



The Heartline

Covenant Presbyterian Church "Loving God by Serving Others"
1001 NW 98th Street, Gainesville, FL 32606-5503
Church Office: (352) 332-0400
info@covenantpresbyterianchurch.org covenantpresbyterianchurch.org



"Where Hearts are Warmed"

May 2016

Highlands Must Close

The Session for Highlands Presbyterian Church has decided that they must close the church. Quoting mail from Steve Benz of the Presbytery of St. Augustine:



"We are thankful to God for the ministry of the Highlands Presbyterian Church in Gainesville, Florida, and we are sad to share that the congregation will be holding its last worship services on Pentecost Sunday, May 15, 2016. A Presbytery-wide invitation to the afternoon service will be sent in the coming days. Please be in prayer for those affected most closely by these events."

The people of Highlands have been close to us at Covenant, often at times when we were facing difficulties. Our congregations have shared joint youth activities and a handbell choir. We encourage all of our congregation to reach out to their members. Please save the date on May 15th to attend the closing service at their church at 1001 NE 16th Avenue here in Gainesville. We will be sure to publicize the exact time when planning is final.



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PASTOR'S CORNER

Praising God, Pizza, and Planning

At a joint Session Retreat with Marion Oak PC, as we went around the table introducing ourselves, we shared our favorite songs, sometimes by song title and other times by playing it on our phones. A few just started singing solo acapella, a single voice trusting, reaching out into the air, and the rest of us would join in, sometimes in harmony.



We shared 'Amazing Grace,' 'Here I Am, Lord,' and many contemporary songs, finding common ground and joy in worship with people we just met that morning.



The introductions between members of the Marion Oaks Session and the Covenant Session during our joint retreat at the Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center on March 5th took a good portion of the morning, but we didn't mind. The joy of discovering and learning

about others that shared our same love for worship was worth every minute and, when it finished, I wished it could have lasted longer.



By the end of the day, we found ourselves writing up ideas and thoughts as fast as we could to take home with us. The three clergy members (Cheryl Gans and Debbie Pangrass from Marion Oaks and I) were kept busy recording these ideas on newsprint paper – one copy for Marion Oaks, another identical one for Covenant - as each of us shared what has worked and what hasn't worked in our congregations, what could be done and what might not be viable as we move into the future with the trust of God's Word for our communities.

A month later, after the activities and joy of Easter and before our April Session meeting, it was these sheets of newsprint that the Covenant Session members gathered around to discuss informally while munching pizza, assessing each idea, and adding others.

By the time we started our formal Session meeting, we had a whiteboard full of ideas, and

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I had a task list of phone calls to make. By next month, we hope to know which of the ideas might be actionable.

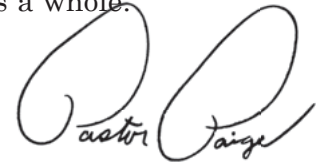
It's a long brainstorming process, spanning several months, but a joyful, communal one, beginning with new friends and shared song, progressing to the sharing of ideas among those who trust each other, and resulting, we hope, with a renewal of focus and simple tasks.

A New Dimension in Reaching Out

In the Annual Report to the Congregation last January, the Session reported the establishment of a Projects and Programs Fund, started with \$20,000 from 2015. We had accumulated this money through careful management and the faithful and undiminished giving of Covenant's members while our pulpit was empty and we were not paying the salary and pension of a pastor.

At its April meeting, the Session began the disposition of this fund. They earmarked \$12,000 to be distributed to Presbyterian agencies (to be divided among the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Presbytery of St. Augustine, and the Montgomery Presbyterian Center), \$6,000 for Covenant's local outreach program, and \$2,000 for church growth projects. The Session

We don't know yet which of the ideas that have captured our imagination will be actionable, and which of these will take root when they encounter reality. But what we do know is that the process of dreaming has brought us together with others who are likewise dreaming: Marion Oaks Presbyterian Church; our Presbytery, the Presbytery of St. Augustine; and the national community of PCUSA as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pastor Paige". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops.

has some specific projects in mind, and we will have the resources to consider others as the year unfolds.

We have already begun the distribution process by sending supplemental gifts that amplify your generosity in supporting the outreach efforts that we featured in the first three months of the year: the Bread of the Mighty Food Bank, the Gainesville Community Ministry, and Girls on the Run. In coming months, your giving to the outreach opportunities in our community that we will feature each month will be multiplied from this fund.

Thank you again for putting your Session in this wonderful situation of distributing Christian benevolence.

Fellowship

The time between the Easter Sunrise Service and 10 AM Worship was busy for those in attendance. After a breakfast of pancakes, egg casseroles & fruit, we listened to music provided by Fred Buhl and Brittany Roughton and assembled 48 Easter baskets for Harbor Chase Memory Care Unit. When Pastor Paige delivered the baskets, the residents and staff were overwhelmed and very grateful for our efforts.

May will be a busy month for the Fellowship Committee, starting with the CommUnity Dinner on May 1st – Baked spaghetti, salad,

and dessert. The next Sunday, the 8th, will be a Mother's Day Tea with finger foods. That will be followed by a Youth Dinner on the 15th, the traditional third-Sunday fundraiser in a five-Sunday month. They will serve BBQ pork sandwiches, potato salad, coleslaw, and (of course) dessert.

Don't forget Celebration Sundays – April 24th and May 29th – when we celebrate those who have had birthdays during the month.

Meditation Trail - Spring Has Sprung!

from Mike Hein, ASLC

Many of the plants will be displaying their colorful flowers this month! As in past years, May is lily month, with a few late amaryllis and other lilies still blooming at the beginning. Rain lilies (pale pink to white flowers) will pop open if we get a good rainstorm. Some of the aloe plants (also in the lily family) may bloom by sign post #3. *Bidens pilosa* (Spanish needles) along the edge of the woods by the CPC end of the trail should be blooming mid-May. By the end of the month, the dwarf palmetto plants

(*Sabal minor*), with minute white flowers on 6 - 8 foot flower spikes, will be blooming near sign post #6. Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) will also be showing their clusters of pale pink flowers in the axils of the leaves.

A special thanks to the Abiding Savior youth for cleaning up the bridges and removing the invasive coral berry plants (*Ardesia crenata*) along the trail in February. Their work will make your experience on the trail more enjoyable.



Aloe



Beautyberry



Dwarf Palmetto



Rain Lily



Spanish Needles



May 2016 Calendar

Su, 1 - Worship at 10
- Fellowship at 11
- Choir Practice after Fellowship

Tu, 3 - Flute Ensemble Concert
at United Ch of Gnv at 7:30

Th, 5 - Koinonia Small Group at 7:30

Su, 8 - Worship at 10 - Mother's Day
- Fellowship at 11

Th, 12 - Koinonia Small Group at 7:30

Su, 15 - Worship at 10
- Fellowship at 11 - Youth Lunch
- Highlands Closing Service in PM
- Session meeting at 7

We, 18 - Heartline Deadline

Th, 19 - Koinonia Small Group at 7:30

Su, 22 - Worship at 10
- Fellowship at 11
- Harbor Chase Devotions at 2:30
- Family Promise arrives at CPC

Th, 26 - Koinonia Small Group at 7:30

Su, 29 - Worship at 10
- Fellowship at 11

May Birthdays

5 - Linda Ivines
10 - Ceara Ebbs

13 - Garnet Brenner

15 - AJ Alessi
16 - Lawrence Alessi

May Anniversary

25 - Susan and Arthur Nimmo

2016 Session

Moderator Rev. Paige Porter-Buhl

Debbi Alessi

Janis Bomar

John Ebbs

Larry Herrington

Susan Nimmo

Dorothy Spangler

John Tucker

The Heartline is published monthly. You may submit articles either handwritten, typed, or on disk (saved in text or Word format) and delivered to the church office.

Deadline for the next newsletter is
May 18, 2016.

If you have a question about submitting an article for *The Heartline*, please call John Tucker.