



COVENANT

United Methodist Church



ASH **WEDNESDAY**

*An Invitation to a Richer
Experience Of God's Grace*

Ash Wednesday is February 22nd this year and marks the first day of the Lenten Season. Lent is the forty days of preparation between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Just as Jesus spent forty days fasting in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry, believers are invited during lent to prepare for Holy Week and Easter through forty days of prayer, fasting, repentance, almsgiving, and self-denial. The six Sundays in this forty-six day period are not counted because each one represents a "mini-Easter," a celebration of Jesus' victory over sin and death. During Ash Wednesday worship, participants receive ashes on their foreheads as a sign of repentance. The ashes are the burned palms of the previous year's Palm Sunday. The ashes are marked in the shape of a cross on each worshipper's forehead, reminding us of the sacrifice and suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. This act echoes the ancient tradition of throwing ashes over one's head to signify repentance before God. As the ashes are imposed, believers are reminded that from dust you come, and to dust you shall return and to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel (Mark 1:15).

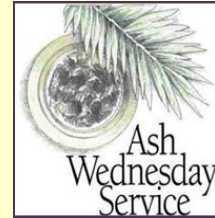
Leadership Training

Charlie Bright

I wanted to write a few words to bring everyone up to date on the Leadership Training efforts here at Covenant UMC. We currently have 96 Brothers and Sisters involved in leadership roles in various committees and ministries', and a stellar group they are. Currently, the Leadership training to date and indeed throughout most of the year will be focusing on making sure we are all pulling in the same direction with harmony towards our mission goal here of bringing disciples to Christ. The plan is to have four training sessions or retreats throughout 2012 and we gathered recently on a Saturday morning to participate in the first one. I gave a short overview of the work of the Assessment Team in 2011 to help define our Mission. I also spoke of the efforts by some members of the congregation to determine the state and thinking of Christianity and the Methodist Church today and relating that to where we can best utilize our strengths and resources in the coming year.

Amy gave a wonderful presentation concerning Creating Partners in Ministry's with emphasis on the things a leader can do in a volunteer environment to make working in a ministry enjoyable and rewarding.

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February 22nd

Noon-1pm Ashes & Prayer

7:00 pm Worship

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Sunday Worship Schedule

8:00 AM	Traditional
9:00 AM	Oasis of Praise
10:00 AM	Sunday School
11:15 AM	Traditional

LENT AT COVENANT

The number forty is significant in scripture. Noah experience forty days of rain during the great flood. Moses spent forty days on Mt Sinai with God. The Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years before entering the Promised Land. Elijah spent forty days walking to Mt Horeb. Jonah preached for forty days to the city of Nineveh, urging them to repent. Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness, where he overcame temptation by citing scripture to Satan. In Matthew 9:15, Jesus instructed his disciples to fast when the bridegroom is taken away from them. Since the time of the Apostles, Christians have fasted during the annual commemoration of his death and burial.

Since Lent is a time for practicing with renewed vigor the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, our Message Series in Lent will be about the spiritual disciplines. On Ash Wednesday, we will focus on the practices of abstinence and engagement, exploring how we can more actively cooperate with God as we refrain from some activities and take on others.

On the first Sunday in Lent, we will explore the benefits of solitude and silence, using Palm 46 and Mark 1:35-39 as our guideposts. During the second week in Lent, we will examine the spiritual disciplines of study and prayer. During the week of March 4th, our Stewardship Team will be hosting a variety of Prayer activities and opportunities for you to grow in your practices of prayer. Throughout the Season of Lent, we will go deep into the essentials of the spiritual life, exploring the means of grace God has given us to help us to die to our sin and be resurrected into abundant life by his power and presence.

It may be a challenging time for many of us, but I promise it will be a rich experience of deepening in our relationship with God as we learn to rely more heavily on his grace and power, instead of our own.

May God bless us as we enter into this Holy Season.

Grace and Peace,

Valerie

Pastor Valerie



Covenant United Methodist Church

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Rev. Valerie Sansing
Senior Pastor

Rev. Rosie Grattan
Associate Pastor
Children's Ministry & Community Outreach

Laurie Strawbridge
Director of Youth Ministry

Kathy Smallwood
Director of Music Ministry

Steve Wottrich
Pianist and Organist

Randy Nettles
Praise Worship Leader

Ashley McDowell
Business Manager

Henrietta McDermott
Receptionist

Laura Clemens
Director of Covenant UMC Preschool

NEW MEMBERS TO THE CUMC FAMILY

Zack Johnson Jan 8 - 9am
Jennifer Jones Jan 15 - 11:15am
Kenna Kulczar Jan 22 -11:15am
Will & Ella Kulczar Baptized
Erin Crews & Daughter Aria
Jan 29 - 9am
Bethany Schoen Jan 29 -11:15am



By Pastor Rosie

and Ashley Beebee, Children's Ministry Chair

Children's Ministry is off and running to a great year in the Lord as we prepare for Children's Sabbath on Sunday, February 19th and many other events this spring and summer.

VBS

As we prepare for Vacation Bible School, June 25-29, 2012, Children's Ministry is especially excited and grateful for our VBS 2012 co-directors, Sarah Nieto and Lisa Rush! Again, we express much gratitude for the leadership of Sherry Smith, last year's VBS director, and all of the many volunteers who stepped up to the plate to bring us an awesome week of *Shake it Up!* Please come and support Sarah and Lisa and all of our efforts to make VBS 2012 another great week at Covenant this year, as we hold informational meetings -- the first of which will be Sunday, February 5, 2012, at 1:00 p.m. in Rooms 104-106. Come and hear of the theme chosen for VBS 2012 and how you can offer your gifts to the church and the community. Your attendance and support will be greatly appreciated!

Children's Ministry Team

Children's Ministry meetings are currently being held every 4th Monday of each month. We want to hear your ideas for ministering to God's precious children of this community, as we work together to make disciples of Jesus Christ. There is so much we look forward to doing to further our children's spiritual lives!

Children's Chapel

Chapel is going well during both the 9:00 a.m. service and 11:15 a.m. services. The number of children attending continues to grow, especially as we recruit several volunteers for both services. Many thanks go to Ryan and Zach (youth), Ashley Beebee, Nancy McCain, Beth Bible, Carla Darce, Judy Bright, John Sansing, Don Jones, Laurie Strawbridge, the Propes, and so many other adult and youth volunteers who have come forward to lend us a hand! Parents: you are always welcome to come and check us out!

Children's Sabbath

Please mark your calendars for Children's Sabbath on Sunday, February 19th! The children of Covenant will be active all morning long, featuring Kids of the Covenant (KOTC), led by Kathy Smallwood and Amy Russin; Riley Beebee on guitar; Wesley United Methodist Church praise dancers; and much, much more, not to mention a wonderful time of fellowship at the Sunday School hour filled with pancakes and stuff! Please continue to look for more information in upcoming announcements. Don't miss it!

Chili Cook off (All Proceeds Benefit Children's Ministry)

Last year's Chili Cook-off winners Tonna & Steve Marcyes have thrown down the challenge for this year's 2nd Annual Children's Sabbath Chili Cook-off. Reports have been made that both have been seen in the church's kitchen strategizing on their secret formula. Observers have commented that they could hear what sounded like a chant...."Float like a butterfly, sting like bee. Your chili can't touch our's no sir-ree. Now you see us, now you don't, you think you'll win, but we know you won't!" Brave challengers can sign up for their chance to dethrone the Marcyes and take the 2012 title on Sunday, February 19th in the Fellowship Hall at 12:30 p.m. Email Rosie Grattan at rgrattan@covenantaustin.org with your team name and team members by Thursday, Feb 16th and let's get those crock pots rumbling! All the rest of you innocent bystanders be sure to be there to vote for your favorite.



Women's Walk # 1644

February 2-5, 2012

Wimberly (CYJ) Fee \$210

Men's Walk # 1659

May 3-6, 2012

Wimberly (CYJ) Fee \$210

**Do Not Let Cost Deter You
from Attending this Powerful
Spiritual Weekend.**

**Scholarships are available to
cover 2/3 of the cost.**

If you are interested in attending a
Walk to Emmaus, please contact
Kristin Hampsten at
khampsten@alumni.utexas.net.

Applications, schedules and other
informative items are located on
the Emmaus bulletin board and on
the wall in the form holder beside it
in the preschool wing. Or, go to the
Greater Austin Emmaus 4th Day
Group website,
www.austinemmaus.org,

Emmaus Team Selection Meeting
will be February 28th 6 to 9 pm in
room 114.



College



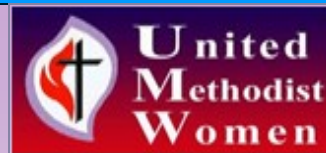
Corner

Katie Slaughter made the Fall Dean's List at the University of Arkansas at Monticello and **Laura Wagner** made the Fall Dean's List at Hendrix College in Conway, AR.

Rachel Whisenhunt completed the Paralegal Certificate Program at the University of Texas.

John David "J.D." King recently completed a trip to El Paso as part of his International Business class at Howard Payne University. During the trip he observed business operations and spoke with economic development officials and business owners to learn firsthand about current issues and trends in US/Mexico trade in the El Paso/Juarez border district.

The Concordia University Choir completed a performing tour in Dallas and Houston during the first week of January. They gave 3 concerts and sang at 4 additional events. **Sarah Hillis** has been a member of this choir for 4 years. (To hear the choir perform, [check out their website here.](#)) In addition, the choir spent a day working at Comunidad de Gracia, a LINC Houston mission church. Read more about this at www.linchouston.org/news.



Meet & Eat Feb. 1st, menu : chicken spaghetti

Circle meeting Feb. 21st @ 9:30 am Come for fellowship, food and lively bible study discussions. Our study for this year is The Journey: forgiveness, restorative justice and reconciliation by

Hixon & Porter

All ladies are welcome to join us.

Lenten Breakfast- March 31st

Guest speaker Pastor Stella Burkhalter, from Oak Hill UMC

Missions & Outreach



COVENANT'S OUTREACH MINISTRY

Ginger Blankenship Chair

CROP WALK



March 3 and 4, 2012

Saturday- 9:30 am Registration ~ Walk begins at
10:00 am Sunday- 1:45 pm Registration ~ Walk begins at
2:30 pm Walter E. Long Park 6614 Blue Bluff
Road Austin, TX

The Crop Walk is just around the corner, so get your walking shoes ready.

Mel McDonald will begin recruiting walkers and gathering donations beginning the last week in January or the first week in February. Stay tuned for information as to when the Crop Walk campaign will begin.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In early December Dana Ripley and Pastor Rosie went out into the neighborhoods and delivered 50 New Testament Bibles with accompanying flyers for our December 10th Christmas Storytime event. These Bibles with invitations to our church are known as Christmas Outreach Kits, made available through Cokesbury at Christmas time, but also throughout the rest of the year. Dana, Carly (Dana's granddaughter) and Rosie were able to deliver to a good number of new residents in the general vicinity of the church and we received many favorable responses from people who were glad to receive Bibles and invitations.

Delivering Bibles to the residents gives us opportunity to have a face-to-face conversation with our new neighbors and to share God's grace, love and joy with them. We encourage others within our congregation to join us in this endeavor!!! This is one way to fulfill the scripture in Matthew 28:19 which commands us to go and make disciples of all nations.

Through our Christmas Storytime event for the children held on December 10th, we were able to collect diapers, wipes, blankets and other baby supplies helps mothers who are in need of assistance.

We want to thank those parents who donated these supplies and allowed their children to participate in Christmas Storytime. The baby supplies will be delivered to *Any Baby Can* on January 12, 2012.

The month of December, Mary/Martha Circle and Community Outreach teamed up again to offer our support to the neighboring schools: Davis Elementary and Summitt Elementary. As we expand this part of our ministry, we have also added one additional school to our list: Barbara Jordan Elementary in Northeast Austin. About once a month or so, we have been sending out e-mails to these schools offering our support through the giving of school supplies and other necessary items, such as underwear and socks for the children. We plan to deliver any supplies collected sometime in January. We pray that the support and partnership will continue between Covenant and these 3 schools.

RAY ZIRKEL MINISTRY

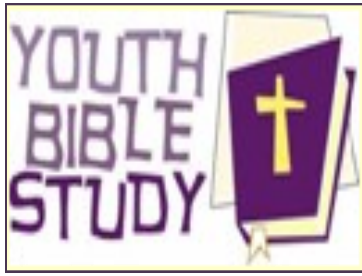
The Ray Zirkel Ministry is no longer a supported ministry of Covenant. If you would like to continue to contribute to this ministry the address is below where checks can be sent.

FUMC

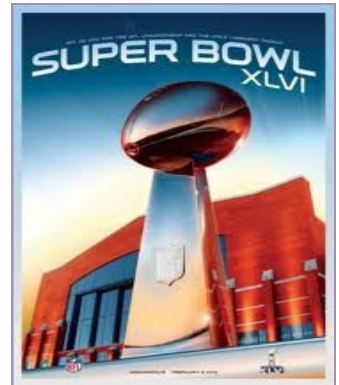
Gardys Johnson
301 North High St
Uvalde, TX 78801-4613

ANGEL FOOD NETWORK

Angel Food Network has disbanded; it is no longer in existence. Please utilize Covenant's Food Pantry if you are in need.



YOUTH NEWS



In January, a total of fourteen youth from Covenant went to two Mid-winter retreats that were truly awesome. God was moving through both camps and changing the lives of our youth. It was a time for rededication, renewal, and respite.

We have a new youth volunteer named Bethany Schoen. Please let her know how much we appreciate her ministry to our kids.

This February we want to keep that spirit alive through our weekly Bible studies and worship times together. We also want to go to a concert on the 23rd. Winter Jam is an annual tour with various Christian artists. The cost is \$10 at the door. Even though we don't have to purchase tickets in advance we still need a head count so email Laurie at lestrawbridge@gmail.com to let me know who is interested.

February is also Super Bowl month and that means two things: Super Bowl party and Super Bowl of Caring. February 5th we will be collecting donations to benefit our food pantry. Peanut butter is the big request this year, but money can be used to buy whatever is lacking so we will be collecting both.

Looking ahead, the Youth Worship Conference is April 20-22, the Sr.. High mission trip is June 10-16, and the Jr.. High mission trip is July 8-12.

Continued from pg 1

Leadership Training

Charlie Bright

Pastor Val spoke to skills of listening, finding good in what anyone says, knowing that generally everyone means well and telling others the truth compassionately. There were 36 folks attending and I received some very enthusiastic responses (of course, there was foodJ). Everyone, I believe, came away with a feeling that with the energy, direction and camaraderie of Covenant, we see great things in creating disciples for the Lord and making certain we care for and provide for our members in 2012.

Covenant UMC Preschool News



The Preschool is beginning a busy month as we enroll students for the coming 2012-13 school year. Children of CUMC members have priority during registration. If your child is between the ages of 12 months and 4 years old, and you're interested in signing up for next year, please call Laura Clemens for information about enrolling. Also, please let your friends and neighbors know that we

COVENANT COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

(Formerly Palooza on the Pavement)

During a recent brainstorming session for our upcoming event it became very obvious that we needed to clearly state that we want our neighbors to join us in celebrating our wonderful community. So a new name has been chosen to ensure everyone knows that they are not only welcome, but this event is tailored for our community.











Covenant COMMUNITY Celebration

music • food • games

Saturday, April 28

10 am — 2 pm

	2/5	<p>Loving our Neighbor: The Samaritans Ministry</p> <p><i>Jesus uses the Samaritans Ministry as an example of What it means to love thy neighbor</i></p>	<p>Leviticus 19:1-18</p> <p>Luke 10:26-37</p>	
	2/12	<p>Loving Our Neighbor: Our Ministry of Mercy</p> <p><i>Christians are to open their hand to the needy as far as there is need</i></p>	<p>James 2:1-8</p> <p>James 2:14-26</p>	
	2/19	<p>Children's Sabbath</p>		
	2/26	<p>Essentials for the Spiritual Life: Solitude & Silence</p> <p><i>Jesus and Paul show us that the desert and closet are the primary places of strength for the pilgrim.</i></p>	<p>Psalm 46:1-11</p> <p>Mark 1:35-39</p>	

WEDNESDAYS IN WORSHIP

2/1 Gospel Worship led by Terry & Carol Hillis

2/8 Praise led by Randy Nettles & Rev. Rosie

2/15 Taize Worship led by Kathy Smallwood & Rev. Rosie

2/22 Ash Wednesday; Noon Ashes & Prayer; 7pm Worship

2/29 Global Worship led by Kathy Smallwood & Rev. Rosie

Covenant Average Attendance Growth

Avg Worship Attendance



An exciting development has occurred in attendance over the last two years.

- 2008 to 2009 increase shows the additional of the Wednesday night Worship to the Sunday worship numbers.
- 2010 to 2011 shows overall attendance growth of 8.2%
- Growth has occurred in the Traditional and Praise services

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
342	328	298	313	292	275	277	275	290	305	332

COVENANT FINANCE UPDATE



Covenant ended 2011 with a Surplus of \$4,929 in the operating account.

Revenue for 2011 was \$594,901 with expenses of \$589,972. The designated account expense will be in next month's newsletter.

On January 22nd Church Council approved the 2012 budget totaling \$609,342.

Covenant United Methodist Church

“A Bible Centered Church”

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(512) 346-3124

www.covenantaustin.org

Give Thanks to the Lord,
For He is Good,
His Love Endures Forever

-Psalm 106:1

**March Newsletter
Deadline
March 15, 2012**

Sunday Schedule

8:00 AM Traditional Worship
9:00 AM Praise Worship
10:00 AM Sunday School
11:15 AM Traditional Worship

Glorify**Witness****Disciple**