

Covenant Call

December 2020 Newsletter

HAVING A LOVING DISABILITY By Pastor Dan Milford

My memories of Rosa are vivid and cherished. Her arrival into my life is one of my very early memories from childhood. I was six years old; she was a year younger, nearly to the day. My aunt and uncle took her in as a foster child. They would eventually raise her as their own and adopt her. It would take years for Rosa to learn to speak clearly, but something else began to flower in her almost immediately. Her capacity to love others with exuberance and joy was unparalleled.

The “Honey Grove Milfords” lived in northeast Texas, a somewhat distant five-hour drive from us. Each of the four or five times a year we made the journey north to visit them and my grandmother, a ritual unfolded reliably. Our car kicked up caliche dust as we sped towards my grandmother’s farmhouse. That approaching cloud served as a beacon for a watchful Rosa, alerting her of our pending arrival. It never failed that she would come sprinting down the front sidewalk to greet us, reaching the car almost before it came to a stop. Her joyful enthusiasm effervesced from a heart full of love.

From all I could tell, this essential part of her character didn’t change as she went through her teen years. Instead, it matured and grew to bear more fruit. Her family lived close to a mile from the school in their small town. Her walk to and from school thus took her past the homes of many elderly citizens. Rosa popped in on many of them regularly, bringing a burst of energy, joy, and care into their day. With Rosa bringing to them news from her life and the lives of others in the community, they also experienced a deeper sense of connectedness.

When my grandmother’s health declined during Rosa’s 8th grade year, “Granny” was moved from the farm into a rental house next door to Rosa’s family. Rosa then became a primary attention-giver to Granny, visiting often throughout the day. The move was disorienting to a woman approaching her 80th birthday, experiencing

dementia, and leaving the farm her family had moved to when she was only three years old. While Granny received visits and love from all in the “Honey Grove Milford” family, the regular and constant attention from Rosa made her last year easier.

Joyful exuberance, overflowing love, and personal attention to others continued to mark Rosa’s life in adulthood. The diseases brought on by an abundance of trauma in early childhood also continued to ravage her body. For the last five years of her life, she was on dialysis, with a number of health scares throughout that period. Her indomitable spirit carried her through some difficult times.

In a world focused on competition, Rosa didn’t rise to the top in athletics or academics. She made joyful enthusiasm and devoted love look effortless, though. In comparison to Rosa, I find myself to have a “loving disability” or a “compassion limitation.” Thoughts of her will help me raise the bar higher for myself.

Perhaps the Apostle Paul knew someone like Rosa. After all, in his great reflection on the importance of all people, Paul asserted “the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Cor. 12:22) and reflected that though he may have knowledge, faith, generosity, and courage, if “I do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2). Rosa’s presence in my life has made it richer. Her death on November 13 leaves a hole.

As we prepare to celebrate Divine Love taking on human flesh in complete vulnerability, may we reflect on the gift in our lives of people like Rosa who expose our “loving disability.” In light of their joyful exuberance and devoted care, may we lower our guards, look with determination for the presence of Christ in others, value deeply the capacity to love, and then love others with vulnerability, commitment, and care.

Grace & Peace, Dan

Special Services & Celebrations

We are continuing to worship, serve, and connect even in the midst of the pandemic. Please make note of these services and special events:

Sunday – Nov. 29th	10:30am	First Sunday of Advent
Sunday – Dec. 6th	10:30am	Second Sunday of Advent
Saturday - Dec. 12th	1:00pm	Second Saturday Concert of 2020 will feature mezzo-soprano, Jacquelyn Matava, and sopranos, Ana Hernandez and Erin McAdams. Program includes selections from Handel's Messiah and other solos and trios to herald the season. Please join us online, December 12th, at 1:00pm at Covenant's Facebook page.
Sunday – Dec. 13th	10:30am	Third Sunday of Advent
Sunday – Dec. 20th	10:30am	Fourth Sunday of Advent
Monday – Dec. 21st	7:00pm	Longest Night Service
Thursday – Dec. 24th	5:00pm	Christmas Eve Service & Communion
Sunday – Dec. 27th	10:30am	Service of Lessons & Carols

Children & Parent Advent Celebration

December 6th @ 2:00pm

In the Parking Lot by the Prayer Garden

Covenant's children and parents are invited to come to the church for a special Advent Celebration! Participants will have the opportunity to make crafts, play games, and hear some stories related to the season of Advent. In order to help make this event one in which we can all participate safely, we are asking that families register by Wednesday, December 2nd. (Simply e-mail Chad Bosse chad@covenantcares.org). If you have questions, please feel free to contact Chad via e-mail or text. We look forward to seeing you!



Advent Celebration

NEW Adult Sunday School Class Begins November 29th!

Adult Advent Study: It's A Wonderful Life
Sunday Mornings @ 9:00am
Led by: Chad Bosse

In the classic film *It's A Wonderful Life*, George Bailey discovers that it is never too late to re-evaluate our lives, find so much to be thankful for, and to live again. Using the study *To Live Again* by Sheila Jacobs and clips from the film, this Advent class will explore four themes that can help us explore during the season of Advent.

November 29th – Hopes and Dreams
December 6th – When Life Doesn't Go Our Way
December 13th – In The Dark Times
December 20th – The Right Perspective

We invite you to join us during the Advent season on Sunday mornings at 9:00am for an opportunity to explore these themes from the classic film.

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



Longest Night Service – December 21

The winter solstice is the longest night of the year. It is the night of the year when we literally experience the most darkness before the sun starts to once again gain strength as it slowly moves through winter toward spring. Symbolically, this longest night comes to stand for our own dark times, the “Dark Night of the Soul” when we experience loneliness or despair, when we are anxious about our health or jobs or relationships. For those who are grieving or suffering, the light-hearted commercialism that often comes with the holidays can make us feel like we’ve been left out or are invisible and alone in our grief and lament.

How healing it can be for your heavy heart to acknowledge the darkness that surrounds you and then choose to light a candle. Choose light. Light a candle for every loss you’ve experienced over the past year. Light a candle for the loved ones you still mourn. Light a candle to know, fully know, that where there is light the darkness retreats.

Choosing the light even while we still feel the loss is a powerful action toward recovery. This Longest Night Service is a peaceful space in which to worship and heal.

This year we are having a FB Live service instead of having people come into the church. We encourage you to light candles at home and post the pictures of the flames in the live chat. You can also simply type a message about what you are lighting a candle for---a remembrance of a loved one or a prayer, personal or for others. If you want your prayer spoken aloud on FB Live by a member of the Beautiful Minds Coalition and a candle lit in the sanctuary, please send your short remembrance or prayer to BMC@covenantcares.org between now and December 21st at noon so we have time to print them out and ensure we have enough candles for each and every prayer sent in.

If you or someone you know needs a service like this, please make plans to attend via Facebook Live at 7pm on December 21st and help us spread the word by sharing our upcoming FB posts about the Longest Night Service with family and friends.

Peace be with you, in this darkest season and always.

Advent Season Fellowship!

We've got lots of social-distance opportunities for fellowship during advent. Here's a short list of what is possible:

Making Christmas cards together on Zoom and sending them to fellow members, shut-ins, and anyone you know who needs a lift during this time. If you've got lots of craft supplies stacking up, this Zoom party is for you!

Painting Party on Zoom where we each buy our own supplies and choose a simple picture to paint—maybe a cross, a Christmas tree, or the star and magi, or whatever suits your imagination and level. Even total beginners can paint if you keep the image simple. And those on the Zoom with more experience can help guide you. This painting can be a keepsake for Christmas 2020.

Cookie Making on Zoom where we try out zooming from our kitchens. Have you always wanted your own cooking show? Volunteer to lead this Zoom—the church can provide the Zoom access but we need a cookie chef to make this fun opportunity a reality. We could also include cookie decorating lessons if a gifted baker/decorator wants to lead. Additionally, if you make plenty of cookies, we can potentially package them up into care packages for the homebound.

Creating Care Packages might not be quite as socially-distanced as some need, so it will take someone who is not in an “at-risk” group for Covid to head up creating care packages. Care packages could have baked goods or potted plants or arts & crafts or other comfort items.

If you are excited about any of these fun opportunities, please send an email to Fellowship@covenantcares.org so you can get involved. Also, if you have any other fun fellowship ideas you'd like to lead, please send an email with your idea. Together, we can make it happen.



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?”

Our Lectio Divina Bible Study Groups will be concluding their study on the book of Galatians over the first part of December. 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.



“BE ENCOURAGED. BE JOYFUL. YOU ARE LOVED!”

It all started with “you are loved” on a note in one of the Compassion Bags we give to people we encounter on the streets. The note, included with some food, water and maybe a pair of socks in a Zip-Lock bag, was a reminder of how we can reach out to people with a message of hope and love as we hand out supplies to someone in need.

The message continued this spring, when we took advantage of the high-visibility location of our church and placed a banner at the Loop 410 entrance. “BE ENCOURAGED. BE JOYFUL. YOU ARE LOVED!” was displayed as a message to our community. Travelers along the access road or freeway and our own church family could be encouraged, joyful, and reminded that we are all loved, even in trying circumstances. Pictures of the banner were uploaded to social media so the message lives on, even though the banner was temporary. If you missed taking a photo before the banner came down and would like to add one to your social media, you can copy it from the Church’s Facebook page. Adding it to your social media not only shares the message, it could also make a connection with someone who wants to belong in an encouraging, joyful and loving community.

The message went even further with blue and white face covers with the “BE ENCOURAGED. BE JOYFUL. YOU ARE LOVED!” message. They were purchased using money from a special Evangelism Fund at a cost of \$9 each, with the idea that member purchases would replenish the fund. From what we hear, wearers have enjoyed being a personal banner of encouragement, joy and love to people who see them. (And every so often, there is an opportunity to mention “our church” and tell people about our community.)

A limited supply of face covers is still available. To get yours, call the church office at (210) 342-5253 or email Bethany at office@covenantcares.org and one will be sent to you. We also have some available free of charge through a quantity-purchase contribution if that would help.



So it all started with a note that said “you are loved” in a Zip-Lock bag. And out of that note a movement has started that we are all part of – a movement to share encouragement, joy and love in a world that so needs it.



Happy 106th Birthday Evelee!!!!

Covenant friends participated in a drive-by birthday caravan to celebrate Evelee Moore's 106th birthday. It was a fun event for all. Thanks to Martha Flores for all the wonderful decorations.



Covenant Presbyterian Church
211 Roletto Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78213

Website: www.covenantcares.org
Email: office@covenantcares.org
Phone: 210-342-5253

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
PERMIT No. 1091

Return service requested



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