, shaped by grace and gratitude. Each session shares a Bible story that reveals God's grace for us. Through fun, age-appropriate activities, and prayer, children will celebrate the meaning of this grace in their lives as they encounter a living God.

Living as God's people isn't always easy, but we have stories in the Bible of people who have tried their best to follow God's ways. As God's people, we can also look to these stories as examples, learn from them, and try our best to be faithful children of God. We'll look at the stories of Noah; Abram & Sarai; Jacob & Esau; Moses; Miriam; Ruth, Naomi & Boaz; David; Abigail, Elisha; and Micah & Isaiah.

We hope your child will join us on Sunday mornings this fall as we explore people from the Old Testament, our ancestors in the faith, as they exhibit characteristics of faithful living.

For the Zoom link and password, please contact: chad@covenantcares.org

Help Fight Hunger Food Drive

Saturday, November 21st

9:00am – 11:00am

In the Parking Lot off Roletto Drive

Covenant's Young Adults are committed to helping fight hunger during this trying season and are asking for the congregation's participation. As many of you are aware, the current pandemic has exacerbated the rates of hunger and food insecurity of families in our local community. For children, food insecurity is especially concerning, as it affects physical health, mental health, and academic achievement.

In order to help fight hunger, several of Covenant's Young Adults will be collecting non-perishable items to donate to SAMMinistries Transitional Living and Learning Center. The families at SAMMinistries TLLC are actively working to become self-sufficient through a holistic program that provides housing and support for families.

We would love for our congregation to bring their items to the church on Saturday, November 21st from 9:00am – 11:00am. We ask that you pull into the Roletto Drive parking lot with your non-perishable items. Our Young Adults will be happy to take these donated items from you, organize them, and then deliver them to SAMMinistries TLLC.

Here is a list of items that SAMMinistries TLLC would be most excited for:

Peanut Butter and Jelly
Instant Potatoes
Spaghetti Sauce and Pasta
Rice (1 lb. bag)
Dry beans (1 lb. bag)
Macaroni and Cheese
Large Can of Chicken
Large Can of Beef Ravioli

Shelf Stable Milk
Canned Vegetables
Canned Fruit
Boxed Meals (Tuna Helper, Chicken Fettuccini, etc.)
Large Can of Tuna (in Water)
Can of Spam
Small box of Cereal
Oatmeal

Children from Covenant's Children's Sunday School class and their parents held a socially-distant outdoor event on Saturday, October 24, 2020. The families painted pumpkins and played charades and bingo. One of the favorite activities was wrapping up one parent of each family like as a mummy using toilet paper! All had a wonderful time at this year's Fall event.

Our Children's Sunday School class gathers virtually each week at 9:00am. For more information, please see:

<https://www.covenantcares.org/zoom-childrens-sunday-school-class/>



EARTH

Our Original Monastery

Cultivating Wonder and Gratitude through Intimacy with Nature

Weekly Fall Book Discussion:

Earth, Our Original Monastery: Cultivating Wonder and Gratitude through Intimacy with Nature by Christine Valters Paintner, PhD

Sundays, after worship on Zoom

We invite you to join us each week after worship for discussion over individual chapters of the book, *Earth, Our Original Monastery* led by Sharon Fowler. These discussions are open to all and will conclude November 29th.

Zoom ID: 839 7429 3773
Password: 550757



Pumpkin Painting

Mummy Contest

Bingo

Charades

Movie

**F
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Lectio Divina Bible Study Groups

Lectio Divina Bible Study Groups

Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”) is a form of biblical reading that is distinct from the academic study of a text. It is a devotional approach in which the reader seeks to let God speak through the text into their lives in order to continue the Spirit’s work of transformation. Throughout this process, our guiding question is “What do you want me to hear today, God?”

Beginning in November, our Lectio Divina Bible Study Groups will be examining the book of Galatians. Each of our groups are open groups, meaning anyone can join at any time. We would love to have you engage in this study with us!

To participate in one of the Lectio Divina Bible Study Groups, please join us via Zoom:

Tuesday afternoon (1:00 p.m.)

Cathy Monkman

Meeting ID: 933 2043 7735, Password: 881541

Tuesday evening (6:30 p.m.)

Chad Bosse

Meeting ID: 961 6414 3935, Password: covenant

Tuesday evening (7:00 p.m.)

Dan Milford & Martha Wright

Meeting ID: 996 6469 8221, Password: 584332

Wednesday morning (10:00 a.m.)

Demarius Douthit

Meeting ID: 956 2656 8717, Password: 672332

Thursday evening (7:00 p.m.)

Jay Pitcher & Scott Simpson

Meeting ID: 933 6556 7445, Password: 495046

Men’s Saturday 7:30AM Morning Zoom Bible Study -Men are welcome to join us for study and fellowship on Saturday mornings! Led by Al Kissling & Jay Pitcher
Meeting ID: 998 7565 1984, Password: 659935

Also, feel free to go to our website
www.covenantcares.org
to click on a link to each Bible Study Group.

Covenant Presbyterian Church
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GET CONNECTED

- **Church News by Email** – We send an email several times a month to inform members and friends on church news and events. Email office@covenantcares.org to have your email added to the list.
- **NEW Website:** www.covenantcares.org - See recorded sermon videos, weekly devotionals, access to event calendar, and many cool features.
- **Watch Live Worship Services on Facebook**
<https://www.facebook.com/covenant.satx/>
- **Prayer Chain** – send an email to covenantprayerchain211@gmail.com