

Covenant Call

February 2022 Newsletter

SOLVING THE RIGHT PROBLEM By Pastor Dan Milford

When our children are young, it's up to us as parents to solve their problems. We quickly learn to understand what our children need: a clean diaper, milk, food, medicine, or just to be held and comforted. While it can be frustrating when a young parent is exhausted and an infant's sole means of communication is crying, the problem solving is relatively straightforward most of the time, with a handful of options for the needed intervention.

As children grow up, though, things begin getting trickier. With growing maturity, the child increasingly needs the parent to facilitate and support the child's own problem-solving rather than intervening. Knowing when to act on our child's behalf and when to help the child discover the action she or he needs to take is not so straightforward.

Once our children were in college, Nadia and I discovered that yet another aspect of engagement with them was needed. They no longer needed us to solve their problems for them. They didn't even need us to go into "problem-solving mode" to help them figure out how to solve their problem. They often just needed someone they could trust to vent to, to share their disappointment, to hear their hurt.

I struggled with shifting gears. "Problem-solving mode" had become second nature. I had come to assume that if a problem was being brought to me the desire was for me to help solve it. So all too often, when my kids simply needed me to listen, empathize, and be a loving presence, I got to work trying to solve the problem and make things better. Only, sometimes, that made things worse, because I wasn't doing the one thing they needed from me. The problem they were sometimes coming to me with was simply that they were hurt, disappointed, or overwhelmed and needed to be heard. It took me time to learn to ask how I could help and listen for what they truly needed. It took time to learn to stop solving the wrong problem.

In other areas of life, it becomes more complex still. Often when a person is declining in health, the effort to address one problem can exacerbate another. Specialists must work closely together, sometimes with nurses or

general practitioners helping them to see beyond the one kind of problem they've dedicated their lives to solving. A careful balancing of interventions becomes necessary to keep from killing the patient by trying to solve one problem optimally without realizing what the unintended consequences could be.

Preserving and restoring human health becomes even more complicated because each person comes with a complex history that impacts both that person's health and how he or she responds to different types of medical interventions. We fill out lengthy medical histories that even include the health histories of close relatives precisely because a "one size fits all" approach to treatment is not as effective at restoring a patient to health as one that takes that person's full medical history into account.

Learning our history as a country and as a denomination is time consuming. There are many different people, events, and movements to consider over the last 400 years. One can approach that history from a variety of perspectives, focusing light in some areas while avoiding looking in others. The history has plenty of moments and angles that are deeply inspirational. It also has horrific chapters that we'd rather not read. The complexity makes it tempting to take a simplistic and mythological approach, casting people as pure heroes or villains and their causes as God-driven or diabolical.

If our "patient" is the great American experiment in democracy, our care for that patient calls on us to know the patient's history as fully as possible, understand what has most jeopardized its health and vitality, and what kind of interventions are most likely to help it to thrive. Understanding the interventions of the past that have helped some and harmed others is part of that history we desperately need to know. Otherwise, we might just continue perpetuating the same interventions that keep our "patient" from becoming the fully vital and robust democracy that its better angels have always called it to be.

Grace & Peace, Dan

Scout Sunday! - February 6th

February 6th is Scout Sunday! We welcome members of Covenant's Pack 537 who will be joining us in worship. During worship, we will recognize the scouts who completed the P.R.A.Y. program's God and Family curriculum. This curriculum provided a unique opportunity for Pastor Dan and Chad to connect with members of Pack 537 as they explored their faith together and learned about the importance of God's role in a healthy family. Covenant will also feature a slideshow of the many ways Pack 537 has been active together and in the community over the past year. We hope you will join us for this special Sunday.



FEBRUARY - We will be Building!!!!

The mission statement of Habitat for Humanity (H\$H) is "Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope". Habitat for Humanity is a non-governmental, and nonprofit organization, which was founded in 1976 by couple Millard and Linda Fuller and recently celebrated its 45th anniversary on November 13, 2021. Praise God!!

In the fall of 2021 I gave a Presbyterian Cluster Habitat update, and at that time we were not sure if the Cluster would be able to fully sponsor the 2022 build. I give thanks to the Lord for the churches and individual supporters who responded and we are fully funded for 2022, and already working on the financial funding for 2023. But there is still a house to build in 2022 and volunteers are needed. What's required of a volunteer? A volunteer needs to be at least 16 years of age and have a willing heart. All tools, gloves and lunch are provided. Please use Sign-up Genius so H4H may know how many volunteers to expect:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090C49A8AB29A5F94-presbyterian6>

The ministry of Habitat for Humanity is a fine example of providing a 'hand up' and not a 'hand out'. We will have an opportunity to meet the new home owners as they work side-by-side with us to build their home.

The 2022 Build in Rancho Carlota, 13801 Watson Road, SAT 78073 will begin on Friday, February 4, 2022. We will again be partnered with the Poerner Family Foundation (PFF) under COVID - 19 safety criteria. PFF will provide volunteers primarily on Friday and the Cluster on Saturday. Landscape and Dedication day is Saturday, April 9th, and the age requirement is lifted, so this is really a great day for younger members of the family to participate. Waivers, maps and Build Schedule are available in the narthex.

Thank you for your continued support of this ministry and if you would like to make a donation please make checks payable to: **"Presbyterian Cluster Habitat"**, and mailed to 211 Roletto, SAT 78213.

To clarify, only contributions made to the Presbyterian Cluster Habitat will go towards the Presbyterian Cluster build. Donations to Habitat for Humanity will be used by that wonderful ministry, but will not be applied to the Cluster's financial responsibility. In Christ, Martha G. Flores



Psalms:

Scripture that speaks for us

Adult Study
Sunday Mornings @ 9:00AM
Emmaus Classroom

The book of Psalms is well-known and well-worn. It is the Old Testament book most often quoted in the New Testament, and its quotations can be found everywhere from John Milton to Star Trek to Congressional speeches. Why so much attention? The Church Father Athanasius said it best—most of Scripture speaks to us, but the Book of Psalms speaks for us.

- February 6th – The Power of Poetry
- February 13th – Lord, Like a Shepherd Lead Us
- February 20th – The Anatomy of a Lament
- February 27th – Jesus & the Psalms

We invite you to experience fresh connections with the Psalms and engage the Bible in a deeply sensitive way. Join us on Sunday mornings—either on our campus in the Emmaus Classroom or online via Zoom. (Zoom information can be found on our webpage:

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

GAME NIGHT

Young at Heart invites all adults who enjoy company, food, and lots of laughter with friends to come join us for games every Friday night. The fun starts at 6:30PM. The Mission Hall door will open around 6:15PM. Please remember to wear a mask. Look forward to seeing you there!



Sign up in the Narthex to reserve Altar Flowers in 2022. This is a great way to celebrate an anniversary, birthday, or special event. It can be used to honor or remember a loved one. Flowers are \$50. Only one family can sign up per Sunday. If you have questions, contact Bethany Borak in the church office 210-342-5253.

Webinar Recording: How to Optimize Your Retirement Income Streams

Sunday, Feb. 6 @ 2:00PM

About this Webinar:

Do you have a retirement savings account?

- A 403(b)(9)
- 403(b)(9)
- Designated Roth account
- Traditional IRA
- ROTH IRA
- Inherited IRA?

Join Jacqueline Boersema, Director of Financial Education for the Board of Pensions, as she discusses how to create sustainable retirement income streams in the most tax-efficient manner.

This webinar will help you:

- understand required minimum distribution rules for various retirement savings vehicles;
- calculate your required minimum distribution when you have more than one IRA;
- explore various retirement income strategies to reduce stock market risk and protect your nest egg; and
- learn how to prioritize the timing of retirement account withdrawals for tax efficiency purposes.

How To Optimize Your Retirement
Income Streams lasts one hour.

Meet the Presenter:

Jacqueline Boersema

Jacqueline serves as Director, Financial Education at the Board of Pensions. She has 30 years of financial services experience in private banking and at accounting firms. She is a Certified Financial Planner and she holds an MBA in Finance from DePaul University, Chicago. Jacqueline is also a Registered Investment Advisor and has been a frequent conference speaker at the American Bankers Association Wealth Management conference and the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA) conference.



Brought to you by Covenant Adult Ministry

BLACK HISTORY IS AMERICAN HISTORY

Why might we observe Black History Month? Because Black history is American history, but the contributions of African Americans are overlooked in most history books used in schools. To read American history from a Black perspective is immensely important to us today. Elements I've come to look for in sources for learning Black history include:

- the long and painful story of discriminatory ideas, laws, and actions against Black people,
- the varied and courageous forms of resistance to discrimination and dehumanization that have been practiced by Black Americans through the centuries,
- the repeated pattern of Black advancement being met with discriminatory laws and, often, with violence,
- the many examples of individual Black Americans who have excelled in every field (since most of us did not learn about more than a half-dozen to a dozen Black

Americans in high school or college classes),

- the variety of ways in which Black Americans, through their protest and struggle for equal rights, have helped our country grow into a fuller representation of the democracy our founding documents aspired to envision,
- the connections that show how the ideas around past laws get recycled and repackaged and the connections that show how past laws and practices shape current realities.

For a broad overview of Black History, I suggest:

Books:

- *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, Ibram X. Kendi
- *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, Nikole Hannah-Jones, et al

YouTube Videos:

- *Crash Course: Black American History*
- Lectures by the authors of books on Black History
- Lectures/speeches by historical Black figures over the last 80 years.

If you've found something helpful, I'd love to know about it! - Pastor Dan Milford

Mail-in Voting in 2022

In Texas, mail-in voting is a service available to those who qualify. Application must be made each year in which a person wishes to vote via mail-in ballot. The following information is from the Bexar County website:

<https://www.bexar.org/3271/Vote-by-Mail>

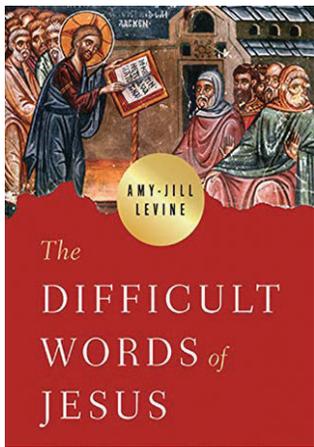
As many in our congregation are eligible for voting by mail and the application deadline for the primaries is rapidly approaching, this information and reminder is being shared.

“The deadline to receive an Application for a Ballot by Mail ballot for the Joint Primary Election for the Democratic & Republican Parties is February 18, 2022. All Applications for Ballot By Mail must be received by the Bexar County Elections Department by 5:00 PM on February 18th.” Don't Wait!--If you qualify for a mail ballot send in your application now.

You are eligible to vote early by mail if you are a registered voter who meets any of the following:

- 65 years of age or older on or before Election Day
- Sick or has a physical condition that prevents a voter from appearing in person without the risk of injuring the voter's health.
- Out of the county during the entire election period and can provide a out of county address for delivery of mail-in ballot.
- Confined to jail, but eligible to vote





Weekly Small Group Bible Study Continuing Through February *The Difficult Words of Jesus* by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine

Covenant offers many different opportunities to gather via Zoom for Weekly Bible Study. In January, we begin a study based on Dr. Amy-Jill Levine's book, *The Difficult Words of Jesus*, which examines some of the most difficult teachings of Jesus.

Jesus provided his disciples teachings for how to follow Torah, God's word; he told them parables to help them discern questions of ethics and of human nature; he offered them beatitudes for comfort and encouragement. But sometimes Jesus spoke words that followers then and now have found difficult. He instructs disciples to hate members of their own families (Luke 14:26), to act as if they were slaves (Matthew 20:27), and to sell their belongings and give to the poor (Luke 18:22). He restricts his mission (Matthew 10:6); he speaks of damnation (Matthew 8:12); he calls Jews the devil's children (John 8:44).

In *The Difficult Words of Jesus*, Amy-Jill Levine shows how these difficult teachings would have sounded to the people who first heard them, how have they been understood over time, and how we might interpret them in the context of the Gospel of love and reconciliation.

Each of our Weekly Bible Study groups are open—meaning anyone can join at any time. Please take a look at meeting times, as well as Zoom information for all of our weekly Bible studies on our webpage:
<https://www.covenantcares.org/weekly-bible-study/>

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

Thursday 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 the new year with the stories of Luke that introduce us to Jesus' ministry and discover that his focus would be on bringing relief to the poor, hungry and mistreated. Through Jesus, we learn that God's reign would mean justice for all, starting with the most vulnerable.

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

We hope your child will join us on Sunday mornings! **For the Zoom link and password, please contact 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.

Help Fight Hunger



Covenant's Youth & Children are inviting the congregation to help fight hunger by collecting non-perishable items thru February 13th.

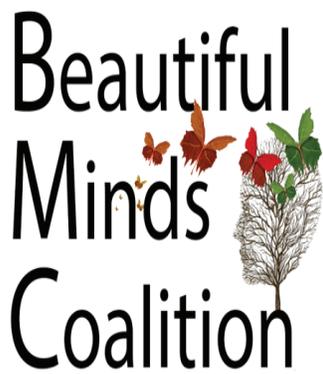
To participate, simply drop off non-perishable items at the table in the narthex.

All items will be counted on SOUPer Bowl Sunday (Feb. 13th) and will be donated to the San Antonio Food Bank and West Avenue Compassion.

Many, many thanks to our Covenant Family for your generous donations of money, time and talent for December's annual Holiday Grocery Shopping event for the 35 families at SAMM Transitional Living and Learning Center. It was wonderful to see everyone out in the aisles again this year. It was especially exciting to see so many new shoppers who joined us this year – new church members, families and friends of church members, Castle Hills Woman's Club members and iHeartMedia employees. We are grateful for all the hands that were pushing carts this year! Special thanks to Beverly Burris and Jayme Pressly, our Beauty Specialists, who once again prepared cosmetic bags filled with goodies for the SAMM moms!!

How much we spend on groceries is completely based on your financial contributions to the James Payne Fund throughout the year. Through your generous donations to the fund, our total spend on groceries, which also included a \$50 gift card for each family, was \$7,500! We thank you for your continued faithfulness to this ministry!!
~The Missions Ministry Team





Mental and Behavioral Health Black American Issues

By: Beautiful Minds Coalition (BMC)

- In 2019, suicide was the second leading cause of death for Black Americans, ages 15 to 24.
- The death rate from suicide for Black American men was four times greater than for Black American women, in 2018.
- The overall suicide rate for Black Americans was 60 percent lower than that of the non-Hispanic white population, in 2018.
- Black females, grades 9-12, were 60 percent more likely to attempt suicide in 2019, as compared to non-Hispanic white females of the same age.
- Poverty level affects mental health status. Black Americans living below the poverty level, as compared to those over twice the poverty level, are twice as likely to report serious psychological distress.
- A report from the U.S. Surgeon General found that from 1980 - 1995, the suicide rate among African Americans ages 10 to 14 increased 233 percent, as compared to 120 percent of non-Hispanic whites.
- Black American people are more often diagnosed with schizophrenia and less often diagnosed with mood disorders compared to white people with the same symptoms. Additionally, they are offered medication or therapy at the lower rates than the general population.
- Because less than 2 percent of American Psychological Association members are Black American, some may worry that mental health care practitioners are not culturally competent enough to treat their specific issues.
- Stigma and judgment prevent Black American people from seeking treatment for their mental illnesses. Research indicates that Black Americans believe that mild depression or anxiety would be considered “crazy” in their social circles. Furthermore, many believe that discussions about mental illness would not be appropriate even among family.

The statistics above were drawn the websites of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health and Mental Health America.

Mental Health

Issues Facing the

Black Community



Lifetime risk for **generalized anxiety disorder** is

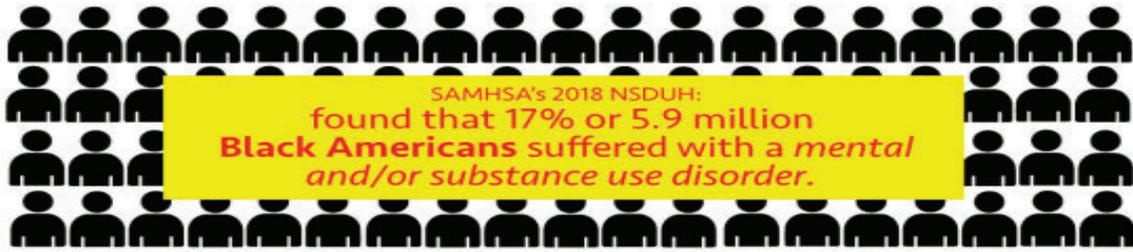
4.9%

in Black Americans

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (HHSOMH),



Black Americans are 20% more likely to experience **serious mental illness** (SMI) than the general public.



SAMHSA's 2018 NSDUH:
found that 17% or 5.9 million Black Americans suffered with a mental and/or substance use disorder.

The substances most often used and abused by Black Americans are:



Alcohol 1.2 million



Inhalants 175,000



Marijuana 5.9 million



Cocaine 577,000



Opioids 1.2 million



Methamphetamine 64,000



one-third

of adult Black Americans who need mental health **care receive it.**

11.5%
of Black adult Americans had no health insurance despite the ACA.



of Black Americans think that **mental illness** is a sign of **weakness** or a **personal failing**



RESOURCES PROVIDED BY
sunshinebehavioralhealth.com





THE MENTAL ILLNESS THAT WE JOKE ABOUT

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) as being “characterized by repetitive, unwanted, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and irrational, excessive urges to do certain actions (compulsions).” Obsessions are intrusive and irrational thoughts or impulses that are unwanted and upsetting but still occur repeatedly. OCD is an anxiety-related disorder.

It is a serious mental illness. It is not having your own system for arranging cans, putting away dishes, cleaning, sorting supplies, or keeping up with work tasks. It is not your pattern of mowing the lawn vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. It is not how often you clean out your cabinets and closets. Unless you have personal experience, it is not likely that you really understand how serious OCD can be or the crushing effect it can have on someone’s life. It is not funny at all.

Obsessive thoughts may take the form of thoughts about harming someone, unpleasant images, fear of saying something inappropriate in public, or doubts about having done something that is important, such as locking a door. Any of us could have such thoughts from time to time, but it is the frequency of the thought, the ability to be rational about it, and the fact that it doesn’t interfere with or overwhelm the rest of our lives that differentiates these occasional intrusions from the debilitating disorder that is OCD.

Compulsions are repetitive acts that temporarily relieve the stress brought on by an obsession. People with these disorders know that these rituals don't make sense but feel they must perform them to relieve the anxiety and, in some cases, to prevent something bad from happening. The urge to act on these compulsions in order to relieve anxiety is often so overwhelming that the person is forced to act, even while knowing their behavior is irrational and possibly while trying to hide it from others. Compulsions can take the form of physical actions, mental rituals, or having to repeat an action a specified number of times. “Checking” can be physical or mental and manifests in many ways.

OCD has a major disruptive effect on a person’s life and relationships. Like any mental illness, it also has ripple effects on those in their family or work circles. Although it cannot be cured, there is treatment to lessen the effects of OCD so that a person can function more normally in society. OCD may be a brain chemistry imbalance which interferes with the body’s ability to use serotonin, a chemical which brain cells use to communicate with each other. About 25% of those with OCD have an immediate family member who is also affected.

This illness cannot be cured, but like most other mental illnesses it can be treated effectively. Diagnosis is made by a professional analysis of symptoms and behaviors and also by medical testing to rule out other causes. Treatment includes psychotherapy and medication. It is not a disorder that anyone should live with but it is one for which the person should seek treatment. You may be the person who provides the encouragement for taking that step. You may be able to look up treatment resources and even provide transportation and support. Although you may not fully understand the illness, you will be helping to relieve someone’s intense suffering.



In 2021 the Mission Ministry Team was blessed and grateful to steward the faithful giving, directed and undesignated, of a portion of the Covenant family's financial provision to serve God's children in need. Covid has kept our family physically distant, but we have been together in ministry. Our hope for 2022 is to have impactful, hands-on, multi-generational

service opportunities so, individually and corporately, we can deepen our sense of and commitment to, God's call to serve others.

Even as the Mission Ministry Team scans externally for potential service partners, internally we seek new Mission Ministry Team members. If you hear, or think you might hear, the call to serve in this way, amend your Time and Talent Survey, contact the church office, or any Mission Ministry Team member you find.

Mission Goals: to educate the congregation on God's call to help the community, and to help facilitate the church's giving to organizations and individuals who are in need. The Committee must inform the Congregation of specific mission needs, and to help the congregation be involved through prayer, physical support, and financial support.

Thanks to the faithful giving of the Congregation, in 2021 the Mission Ministry Team distributed \$39,438.28 to the following organizations and individuals in need:

- Community and Prayer Gardens:
 - Upkeep: \$174.80
 - Picnic Tables: \$5,412.95
- Compassion Kits: \$238.00
- Food Pantry: \$400
- Habitat for Humanity (Presbyterian Cluster): \$1,950.00
 - Hosted Virtual Holy Smoke Fundraiser
- Haven for Hope: \$50.00
- House of Neighborly Service (Christmas Books): \$300.00
- James Payne SAMM Christmas: \$7,670.07
- Larkspur Elementary (Books): \$300.00
 - Teacher Appreciation Day (Desserts): priceless
- One Great Hour of Sharing: \$4,950.00
- Presbyterian Children's Home and Services: \$850.00
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance:
 - Hurricane Ida Relief: \$1,000.00
 - Haiti Earthquake Relief: \$4,550.00
 - December Tornados Relief \$1,500.00
- SAMM: \$1,900.00
- Covid Lock-down Dinner: \$775.00
- Covid Lock-down Breakfast and Cards: \$126.86
- San Antonio Food Bank (Souper Bowl of Caring): \$969.60
- San Antonio Refugee Services (Afghan evacuees): \$750.00 for \$825.00 in gift cards
- SJRC Texas (Foster Care and Services): \$2,071.00
- Connected Mission: \$2,250.00*
- West Avenue Compassion: \$500.00

* Connected Mission includes Covenant's larger commitments through the Operating Budget to Habitat for Humanity (www.habitatsa.org), Covenant's Food Pantry, Mission Interpretation and Promotion, Mission Presbytery (mission-presbytery.org/committees), and the PCUSA (presbyterianmission.org/). The Mission Ministry Team invites everyone to take the time to learn more about, pray for, and get involved in these connected ministries.

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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