

Covenant Call

September 2021 Newsletter

BEAUTY IN UPHEAVAL By Pastor Dan Milford

It's been heartbreaking to hear about the upheaval in Afghanistan as US forces and state department personnel are leaving the country. Regardless of our political party affiliation two decades ago, today, or anywhere in between, most of us who have been adults throughout the US war in Afghanistan were supportive of our entering the country to root out Al Qaeda. Most of us were supportive of efforts (at least early ones) to help the Afghans rebuild their country, especially their education, political, and economic systems. Most of us were supportive of efforts to hold the Taliban at bay and help transform the country into one that was not oppressive of women. Most of us hoped that the blood, sweat, tears, and lives invested in those efforts would not be in vain. Most of us hoped for a lasting peace in that land and its transformation into one that was able to defend and govern itself so that it might become its best, most beautiful self. So most of us are brokenhearted and angry to see how quickly and effortlessly the Taliban took over this past month.

While we reflexively want to find someone to blame for the mess and even more reflexively want it to be leaders of the political party we're opposed to, we're reluctantly and belatedly learning that there's a lot of blame to go around. On top of that, no degree of blaming will save the courageous Afghani men, women, and children who believed in a transformed country and now find their very lives at risk.

Upheaval can be unbelievably dark, painful, and horrific. Such is the turmoil in Afghanistan today. My life has never known disruption on a scale anywhere close to that. Still, I'm no fan of upheaval. It is the opposite of the predictable stability I seek. In a world with few surprises, we can anticipate opportunities and challenges we will face each day, the outcomes of our actions, and how to plan for the future. Upheaval disrupts everything, undermining not only our ability to forecast future needs, but even stripping us of the resources to respond to the changes thrust upon us.

In the midst of my "upheaval is always bad" reflections, I booted up my computer and was confronted with a stunningly beautiful photo of an alpine meadow in Hooker Valley, New Zealand, with rocky, snow-covered mountains rising beyond the valley. I love such scenes and feel my heart soar anytime I stand in the midst of such beautiful, mountainous places.

I have gloried at being in the Ozarks, the Cascades, the Rockies, the Alps, the Appalachians. From their majestic peaks, there is the opportunity to gain an amazing perspective, as we can see for dozens of miles and the people and buildings and

traffic that loom so large in our lives come to look incredibly small—even imperceptible—in comparison.

For perhaps the first time in my life, as I gazed at the photo on my screen with the horrors in Afghanistan in my mind, I saw the mountains for what they are—a great scar on the land where the earth's rocky crust has been forced high into the air through a powerful, grinding collision of tectonic plates. Nothing appeared to be growing on the peaks as mighty winds undoubtedly whip off any soil that ever settles there. From that perspective, I saw only a dark, bare, ugly scar and a painful reminder of the life-crushing power of upheaval.

The mountains we see today were lifted up millions of years ago, even if they are still growing now. The disruption and upheaval of the past continue to shape weather patterns today, even though millions of years have passed and the rumbling disruption of that upheaval is long forgotten. In ranges like the Cascades or volcanoes like Haleakala on Maui, rainfall is coaxed out of laden clouds as they pass, creating lush forests on the side of the mountains facing the prevailing winds. The ugly scars create conditions for new life to spring forth.

No amount of beauty that arises in the future from the present upheaval will excuse the poor political decisions from outside and inside Afghanistan over the last two decades. We can hope, though, that people—particularly political decision-makers—will pay attention as the failures are catalogued over time and will strive to learn the right lessons from this chapter in history.

As people who root our lives in the God revealed through the pages of scripture, we are also mindful that the wisdom in the Bible comes to us mostly from communities in the midst of upheaval and communities reflecting on recent turmoil and loss.

Throughout my life, I have been drawn to the mountains, to these rugged scars of the earth. Whenever possible, I go to them, open to being awed and humbled by their majesty, invited into new perspectives, given a new lens for seeing myself, God, and others. I'm also finding myself drawn more deeply toward communities that bear the scars of upheaval. They, like the writers of scripture, have often discovered profound insights into the heart of God, resources for resilience, and perspective for living through difficult times.

Grace & Peace, Dan

DELIGHT

Adventures in Discipleship

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Delight! Discipleship as the Adventure of Loving & Being Loved by Justin Rossow

"You bring God joy. And God intends the feeling to be mutual. This book will help you lean into Joyful Delight, Thoughtful Delight, Playful Delight, Delicious Delight, and Desirable Delight in your life with God. Delight! invites you into a real, accessible, and down-to-earth way of experiencing the adventure of following Jesus."

Grab a cup of coffee and together we'll study the book *Delight!* Each week, we will gather at 9:00am in Mission Hall and on Zoom (for those not ready to be in person) to explore and discuss the lessons from one of the book's chapters.

Delight! Discipleship as the Adventure of Loving and Being Loved by Justin Rossow can be purchased at your favorite bookstore. We encourage you to consider purchasing the book and adding it to your devotion time this Fall!

September's Sessions:

- Sept. 5 – **The Architecture of Delight** led by Karl Hays
- Sept. 12 – **Treasured Possession** led by Martha Hernandez
- Sept. 19 – **He Will Rejoice Over You With Singing** led by Lori Anderson and Rebekah Hernandez
- Sept. 26 – **I Am My Beloved's and My Beloved Is Mine** led by Sharon Fowler

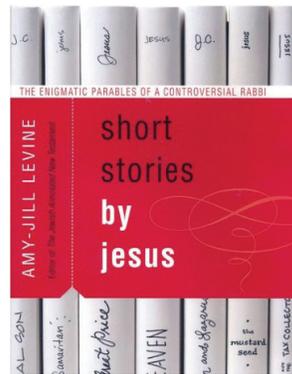
Family Event!

Covenant Children & Parents
Sunday, September 19 - 11:45AM

Covenant's children and parents will gather together on Sunday, September 19th to engage in a few service activities in Mission Hall. Following the service project, each family will have the opportunity to engage in a painting project together. The cost for the painting project \$20.00 which includes the painting materials and instruction.

During this event, we will ask each person to wear a mask and that each family remain socially distanced.

Interested? Great! We do require that each participating Covenant family register by September 8th. For more information or to register, please contact Chad Bosse (chad@covenantcares.org).



Small Group Bible Study

Beginning Week of September 12, 2021

Groups are forming now!

Rejoice in a new perspective of the parables with *Short Stories by Jesus* by Amy-Jill Levine

"In Short Stories by Jesus, author Amy-Jill Levine takes you back in time and explains how original audiences understood Jesus' parables. You'll learn how new interpretations of the parables continue to challenge and provoke contemporary readers."

Weekly meetings (Zoom and In-person groups available). **Let us know your preferences:** day of the week; morning, afternoon, or evening; and in-person or via Zoom.

Sign-up sheets available in the Narthex

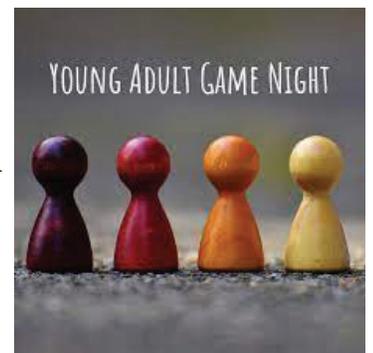
and by contacting Martha Hernandez at 210-382-3627 or MartyAHernandez@gmail.com



Experience joy in the midst of COVID19

Young Adult Game Night!

Sunday, Sept. 19th
6:00pm



Covenant's Young Adults are invited to gather together for a pizza & game night at the church. Let us know that you're planning to attend by September 15th. Simply contact Chad Bosse (chad@covenantcares.org).



The Beautiful Minds Coalition is looking for Wellness Champions as part of Bridges to Care San Antonio!

Bridges to Care San Antonio (BTCSA) began October 1, 2020, as an endeavor to train congregations to be companions

to those with mental health issues. The congregations work in cohorts of geographic proximity so they may together make a difference in their neighborhoods and congregations in the area of mental health. Often those individuals or families suffering with mental health issues walk alone – not so anymore.

BTCSA is the brainchild of NAMI – San Antonio (National Alliance on Mental Illness), the City of San Antonio (COSA), and the Pathways to Hope Conference. It is funded by NAMI, COSA, WestCare Foundation, and private donations. The training is provided free of charge, and each congregation is invited to choose up to 10 Wellness Champions (trainees) who will take 5 modules of free training equal to 20 hours of work. After completion of training, that congregation will be known as a “Behavioral Health Friendly Congregation,” meaning it is a congregation that welcomes those with mental health concerns.

The Wellness Champion agrees to:

- Attend at least 20 hours of training (listed below) provided by Bridges to Care San Antonio starting in October 2021.
- Attend cohort meetings.
- Carry out the mission and vision of their congregation’s mission and vision for mental and behavioral health and wellness.
- Lead their congregation in becoming a Mental and Behavioral Health Friendly Congregation.

The 5 Core Training Modules that the Wellness Champion needs to complete are:

1. Building a Behavioral Health Program for Spiritual & Faith Communities w/SACRD.org usage [3 hours]
2. Companionship Training [4 hours]
3. Mental Health First Aid [6.5 hours +2 hours pre-course work]
4. Becoming a Trauma-Informed Organization [1.5 hours]
5. Suicide Prevention [2 hours]

Are you interested in becoming a Wellness Champion? Do you have questions? Please reach out to the Beautiful Minds by emailing Shelly at shelbosse@gmail.com or speaking to a member of Beautiful Minds. Members of the Beautiful Minds Coalition include: Shelly Bosse, Louise Ward, Michael McMains and Kathy Simmons.



Calling all gnomes! What is a gnome you may ask? Until recently, gnomes have been considered mythological creatures. Since they were rarely sighted, they were assumed to be somewhat shy (not unlike a Unicorn). The possibility of gnomes at Covenant Presbyterian Church as often been a topic of rumor and discussion. I can now confirm our church does indeed have gnomes. Do not be alarmed! Unlike those pesky Leprechauns, our gnomes are unassuming servants of Christ that donate their time and talents to help maintain the church building and grounds. They provide very valuable service by doing minor maintenance, repairs, and landscaping that would normally require hiring a contractor. This helps to greatly reduce our operating and maintenance costs.

Although they seek to avoid recognition, our gnomes have been known to work alone or in small groups. In doing so, they have been involved with electrical, painting, plumbing, drainage, carpentry, and landscaping projects. I have observed them in action and they appear to be a very joyful lot that seem to derive a great deal of satisfaction from serving the Lord, accepting a challenging project, fixing a problem, helping the congregation, enjoying fellowship with other gnomes, or just getting some exercise and fresh air.

As the Maintenance and Technology Elder for Covenant, I serve as the designated liaison with the gnome community. To that end, I am actively recruiting others to join the guild. If you have particular skills that are relevant to the operation and maintenance of our church, or if you would like to learn new skill along those lines, the gnomes would love to have you join them. Please contact Mike Flinn at the Covenant Gnome Liaison Office by calling (210) 557-2686 or emailing 2000seadoc@gmail.com. The gnomes are eagerly anticipating your response.

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ADULT MINISTRY

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mission Statement: The adult ministry at Covenant serves the adults of Covenant and the surrounding community, inviting all into a deepening relationship with Christ and into fellowship with others.

In the past 30+ years our Adult Ministry here at Covenant Presbyterian Church has evolved to meet the needs of our changing population. The seed planted years ago was a God-seed. Adult Ministry has been the passion of many different people over the years and as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 " I planted, Apollos watered—and God gave it life." As this congregation changes, Adult Ministry is once again being restructured. It has been planted, watered and pruned. It is with enthusiasm and excitement that I tell you about our current Adult Ministry at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Covenant will have many ministry opportunities for adults in our congregation and our larger community beginning this fall (please see the graph). If there are additions you hope to see, please call me, Demarius Douthit.

