

# Covenant Call

December 2021 Newsletter

## RODNEY'S ROOM By Pastor Dan Milford

It's December of 1985, and the fall of my sophomore year at Texas A&M is drawing to an end. I'm returning from the library late at night once again, leaving the solace of a plain cubicle in a large, silent room. The stress of finishing the semester well is weighing on me as I continue to try to claw my way out of the GPA hole I dug myself into during my first semester of college.

It's late at night, but I'm still wound up from studying and beginning to feel the dread of returning to my dorm. My roommate and I had lofted our beds at the beginning of the semester, and he had brought in a sectional couch and a small TV, creating a living-room environment in our room. It seemed perfect when the semester began, but now it feels like a terrible mistake to me. He and his two friends rarely study or go anywhere and instead are a constant presence on our couches, watching TV nearly around the clock. I don't know how to deal with that, so I go across the hall to Rodney's room.

A single desk lamp pointed toward the ceiling casts a soft indirect light down where Rodney works at the drafting desk in the corner of the room. His sole possession of real value is an outstanding stereo, comprised of several quality components and two large speakers. He never plays it loudly. Instead, it steadily and softly carries into our corner of the dorm the calming music of George Winston (pianist), William Ackerman (acoustic guitarist), and other musicians recording on Windom Hill Records. The strains of the music make the old concrete walls reverberate gently, holding the echoes of sustained chords. When the stresses and pressures of the world close in, Rodney's room provides a place of solace, warmth, and understanding.

In truth, it is Rodney, himself, who provides those things, the ambiance of his room simply projecting outward the calm that radiates from within him. Rodney is a careful listener and a wise soul. As an architecture student, Rodney is always working on projects in his room late at night. He seems to have no difficulty with carrying on a conversation while he works, so there is often someone in his room, taking in the healing presence that surrounds him. Questions about faith, life, and philosophy flow easily

in Rodney's room. Judgment only comes forth from him, and even then mostly with a raised brow, when unkindness is expressed toward someone.

After a few minutes or a few hours in Rodney's room, I am ready to return to my own, where I only feel tension, competition, and disappointment. My roommate and I don't know how to address the relationship that is slowly coming unwound, so the silence is different, filled with awkwardness, anger, hurt.

The ambiance and spirit of Rodney's room is often what we're looking for when we come to church—a soft place to land, feel welcomed and cared for, be healed, and be strengthened to return to places where we experience tension, competition, and disappointment. My roommate also finds that in Rodney's room.

Interestingly, the places that are uncomfortable for me are also filled with the presence of Christ. While I don't experience the same welcome, warmth, and healing as in Rodney's room, they nevertheless bring Christ's presence into my life. In classrooms, labs, the library, my difficult roommate relationship, and other spaces, Christ is present and at work, stretching me, challenging me, urging me to grow. The church must also be this for us—a place to be challenged, stretched, called into the fullness of the self-giving life of discipleship. Nurture and challenge, healing and stretching, dying and being raised to new life. Emmanuel, "God is with us," in it all.

Today is actually a quiet sunny afternoon in November of 2021. Advent and Christmas seem far away, but there's a newsletter article to be written. So I put in my earbuds, open Spotify, and begin playing George Winston's "December" album. My mind races back to Rodney's room, pain and healing in college, welcome and stretching, dying and being raised to new life. I say a word of thanks for every experience, past and present. Then I get ready to walk forward, in the strength of the God who is with us in every experience of life.

Grace & Peace, Dan



# Advent

## Advent Worship at Covenant

We hope you'll join us this December to worship, share our blessing, and have fun! With COVID-19 statistics remaining low, if you haven't joined us in worship in a while, we hope you'll consider whether this might be the time for you to return. The sanctuary will be beautifully decorated, the music will be outstanding, and the opportunity to worship together heightens the joy of the season! Oh come let us adore Him!

### December

Sunday – 5th	10:30am	Second Sunday of Advent
Sunday – 12th	10:30am	Third Sunday of Advent
Sunday – 19th	10:30am	Fourth Sunday of Advent
Tuesday – 21st	6:30pm	BMC – Longest Night Service
Friday – 24th	5:00pm	Christmas Eve Service & Communion
Sunday – 26th	10:30am	Lessons & Carols Worship



NEW Adult Sunday School  
 The Redemption of Scrooge  
 Mission Hall @ 9:00am  
 November 28th, Dec. 5th, 12th, & 19th

This Advent, we take a look at the classic tale by Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*. Using Pastor Matt Rawle's book, *The Redemption of Scrooge*, we will explore the world that Ebenezer Scrooge lives in—and we will find a man in need of a second chance. Along with Scrooge, we will meet the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future—and in the process learn about living with and for others in a world blessed by Jesus. We invite you to join us this Advent season as we look at this familiar classic tale through the lens of faith.

- December 5th – The Remembrance of Christmas Past
- December 12th – The Life of Christmas Present
- December 19th – The Hope of Christmas Future

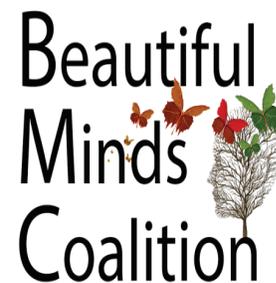


Sunday, December 5th  
 Following 10:30am Worship in Mission Hall

**Covenant's Children & Families are invited to join us for an Advent Celebration** following worship in Mission Hall. Following lunch, children and families will learn about the season of Advent through crafts, stories, and music. We hope that you will join us as we begin to PREPARE for the birth for of Christ.

Please RSVP to Chad Bosse (chad@covenantcares.org) so that we make sure to have enough to eat for everyone!

## *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 hybrid service just as we do every Sunday. If you are at home we encourage you to light candles 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 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](mailto: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. We will also have extra candles for those that attend in person.

If you or someone you know needs a service like this, please make plans to attend in person or via Facebook Live at 6:30 pm on December 21st and help us spread the word by sharing our upcoming FB posts about the Longest Night Service with family and friends.

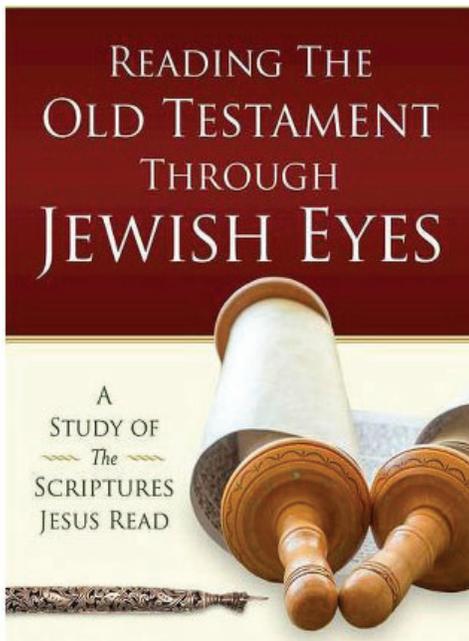
Peace be with you, in this season and always.



## Year-End Giving

Please remember that for us to count gifts toward 2021 giving, they need to be received at the church office by December 31, 2021. Please also note that a number of local companies, including USAA, provide corporate matching of employee donations to registered non-profits. USAA, for example, matches up to \$1,000/employee/year through matches made by payroll deduction through Benevity.

Covenant is registered with Benevity and receives corporate-matched gifts from several members already. If you are considering a year-end gift and work for a large company, ask if there is a corporate matching program that can help your gift go further. If you work at USAA and would like to do so, our office manager, Bethany Borak, would be happy to help walk you through the process.



## Weekly Small Group Bible Study

*Reading the Old Testament Through Jewish Eyes*

by

Rabbi Evan Moffic

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. We begin December with the prophet Micah's promise of peace in the coming of the Promised One. As the story unfolds, God's grace is poured out to Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and all the world as we, in turn respond in gratitude for God's gift. With Mary and the shepherds, we ponder and rejoice at this miracle. With Simeon and Anna, we marvel in God's grace. With the magi, we worship the newborn king.

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](mailto:chad@covenantcares.org)).

We hope your child will join us on Sunday mornings! For the Zoom link and password, please contact [chad@covenantcares.org](mailto:chad@covenantcares.org).

## Ruth Circle Upcoming Study

Ruth Circle meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 1:00PM at the church. We are studying Ephesians. All women of the church are welcome to join us for study and fellowship.

# Maintenance and Technology Ministry

As the year draws to a close, the Maintenance and Technology Ministry would like to thank all those who volunteered their time and talents to help with the operations and maintenance of the church. Through your routine participation and in volunteering on for Fifth Saturday activities, you have had a demonstrable impact. Together, we have maintained plumbing and electrical fixtures, replaced broken windows, and addressed drainage problems. Doing so has saved the church hundreds of dollars that otherwise would have been spent on hiring contractors. Through our Fifth Saturday activities, you have trimmed trees, removed vines, planted shrubs, and grown vegetables for distribution to those in need. Working with the Mission Ministry, we also installed six picnic tables to further promote and enhance the use of church grounds. You are truly a remarkable congregation and we look forward to your continued assistance to the church in the New Year.

## South Texas Corn Maize

We had a wonderful time out in Hondo at the Graff 7A Ranch's South Texas Maize! Covenant families roasted S'mores by the campfire, had a fantastic hay ride, and got lost in the Corn Maize! We're looking forward to our next family event—the Advent Celebration on December 5th!



## Covenant Backyard Cookout & Dedication

Dedicating, singing, eating, and reminiscing! We had a great time gathering at our new picnic tables for some fellowship on November 7th! It was a special treat to see photos of gatherings over the 50+ years of Covenant Life. Thank you to all who joined, and especially our grill masters Lee and Jay!



## 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, call the church office at 210.342.5253. Thank you, Missions Ministry



## 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](mailto: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.

### Need a Ride To Church?

Life is moving back to normal. The Congregational Care Committee has learned that several members of the church are unable to drive themselves to Covenant on Sundays. If you need a ride, we can find someone in your neighborhood to drive you to church.

Call Bethany at Church Office (210) 342-5253 to give your information.

### Calling All Cookie Bakers!

Covenant will begin having funeral receptions in the near future. One of the things that we all have in common is the love for homemade cookies. We want to sign up a group of church members to donate 2 dozen cookies for future funeral receptions. We have freezer space to store cookies. Contact Pam Klinzing for info.

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211 Roletto Drive  
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**Website:** [www.covenantcares.org](http://www.covenantcares.org)  
**Email:** [office@covenantcares.org](mailto:office@covenantcares.org)  
**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](mailto:office@covenantcares.org) to have your email added to the list.
- **Website:** [www.covenantcares.org](http://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](mailto:covenantprayerchain211@gmail.com)