

Covenant Call

November 2021 Newsletter

SURPRISING GROWTH By Pastor Dan Milford

For the first time in almost 30 years of marriage, Nadia and I are trying our hand at gardening. It started with Austin's interest in building a raised garden. Our cedar box is roughly four by eight feet and raised by one foot. We filled it with sand, manure, and potting soil in the late spring and planted peppers, basil, oregano, rosemary, and parsley—the plants of interest that we found in a brief search. We've had fun finding ways to use the peppers and herbs over the last few months and can attest that basil makes for a delicious addition to a fruit smoothie.

Today when Nadia went to the garden, she encountered a strange addition—about a dozen Flowerpot Parasols and three Milky Conecaps. These two species of mushroom both have a seasonality that shows that they begin to flourish in May, peak in August, and drop off steeply in October. Thus, their first-time appearance in our garden in the very month their growing season is ending seems surprising.

Mark shared a parable of Jesus (4:26-29): “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The parable points toward surprising growth that comes from God. The sower of the seed in the parable knows something about agriculture. The person Jesus imagined probably knew what kind of seed they were sowing, whether it liked sun or shade, how much water it needed, and when it was best to plant the seed. The seed itself, though, and what caused it to grow must have been an utter mystery in the era before microscopes and science. Even today, most of us have very little understanding of the factors that lead to germination and the biochemistry of plant growth. Growth—even with plants—remains something of a mystery to us.

Growth in people and communities is even more so. Like farmers in antiquity, we've observed a number of things that seem helpful for enabling growth, but there's much that still escapes us. We are thus surprised when we do what we think will help but see little growth coming as a response. We are also surprised when growth—as with these mushrooms—happens without any input from us.

In Jesus' parable, the sower of the seed does not know what causes the seed to sprout and grow. He does know what to do with the mature plant, though, and goes in to harvest

the grain.

We are living in exceedingly strange times. Anxiety is as thick in the air as a heavy fog that settles over us and on us, obstructing our vision and dampening our spirits. There is anxiety about the state of our democracy, the persistence (and next resurgence?) of the pandemic, the health of the economy, our own physical and mental well-being, and many, many other things.

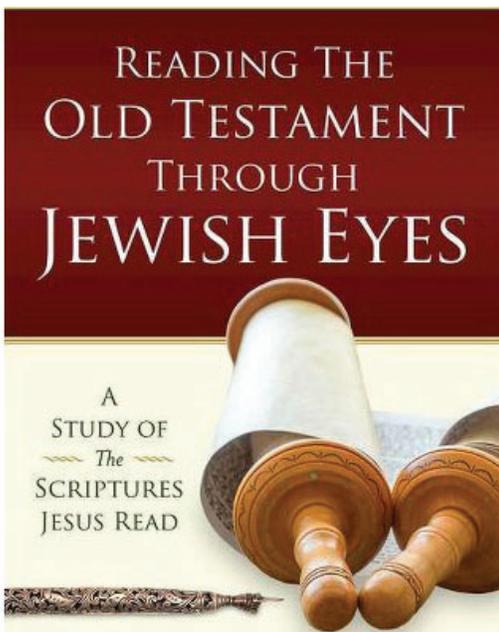
We spend more time than we care to admit driven by that anxiety, wishing things were different than they are, or looking for some kind of escape. We aren't told how the farmer in the parable passes the time between planting and harvest. For many farmers, that is an exceedingly anxious time, since there are so many factors that determine whether they will be able to pay off their debts after the harvest, including the impacts of insects and mold, rainfall, and global prices.

Others may be better able to entrust the planted crop to God, do their small part to tend to it while it is growing, and trust that the harvest will be good enough. All know what to do when the grain has matured—harvest it!

We're in an anxious time as a church because we don't know what the impact of this season will be on the church's life going forward. Will it lead people back to God and to communities of faith? Will it lead to disengagement with our church? There are many questions that we simply cannot answer right now. We do note signs of growth, though. On October 24, our Adult Ministry hosted 16 people for a webinar on “Financial Preparedness for Aging Parents” that provided a great deal of helpful information for those present. Later that day, we had a great turnout for our Fall Harvest Festival directed to the families of Covenant and Epiphany. Four visiting families were in attendance along with those who are already members at Covenant or Epiphany.

The main activity of the farmer in the parable is to watch for growth that he did not fully understand and then harvest the grain when it became ripe. Clearly, most farmers do more than that—weeding, killing pests, building and mending fences, irrigating. As a community of faith, we have our share of work to do, as well. Still, the factors that lead to growth are beyond our full comprehension. Our challenge is to entrust that growth to God and wait and watch for it with hopeful anticipation. And then to give thanks for the harvest that comes and do our part to gather it in.

Grace & Peace,
Dan



NEW
Weekly Small
Group Bible
Study
*Reading the Old
Testament Through
Jewish Eyes*

by
Rabbi Evan Moffic
Beginning the week
of October 31st

This study is based
on Rabbi Moffic's

book which explores the first five books of the Hebrew Bible and highlights points of interest to Christians. Beginning the week of October 31st, our Weekly Small Group Bible Study groups will have the opportunity to listen as Rabbi Moffic shares key themes of each book guided by the wisdom of Jewish interpreters through the centuries. We invite you to learn from Rabbi Moffic, as he invites us to discover how the Torah can be a source of wisdom, truth, and transformation in our lives.

Weekly meetings (Zoom and In-person groups available).

Tuesday evening (7:00pm) via Zoom
Meeting ID: 876 4294 3211 Password: 696769

Young Adult Bible Study
Tuesday evening (7:15pm) via Zoom:
Meeting ID: 961 6414 3935 Password: covenant

Wednesday Morning Women's Bible Study (10:00am) via
Zoom and in-Person @ Covenant:
Meeting ID: 831 1529 2998 Password: 051831

Wednesday evening (7:00pm) via Zoom:
Meeting ID: 844 5191 8536 Password: 355303

Saturday Morning Men's Bible Study (7:30am)
via Zoom and in-Person @ Covenant:
Meeting ID: 880 4315 3155, Password: 095022

As always, you can always find the Meeting ID's and
Passcodes for all of our weekly Bible studies on our webpage:

<https://www.covenantcares.org/weekly-bible-study/>



Children's Sunday School
Growing in Grace & Gratitude
Sundays @ 9:00am

Covenant's 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. Continuing in November, we will focus on God's actions with the people in the Old Testament and celebrate that God never stops acting in the world—including with us today!

This Fall, our Children's Sunday School class will meet online via Zoom as well as in-person in our Esperanza classroom. Parents can access the Zoom link and password by contacting Chad Bosse (chad@covenantcares.org).

The Christian Education Team asks for your understanding as our community continues to make the transition to include both our Zoom participants as well as our in-person participants during the Sunday School hour. Please know that this is a work in progress, and your patience and grace is greatly appreciated!

We hope your child will join us on Sunday mornings!

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



Backyard Cookout under the Big Oak Tree & Picnic Table Dedication

Sunday, November 7th, after worship

Menu: Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, Potato Salad, Coleslaw, & Chips
Drinks: Water & Soda

Looking forward to food, fun, and fellowship! Please join us.

Contacts: **Martha Wright**
Martha Hernandez

COVID19 Precautions - **Cooks and servers will be masked and gloved with outside seating & distance provided between tables.**

HYMN STUDY SUNDAY MORNINGS 9:00AM MISSION HALL

NEW Adult Sunday School Hymn Study!

Mission Hall @ 9:00am - Nov. 7th, 14th, & 21st

“Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.”

“As long as we live there is never enough singing.”
-- Martin Luther

It has been said that “Music touches the soul” The singing of hymns are often cited as one of the most meaningful aspects of worship and many people are able to name a hymn that has played a significant role in their life. This November, we invite you to explore the stories of several hymns that might be familiar to you. Listen to the origins of how they came to be and experience these hymns in a whole new way.

- **November 7th** – *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty*
- **November 14th** – *Amazing Grace; When Peace Like a River*
- **November 21st** – *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Morning; Advent Hymn*



South Texas Corn Maize in Hondo, TX Afternoon of Sunday, November 21st

\$17 for the Corn Maize + Additional \$ for food/drink
RSVP by November 7th

Covenant’s Young Adults, Youth, Children & Families are all invited to join us to “Get Lost” in the South Texas Corn Maize! We invite all participants to worship with us at 10:30am. Afterward, we will travel to Hondo, TX to experience the Graff 7A Ranch South Texas Corn Maize.

General Admission is \$17 and includes the 7-acre maze, hayride, MatterCorn Slide Mountain, Twin Cow Train, Farmer Ken’s Kiddie Korral, Hay Bale Jump, Paw Paw’s pig races, and unlimited jumping on the two CornPop-Poppers. Please bring your own \$ for snacks & drinks or additional activities you would like to participate in (Corn Cannon, etc.).

This year, we will gather around a campfire site to roast S’mores!

This year, we will be purchasing group tickets, so please be sure to RSVP to Chad Bosse by November 7th!

Checks can be made out to Covenant Presbyterian Church (Please put “Corn Maize” in the memo line). Contact Chad Bosse for more information (chad@covenantcares.org).



stewardship

Thank you for giving your Time, Talents & Treasures to Covenant Presbyterian Church!

When you give to Covenant, you are responding in gratitude to God and strengthening a body that acts in countless ways to make God's love known and felt in the lives of people who are part of this community, Greater San Antonio, and far beyond. Some ways Covenant helps share God's love include:

- **Comforting** those who grieve the loss of a loved one;
- **Forming disciples** who are motivated by God's love and forgiveness rather than by fear of punishment;
- Leading a national effort to help congregations engage in **mental health ministry**;
- **Offering worship** that is prayerful, moving, thoughtful, and relevant;
- Helping people of all ages **engage in mission and service** to others;
- **Creating community** that values all people, making a particular effort to welcome into community and leadership people who have traditionally been marginalized; and thereby
- **Sharing the light of God's welcoming, transformative love.**

**We hope you consider giving financially to support the life and ministry of the church.
Please consider contributing to each of the funds below.**

OPERATIONS FUND

Contributions to the Operations Fund support the budget. This includes educational ministries, worship & music, fellowship & congregational care, the operation/upkeep of the church facilities (including utilities, maintenance repairs, & building improvements), and staff salaries.

UNDESIGNATED MISSIONS FUND

Contributions to this fund will be allocated by the Missions Committee as needs and opportunities arise throughout the year. This will include gifts to local and global disasters in addition to ongoing support our mission partnerships of the church. Funds will also help support our church Food Pantry and Community Garden.

There are several easy ways to donate to the church:

ONLINE BILL PAY

We can work with you to set up an online bill pay schedule. You will set up a "Covenant Presbyterian Church" as the "payee" and you will schedule either one-time or recurring payments to the church. We are not currently processing direct account-to-account transactions; rather you will need to select the bank "mail to" option and a physical check will be mailed from your bank to the Covenant Office. Please contact Bethany Borak in the Church Office for more information on how to set up the account. Most banks do not charge for this service.

ZELLE APP

If you are able to use Zelle (an app that you download on your phone) for your giving to the church, it is a quick way to donate funds and have them deposited immediately. On Zelle, you can find us through our linked email. Contact the church office for this email. In making your donation, when it asks "What's this for?" please enter "Operations," "Missions," or whatever designation that you wish it to go towards.

OFFERING PLATE or MAIL A CHECK TO THE CHURCH

Cash/Check offerings can be put in the offering plate as you leave church on Sunday mornings OR feel free to send checks to our church mailbox. We pick up the mail daily. Our mailing address is: Covenant Presbyterian Church, 211 Roletto Drive, San Antonio, TX 78213.

Sample Pledge Cards for 2022

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: _____



YOU'RE INVITED!
Consecration
Sunday

November 14th

WORSHIP 10:30AM

IN-PERSON & ONLINE VIA FACEBOOK



Join us for a time of

Thanksgiving

Worship Service

Sunday, November 21 - 7:00PM

Worship In-Person or Online via Facebook

Holiday Grocery Shopping for SAMM Families

Covenant has a long tradition of supporting the families at the SAMMinistries' Transitional Living & Learning Center through our annual holiday grocery shopping event. The center provides housing for 40 families as they work towards the goal of moving into a home of their own. While these families are in transition, TLLC supports their first steps towards independence and self-reliance. The program includes life skills, job training, financial management, computer skills, parenting classes and more.

Food insecurity is a health crisis in our country. According to the SA Food Bank, Texas ranks #2 in the nation for food insecurity and San Antonio is among the cities which have been severely impacted. Additionally, the cost of basic groceries is on the rise due to shortages and supply chain bottlenecks.

Covenant can make a difference for 40 families. Through December 12th our congregation will be collecting donations to the James Payne Fund to purchase groceries for the SAMM families. Then on Saturday morning, December 18th, we will personally shop at HEB on West Ave. for each family. We'll need donations to fund the shopping and lots of volunteers to help with the shopping and delivery of all the groceries to the 40 families at the Living Center.

Here's how you can help us feed these 40 families:

1. **Donate money to the "James Payne Fund".** Our Missions team has designated this fund specifically for purchasing groceries for the SAMM TLLC families. You may send a check to Covenant and note in the memo line "James Payne Fund," or if you prefer to give electronically via Zelle, indicate it is for the "James Payne Fund." Please ensure donations are sent by December 12th so we can budget accordingly.
2. **Be the Hands and Feet and volunteer to shop for the families.** This is a wonderful way to live out the spirit of Christmas! Our shoppers will go to the HEB located on West Ave. and Jackson Keller at 8am on Saturday, December 18th. Each shopper is assigned to a family and will be given a set budget allotted for that family. The groceries will be purchased with the funds we've collected. We will also provide information about that family such as how many children, their ages, gender, etc., so that the shopper has an idea of what kind of groceries to purchase that best suit that family's needs.

If you would like to volunteer to shop for a family, email Vicki Moreno at office@covenantcares.org, or call the church office at 210.342.5253. Thank you, Missions Ministry

Prayer Chain

Experiencing Life Love Together through Prayer & Our Prayer Chain

by Denise Haley

One of the ways we care for and love one another is by praying, and our Prayer Chain is a way we do that as we share joys and concerns in our community. Those joys and concerns are emailed to the Prayer Chain email, covenantprayerchain211@gmail.com, or emailed or called in to the church office and then sent to the Prayer Chain email.

When people pray with us and for us, we are reminded that we are not alone. As we take a fresh look at how we care for and love one another, we want to help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have the Prayer Chain available as a way for us to pray with and for each other. If you use email and are not on the Prayer Chain, you're invited and encouraged to subscribe (see the email address above). If you do not use email, call the church at (210) 342-5253 and let the office know you would like to be added to the Prayer Chain and a Congregational Care Ministry team member will get back with you.

Also, when sending a prayer request for someone other than yourself or your immediate family, please get the okay from that person about sharing information, and if cards, calls or emails would be appreciated, the addresses and/or telephone number so that Prayer Chain members can reach out to him or her.

Thank you for subscribing, for submitting, and for your prayers we we grow in experiencing life love together through our Prayer Chain ministry.

Session Elders & Ministries

Outreach/Mission	Janice Shute
Christian Education	Martha Hernandez
Young Adults & Youth	Khristina Fielder
Evangelism	Kathy Simmons
Maintenance & Technology	Mike Flinn
Fellowship	Martha Wright
Congregational Care	Denise Haley
Personnel/Communications	Scott Simpson
Planning	Jay Pitcher
Older Adult Ministry	Demarius Douthit
Finance/Stewardship	Kathryn Safford
Worship/Music	Karl Hays

Covenant's young adults had a wonderful time at their October painting event. Each young adult had the opportunity to paint their own version of a "Rainbow Starry Night". Their creativity shined throughout the night as well as many moments of laughter!

Each painting is unique, and they are currently hanging in Mission Hall for Covenant's community to enjoy for a few weeks before the young adults take them home. We invite you to come take a look and enjoy the art display!

In addition to these paintings, the young adults created 5 unique pieces that were displayed during worship on October 24th. These pieces helped our worshipping community visualize the lyrics of the Offering Music, "God of the Sparrow". We give thanks to these young adults for sharing their gifts with our community!

"God of the Sparrow" No 22, vs 1-5

God of the sparrow
God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise

God of the earthquake
God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save

God of the rainbow
God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks

God of the hungry
God of the sick
God of the prodigal
How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life

God of the neighbor
God of the foe
God of the pruning hook
How does the creature say Love
How does the creature say Peace





Harvest Festival - October 24, 2021

Thank you to all of the families from Covenant Presbyterian and Epiphany Anglican who joined us for our annual Fall Harvest Festival! All of our families had a great time painting pumpkins, stacking apples, pretending to be an elephant, making a mummy, playing BINGO, and enjoying some candy! We hope our families will be able to join us for the November trip to the Corn Maize.

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

We are in our 20th month of the Covid virus. That is over a year and a half of living under fear, uncertainty, grief, job losses or changes, rapid changes, environments that were out of our control, and sometimes constant stress, on a global scale. While we have had some relief, Covid is not gone yet. The human mind was never designed to operate under conditions of such extended adversity without negative repercussions. So, I would say that the mental health of everyone in this room and perhaps everyone throughout the world has been challenged and affected, to a lesser or greater degree, by the phenomenon that we have experienced. There's no way that it could not have been affected. When we think of mental health and mental illness, we often think of mainly the very serious, diagnosable disorders that millions of people suffer with. These conditions have been amplified by the events of the past 19 months. We are not only concerned with those issues now, but the mental health and wellness of every person.

Mental illness and mental health or not opposites: you can be mentally healthy and still have down days and you can live with a mental illness and still have good days. Mental wellness comes from feeling good and functioning in a healthy way which can be worked on by developing a positive mindset, sleep patterns, and building self-esteem. (Business Insider, 2021) Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness. When poor mental health or distress has a sustained negative impact on someone's ability to work, have meaningful relationships, and fulfill day-to-day tasks, extra support is usually needed.

All of us here have made it to this present point one way or another. But there may still be residual feelings of anxiety, depression or unrest that need to be dealt with to make our quality of life even better. With all of the things that we have not been able to control over the past year and a half, we CAN take charge of our own mental health. Many times, the members of the Beautiful Minds Coalition have reviewed different ways to make yourself feel better or to improve your mood—

exercise, walking, meditation, relaxation exercises, hobbies, and maintaining a support network. But many people may decide that they now need professional help to deal with these issues. This chart from NAMI gives some very good ways to take charge of your mental health. Many times, a person may feel apprehensive about making an appointment with a counselor or therapist, but this information describes what to expect when considering talking with a specialist. In addition, tips for generally living well are listed at the bottom of the chart.



Very soon we will have another resource available in our congregation, either as a participant or as a seeker. That is the Bridges to Care San Antonio program which is a lay ministry that trains congregational members to walk supportively alongside someone who may be having mental health or emotional issues. We would love to have as many of our congregants participate as possible. You certainly do not have to be a mental health professional. The persons who will be acting as the Wellness Champions will be trained by the NAMI organization and will be compassionate, concerned listeners for those who have problems they would like to discuss. So, when that is available, it will be a very valuable resource in our congregation and in many other congregations across San Antonio. Mr. Michael McMains is contact person for Bridges to Care. And even if you feel that your mental health issue is minimal, there is never a stigma about asking for help, professional or otherwise. We seek medical intervention and help if we have a medical problem, so it is no different if we have an emotional problem to seek help. These are ways in which we take charge of our mental health, and after what we have all been through, we could probably all use some empathetic listening ears. If you would like to contact a professional, please check with your insurance company or check with any of the Beautiful Minds Coalition members here at Covenant. It is all confidential. If your quality of life is not as you would like it to be, please reach out.

Taking Charge of Your Mental Health

FIND THE RIGHT SPECIALIST



Ask your doctor or nurse to help you find a specialist and make your first appointment



There may be a long wait for your first visit, so speak up if you need to see someone right away



If the first mental health specialist you see isn't a good fit, keep looking for one who works for you



DON'T FORGET!

- > Surround yourself with family and friends
- > Talk to a counselor, social worker, nurse or trusted adult
- > Continue doing what you love: reading, sports, writing, nature walks, creating art

MAKE YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT COUNT



Be ready to talk about your health history and what you're experiencing



Be clear about what you want and need to get better



You may be asked to fill out a questionnaire describing your mental health experience



Ask the mental health specialist to explain treatment options so you understand the plan and what you need to do

NAVIGATING YOUR INSURANCE

- Involve someone with experience to help you
- Call your insurance company to ask what mental health benefits are covered
- To find a provider, visit your insurer's website or call the number on your insurance card

ASK QUESTIONS



If I have thoughts that scare me what should I do?

How often should we meet? What can I do between appointments if I need help?

Do I have to take medication? What does it help with? What are the side effects?

How long will it take for me to feel better, a few days, weeks or months?



STAY INVOLVED



Keep a wellness log and monitor your progress



Ask for changes if your treatment plan is not working for you



Stick with it; most therapies and medications take time to work



Your treatment plan may change, so be an active partner in this process

LIVE WELL

- ☀ Remember that you have control over living well
- ☀ Find a routine that works for you that includes a healthy diet, exercise and regular sleep patterns
- ☀ Stay close to your support network. Engage family, friends, teammates and your faith community. Think about joining an online community
- ☀ Be realistic and mindful of your needs and know your limits



GETTING THROUGH IT

- > Try staying away from drugs and alcohol. This is not always easy, so find strategies that work. Using drugs or alcohol to feel better is harmful to you.
- > If you use alcohol or drugs, be honest and tell your therapist or doctor because it affects your care plan.
- > Stay positive. Surround yourself with positive messages, people and activities. This will help you to feel better.

Follow Us!



NAMI



NAMIcommunicate



NAMIcommunicate



www.nami.org



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Phone: 210-342-5253

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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.
- **Website:** www.covenantcares.org - See recorded sermon videos, weekly devotionals, access to event calendar, and links to Zoom Bible Studies.
- **Watch Live Worship Services on Facebook**
<https://www.facebook.com/covenant.satx/>
- **Prayer Chain** – send an email to *covenantprayerchain211@gmail.com*