



The Salt Shaker

Thriving, Growing and Depending on God

For many, the New Year brings new resolutions—promises we make to ourselves to improve ourselves in some way. Things like eating better, exercising more, thinking more positively, getting rid of bad habits, and spending less time on social media all come readily to mind. You may have already made yours — and very possibly already broken them as well! Most don't stick, and all too often, we've begun to expect them not to. And this doesn't just apply to New Year's. Our struggle with consistency runs deep. Our desire is often outweighed by the busyness, chaos and clutter that inundate our lives.

Even godly aspirations, such as reading our Bible more and volunteering in ministry at church, can be empty if they are religious practice just for the sake of religious practice. Anything that produces rituals, expressions, practices, and the like — without ultimately inviting us to a deeper understanding and worship of the Living God — lends itself only to empty religion. The good news: God wants more for us. He doesn't ask us to "give up coffee" — and couldn't care less about our depriving ourselves of an innocent pleasure in His Name. He wants both less and infinitely more: For us to surrender our life to the gospel that cuts into the heart of humanity with a grace that compels us to not just merely to salvation but a life committed to justice, reconciliation, and redemption. *"My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God will not despise"* (Psalm 51:17). This is the kind of resolution *I* want. This is the kind of resolution **we** want together as a church — a resolution that is lasting, and is found in deep discernment desiring all that God has for us. His good, pleasing and perfect will — nothing more, nothing less.

(Continued on page 2)



veritas

Inside this issue

Treasurer's Report.....	3
Birthdays & Anniversaries.....	3
Service Ministry	4
Discipleship Ministry	5
Children's Ministry	5
Youth Ministry.....	6
Missions Update.....	7

Special points of interest

- Three Freedom Riders from the 1960s will be here on January 28 & 29
- Don't forget to register your student for the upcoming Winter Retreats!



veritas

Thriving, Growing and Depending on God

(Continued from page 1)

This is what the Vitality Process is About

This is what the Congregational Vitality Process — an initiative embraced by our church to help us discern our way forward — calls us to. It is not about just “sustaining and maintaining”; rather, it’s about thriving, growing and depending on God to lead us deeper in Christ and further in mission. It is not about adding something just for sake of adding, but instead to discern God’s true will for us in this time, in this place. Vitality is not the goal; it is simply the fruit of good ministry over a long period of time, along with the moving of the Holy Spirit. This doesn’t mean that we have not already (and will continue!) to do good. It means we want more. More, Lord, more! “Doing church” like church has always been “done” or settling for stability are no longer viable options in the church today. If we think change is difficult, how do we feel about irrelevance? Let us be like the tribe of Issachar who understood the times and knew what Israel should do (1 Chronicles 12:32). Let this be the kind of lasting resolution we make this New Year!

We are blessed to have incredible congregational resources and strong support for this pathway. Our next step will be **Veritas: Telling the Truth About Vitality**. Veritas is an initiative designed to help us discover where we are, currently, as a church. Every church is one of four types: Healthy missional, Stable, Critical Moment, or At-Risk. As a Covenant pastor commented,

“Veritas set the stage for my congregational leaders to understand themselves, our church, and have the courage to be completely honest about the changes necessary to move toward vitality.”

Everyone over the age of 12 is invited to this workshop. Among other information, the workshop introduces the language of vitality and will look at healthy missional markers to point the way forward. All this information is intended to get a clearer understanding of our pathway to healthy missional growth. It is a time to take an honest (and loving) look at ourselves, to see what kind of church we are, and to discern what all that means about our decisions and what needs to take place. Please plan to attend on Saturday, February 11. We are better together!

Krista Dolan

VERITAS WORKSHOP

Saturday, February 11

For everyone over the age of 12

Look for more information coming soon!

OUR CHURCH'S
FINANCIAL
HEALTH

Treasurer's Report

The financial results of the General Operating Fund for the 11 months ended November 30, 2016 were as follows:

INCOME:

Offering Receipts	\$476,318
Investment & Other Income	<u>5,309</u>
Total Income	\$481,627
Expenses	<u>\$462,510</u>
Excess of Income over Expenses	\$19,117

The above year-to-date surplus increased \$12,294 over the last month because Offering Receipts for the month of November were on the high side, while expenses were on the light side. December expenses will be much higher due to missions payments which are made quarterly and because there are three (rather than the usual two) pay periods in the month. These month-to-month expense variations occur because the Church accounting is on a cash basis, just like your personal accounting.

Offering Receipts are running almost 3% over last year. During the 2017 Stewardship Program presentation on Sunday, November 3, I reported that Offering Receipts would need to average \$11,609 per week for October through December in order to avoid a deficit for the year. The response to this challenge has been tremendous. Through the end of November (nine weeks) the weekly average has been \$11,958 and the first three weeks of December were even higher.

THANK YOU for this generous response to supporting the care of our staff and the ministries of this church.

Bob Fiscus
Treasurer

Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 1/1 Krista Dolan
Scarlett Mojcher
- 1/2 Ethel Thomas
♥Randy & Margo
Cobaugh♥
- 1/3 Mark Mojcher
Elizabeth Thomas
Tara Spaulding
Michelle Valente
- 1/7 Peter & Yun Zhou
- 1/8 Craig Packnick
Ashleigh Testa
Spencer Hatfield
- 1/9 Alice Sundman
AJ Keegan
- 1/12 ♥Michael & Lillian
Valente♥
- 1/13 Margaret Bjers
- 1/14 Rosann Daniels
- 1/15 Jim Meyers
- 1/19 Diana Swanson
Gabriela Estrada
- 1/21 Bob Merritt
♥Steve &
Adrienne Reedy♥
- 1/23 Bruce Cooper
Noah Slater
Emmet Gilmore
- 1/25 Adrian Ambrose
Tyler Forstrom
- 1/27 Kyle Anderson
- 1/28 Nancy Wilber
Roseann Slater
- 1/30 Aaron Logan
- 1/31 ♥Jim & Alma
Kearns♥





**HIS LOVE
EXTENDED**

Service Ministry

Our Church partnered with Family ReEntry of Bridgeport for Thanksgiving baskets this year. Family ReEntry is a nonprofit program for children and teens who are impacted by the incarceration of a parent or close family member or for youth who are currently involved with the juvenile justice system.

Your generosity filled baskets for 30 families so they could have a delicious Thanksgiving meal. Please take a moment to read the Thank You letter in the article to the right that the Service Ministry recently received on your behalf.

The Service Ministry committee members would also like to thank you for showing your care and for blessing these families. We look forward to partnering with Family ReEntry again on future projects.



Family Reentry Youth Programs

December 12, 2016

Covenant Church of Easton
c/o Charlene Skok, Missions
Easton, CT 06612

Dear Charlene,

Thank you for your mission support toward the families represented through the Family Reentry, Inc. Covenant's recent donation of Thanksgiving bags provided a wonderful blessing to thirty (30) families who face daily hardships.

The Thanksgiving bags were thoughtfully packaged and signified the care and compassion that went into the assembling of each bag. Distributing these Food Bags with gift cards and notes was a true pleasure. Families were delighted and expressed sincere appreciation!

It was a joy to partner with Covenant Church of Easton and we look forward to other ways we can partner in the future. Again, we thank you, the mission board and congregation for your commitment and ongoing desire to serve those in need.

Sincerely,

Tina Banas

Tina Banas, LCSW
Director of Youth & Family Services



*Paula is a single mother with three teens. The family has experienced multiples losses and hardship; they have experienced homelessness and are now living in public assistance housing.
Thank you for blessing our families!*

75 Washington Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06604 = (203) 382-1190 Telephone, Fax (203) 382-1197 = www.familyreentry.org

Light on the Hill Food Pantry

Suggested donations for the Food Pantry at Summerfield United Methodist Church for January include:

Coffee, Tea, Hot Cocoa

Toiletries

Toothbrushes, Facial & Bath Soap, Shampoo, Deodorant, etc.

Discipleship Ministry

As we close out 2016, the Discipleship Ministry has much to be thankful for and look forward to what God has in store for our church in 2017!

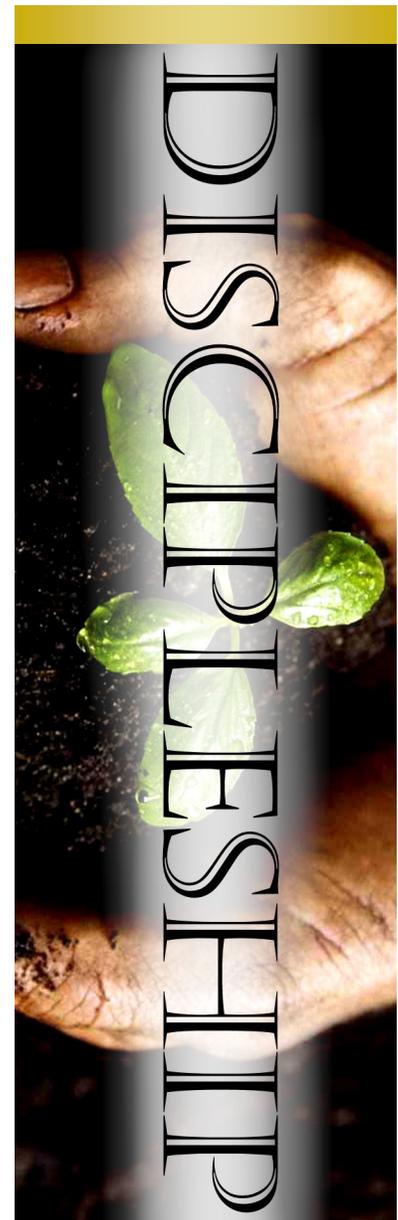
- ◆ **The number of Life Groups continues to grow!**
- ◆ **Many folks are sharing their Life Group book recommendations with other Life Groups.**
- ◆ **Life Group projects or events have served those in need in our communities.**
- ◆ **After much prayer and fasting by our church body and Discipleship Search Committee, Bob Rieger was hired as our part-time Director of Discipleship.**

The role of the Director of Discipleship for our church is to further develop, support and equip our “next phase” of Life Group communities and to collaborate and partner with our Connections, Fellowship and Service & Evangelism Ministries.

Bob has been praying and earnestly seeking the Holy Spirit’s direction for our community. Partnering with Pastor Cary, the Church Council, our Core Ministries, Life Group Leaders, and our congregation, while also doing research — several Life Group books, Young Adults (millennials), and one-on-one conversations with dozens of folks in and outside of our church to align to where God is already at work.

If you have any ideas or suggestions to help us grow closer together in Christlikeness, please talk with, call or email Bob (brieger21@gmail.com or 203.727.8523), he’d really love to chat with you!

HAPPY NEW YEAR from all of us on the Discipleship Ministry!
Life Group Leaders, Paul Veerman, Bob Rieger



Children’s Ministry

Friends Night Out begins Tuesday, January 10 at 6:30 pm. **NO Friends Night Out on January 31st.**

WinterJam TrailBlazer Retreat for kids in 4th & 5th grade is February 3-5 at Pilgrim Pines. Cost for campers is \$120. This is an incredible weekend in New Hampshire for 4th & 5th grade students and their youth leaders. Experience Camp Squanto style worship, make new friends, and enjoy sledding, ice skating, a broomball tournament, foosball, ping pong, prizes and much more! Contact Roseann Slater (roseann@coveaston.org) for more information.



Youth Ministry

Our youth put their faith into action in December by spreading Christmas cheer to the residents of Parrish Court senior facility in Fairfield. Both our High School and Junior High youth blessed many people with hand-written cards, home-baked goodies and lots of singing, dancing and laughter!

We ended our year celebrating with our Annual Youth Group Christmas Parties on December 14th (OASIS) and December 15th (JHAMS), including a special dinner prepared by some of our wonderful parents!

Schedule Updates:

- ⇒ **CrossFit** will NOT meet on January 1; but begins again on Sunday, January 8 from 9:00 to 10:00 am
- ⇒ **OASIS** (High School) begins again Wednesday, January 4 from 6:30 to 9:30 pm
- ⇒ **JHAMS** (Junior High) begins again on Thursday, January 5 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Looking for a last minute Christmas or New Year's gift for your teen? Nothing says, "FUN" like our Annual Winter Retreats! We'll enjoy powerful worship, awesome seminars, and activities that include a 40-person hot tub, 3 800' zip lines, a climbing wall, great food, disc golf, give-a-ways, late night pizza party, games and prizes! These

will be amazing weekends that your kids will never forget! Registration ends soon; parents MUST register online at: www.pilgrimpines.org/winter-youth-retreats/. If you would like to provide a scholarship to sponsor or partially sponsor a youth for a winter retreat, please contact Pastor Debbie.

- **WinterFest 2016 High School Retreat:** January 6-8, \$130*
- **WinterBlast 2016 Junior High Retreat:** January 20-22**, \$120*

***There are two retreat options for our Junior High Retreat, be sure to select January 20-22!*

**A separate fee of \$45 for High School and \$30 for Junior High will be collected in January for each student to help cover the cost of van rentals, adult leaders and administrative costs.*

For questions or more details about our Youth Ministry programs, check out our church website (www.coveaston.org) or contact Pastor Debbie directly by email debbie@coveaston.org or her cell 203.668.5350.





Missions Update

The following article is taken from the Johnson family's December 2016 monthly E-newsletter.



RECENT HAPPENINGS

This past weekend, we went door-to-door visiting all of our townhouse neighbors, giving out plates of cookies and Christmas cards. It was another step in trying to demonstrate to our neighbors that we want to get to know them and not just live next door. Several of them invited us in for a few minutes of chatting, and we hope to follow up soon with some dinner invitations to get to know our new friends better. **Please pray for these new relationships to continue progressing.** Building friendships in this culture is a long, slow process, but God is working each step of the way!

A few weeks ago, we also hosted a meeting in our home for the "Nord Pool" group, which is a church planting and ministry networking group in northern Vienna. We brainstormed how churches north of the Danube River can work together to reach this region. This group will play a crucial role in building our church planting team. **Pray for God to continue to work in this area and for partnership, rather than division, amongst local Austrian churches.**



MEET OUR NEW TEAMMATES!

We are excited to share that God has provided a new family to come serve with us in Austria! Brandon and Kristi Kosse, along with their children Nikayla (14), Ethan (10) and Elena (9) attend Cornerstone Church, a partner church of ours in Minnesota. They saw our video this past summer about our new church plant, and God began to stir their hearts to come join us!



Their vision for ministry is to come alongside existing national churches or new church planting efforts for discipleship of young families. They are gifted in discipleship and ministry to young couples, as well as music ministry. We are so thrilled to have them join us. **Would you please pray for them, as they begin the process of training and raising support to come here?** The journey to the mission field can be long and grueling, and they need all the prayer support they can get!

Freedom Riders Special Guests

Joan Browning — at the age of 19, she rode the Central Georgia Railroad as part of a Freedom Ride from Atlanta to Albany, Georgia in 1961.

Dion Diamond — was in the 2nd Freedom Ride which arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, but was arrested and sent to Mississippi State Prison.

Reginald Green — was a student preparing for ministry at Virginia Union University. In 1961 he joined the Freedom Riders and took a bus to a heavily segregated town in Jackson, Mississippi. For his actions, Green was also arrested upon his arrival.

Freedom Riders

**Mark your Calendars ~ Save the Date
Saturday & Sunday, January 28 & 29**

The first Freedom Ride began on May 4, 1961, when seven black and six white riders left Washington, DC, on two public buses bound for the Deep South. They intended to test whether the southern states would enforce the Supreme Court's ruling that declared segregation in interstate bus and rail stations unconstitutional. **This initial ride led to countless other Americans joining the Civil Rights movement.**

On Saturday, January 28 you are invited as we host three of the Freedom Riders from the 1960s. We gather with other Christians and churches to consider how the church can, not only, respond but lead today because of Christ in racial reconciliation and social justice. On Sunday morning, January 29th Reverend Reginald Green will bring the message at both worship services.

COVENANT CHURCH OF EASTON

Loving God, Growing Together, Serving Others

1 Sport Hill Road
Easton, CT 06612
203.371.8335

www.coveaston.org



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

