



## Direction Matters!

On my recent drive to the Berkshires for some “study days” I was listening to a Christian comedian as he expounded on a popular notion that *“it doesn’t matter what religion you believe as long as you are faithful to it.”* He went on to liken it to *“it doesn’t matter what direction you’re going, we’ll all end up in the same place anyway.”*

Next time you go to the mall begin your trip with complete sincerity about – “it doesn’t matter which way I go, I’ll end up there.” It doesn’t take long to realize the foolishness of that statement – it matters which way you go. There may be a few choices along the way – but direction matters.

I’m amazed how many times I’ve had people say to me that direction doesn’t matter. I am certain it’s being said to avoid the kind of surrender (and commitment) Jesus calls us to. He says, “Come to Me!”

Jesus’ call to His first disciples was to “follow Him” – certainly, direction mattered. When calling additional disciples Jesus encountered several who wanted more time, others had some matters to take care of, etc. Not only did direction matter, so did a timely response – and it still does.

We are in the season of Lent – where we follow Jesus on His journey to the cross. The cross is His reason for coming – so that people could be redeemed, restored, returned to a personal and purposeful relationship with God and each other. Thank God Jesus chose the direction that led Him to earth, to Israel, to the cross, and to our redemption. Now Jesus calls us to come to Him.

If your life is going extremely well, if you’re experiencing one blessing after another, if those around you (family and friends) are close, the call of Jesus is still given: “Come to Me!” Closeness with Him will raise the bar of delight in the midst of the “good life” being experienced. But the key in these days is to not neglect to “come to Him” when all is well. It is to Jesus that we are to come – direction matters!

If your life is stuck, if you’re experiencing the same rut day after day, if those around you (family and friends) are there but not all that close the call of Jesus is given: “Come to Me!” It is in fact times like these that require a quicker response and a stronger discipline to “come to Him.” Closeness requires discipline on our part. In these “ordinary days” we need Jesus even more. It is to Jesus that we are to come – direction matters!

On the other hand if your life is in a ditch, if you’re experiencing one disappointment upon another, if those around you (family and friends) are distant (at best) the call of Jesus intensified: “Come to Me!” It is in these days that the call of Jesus is often harder to hear – but it is still given: “Come to Me!” Here is where the habits of “coming to Him” in our “ordinary” and “blessed” days will serve us well. The well worn path of coming often to Jesus is a gift to us when the days are unbearable. It is in these days that we need Jesus most. It is to Jesus that we are to come – direction really does matter!

Come toward Jesus in these days of Lent. Direction matters!

**Matthew  
11:28**  
**“Come to me,  
all ye who  
are weary and  
burdened,  
and I will give  
you rest.”**

*Pastor Craig*

# East Coast Conference Annual Meeting

Our church has the honor of hosting the *122<sup>nd</sup> East Coast Conference Annual Meeting* this coming April here at our church.

What is the Conference Annual Meeting? It is the highest legislative body of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), made up of representatives from Covenant churches throughout our conference stretching from New Sweden, Maine to Springfield, Virginia. Delegates gather together for worship and fellowship, to elect and pray for leaders, to review finances, to adopt a ministry plan & budget, and address the future direction and mission of the conference.

The East Coast Conference Ministerial Association will also be holding their meeting for two days before the annual meeting; so we will be hosting both events. The Ministerial Association is a community of pastors, ministers, and chaplains serving or having served churches and other institutions in the East Coast Conference.



## The Ministerial Association will meet Thursday & Friday, April 19-20, 2012 The Conference Annual Meeting will be held Friday & Saturday, April 20-21, 2012

In order to prepare to make our guests feel welcome we have much work to do! Many volunteers are needed, both men and women and even families, to help with the many tasks that need to be done. We will need help from Wednesday April 18<sup>th</sup> (setting up all the rooms) through the luncheon and clean up on Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>. We will be providing five meals (Thursday lunch, Friday lunch and dinner, Saturday continental breakfast and lunch). Snacks and refreshments will also be made available on Thursday & Friday morning and afternoon. In addition to the meals, we will need help with the sound system, servers for communion at the Worship services, music and much more.

This is an all church event and we need help from everyone! Please consider giving generously of your time and talents. To get started, please fill out the form below or you can easily sign up on our church website – [www.coveaston.org](http://www.coveaston.org). Simply click on “ecc volunteer form” fill in the info and hit “Sign Up”. We look forward to working together with you!

### THE EAST COAST CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING CO-CHAIRS:

- Paula Keegan - Hotels & Events, Liaison to ECC Office
- Bobbie Morgan - Volunteer Coordinator
- Brenda Adriani - Meals Coordinator

## EAST COAST CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING VOLUNTEER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Please check off each day and circle what time of day you are available to work at church  
Return form to Bobbie Morgan’s mailbox by March 4th or email [bobbiekay54@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bobbiekay54@sbcglobal.net)

<input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday, April 18 <sup>th</sup> (set up rooms)	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<input type="checkbox"/> Thursday, April 19 <sup>th</sup>	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday, April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon      Dinnertime
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, April 21 <sup>st</sup>	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon (clean-up)
<input type="checkbox"/> I cannot work at church but can help in some other way (tell us how you can help).			

# Youth Headlines



## It's that time of YEAR! Covenant **YOUTH & FAMILY** Event

**DATE: Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**TIME: 5:00 PM - ???**

PLACE: Covenant Church of Easton

COST: \$8 per person; \$25 families of 4 or more

*If you attended MishMosh, admission is FREE!*

## 4TH ANNUAL FLOOR HOCKEY TOURNAMENT



Everyone welcome!

Invite your friends, family, parents, and grandparents!  
There's something fun for everyone!

*Wii, Rock Band, Dancing to Michael Jackson's "Thriller",  
LOTS OF GOOD FOOD, Dart Room, and a fun Hockey Competition!*



## CHIC 2012 AUCTION & DINNER SATURDAY, MARCH 31

Everyone is invited to attend the second youth fundraiser for CHiC 2012. Tickets for the Auction (including dinner) will be available soon! The funds raised will be used to send our high school students to the Covenant High in Christ Conference (CHiC) this coming July.

Not sure how you can contribute? Here is an idea that everyone can use to get items for the Auction. Think about all the organizations you give your business to – hairdresser, massage therapist, manicurist, dentist, grocery store, coffee shop, restaurant, etc. Ask the manager or owner for a donation for your church's youth group from an establishment you are a frequent patron; or perhaps there is a family-owned business that would like to contribute. Despite the economy, many places are very willing to help out.

If you would like a CHiC flyer or solicitation letter to bring along with you, contact Christine Austin ([chrisaustin716@aol.com](mailto:chrisaustin716@aol.com)) or Trish Meyers ([pmeyers1@comcast.net](mailto:pmeyers1@comcast.net)). Items need to be secured by Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your help!

# Children's Page

## FRIENDS Nite Out

Tuesdays 6:30-7:45 pm  
Grades K-5

### *When Do We Eat?*

The FNO kids learned about the factors that cause world hunger, and what Jesus wants His followers to do about it. They collected enough money to buy 3 ducks and a rabbit to help a family break the cycle of poverty through World Vision.

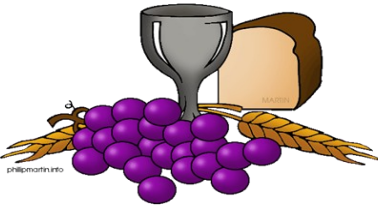
Way to go, kids!

On Valentine's Day we gave Pastor Craig a **HEART ATTACK!**



## WELCOME TO THE TABLE

Understanding God's Special Gift of Holy Communion



A 3 week Sunday school class for kids in grades 2-5

with their parent(s)

May 6, 13 & 20 at 10:45 AM

Contact Roseann Slater

## SAVE THE DATE — VBS July 30-August 3





## Special Service Project for Kids

The Girls Night Out Bible Study Group will be hosting a special service project for Friends Night Out (Grades K-5) on Tuesday, March 27th. Join us from 6:30-7:45 pm for this special night. For more information, speak with Children's Ministry Director Roseann Slater.

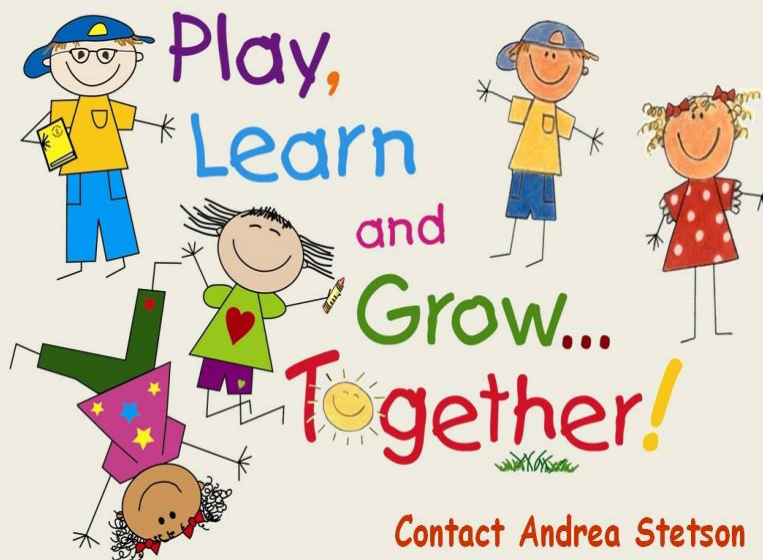
## Kids Meet the Johnsons!

sunday, april 1st, 10:45 am  
grades k-5

Bethany & Nate are busy getting ready to go to Austria as missionaries, but we've scheduled a special time for our kids to meet with them. Bethany grew up here at Covenant Church, so she and Nate will share how they knew God wanted them to be missionaries — we'll also enjoy fun games and crafts!



## COVENANT CHILDREN'S CENTER



Contact Andrea Stetson  
203-374-3049

REGISTRATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR 3'S & 4'S CLASSES

# Treasurer's Report

The financial results of the Unified Operating Fund for January, the first month of 2012 were as follows:

## INCOME

Unified Receipts	\$45,257
Investment & Other Income	(23)
Total Income	\$45,234

## EXPENSES 42,403

Excess of Expenses over Income	<u>\$2,831</u>
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It is always good news when income exceeds expense, as you know from your personal life. In this case, the good news is tempered by an imbalance in the timing of income and expenses. There were five Sundays in January, but only four weeks of expense for Church staff salaries and wages. This occurs because the staff is paid every two weeks and depending how the weeks fall versus the Sundays, the two can be out of sync as was the case in January. On the other hand, payment of pension and benefit costs occurs the first month of every quarter, so that expense is out of sync with income in the opposite direction. So where does this leave us?



Well, we manage these variations by taking the Annual Financial Plan that is approved by the congregation and breaking it down into monthly amounts. These monthly amounts take into account the normal timing of expense payments, so we can accurately measure where we are at any point during the year. Once we estimate each month's expenses, the planned income for each month is equal to that month's expenses.

This allows us to know how much income is needed to support each month's expenses and to know on a year-to-date basis, whether the church's income is ahead of or behind expenses.

This explanation is probably more stimulating to a "numbers person" than to most people, but it is intended to give you a sense of how we try to be good stewards of your generous giving to the Church.

Blessings to you all,  
**Bob Fiscus**, Treasurer

# Discipleship Class

We are currently studying the New Testament texts on the topic of the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit." We have a lively group and would love to have you join us. Every Tuesday evening at church beginning at 7 pm and concluding by 8:15 pm. For more information, please speak with Pastor Craig.

# March



- 3/2 Colleen Herrmann
- 3/3 Zachary Wirth
- 3/4 Jessica Estrada
- 3/7 Phylis Linder  
Cat Heitz  
♥ Bob & Ruth Lewis ♥
- 3/8 Crista Forstrom  
Nick DelBuono
- 3/9 Mark Spisto
- 3/10 Chuck Forstrom
- 3/11 Missy White  
James Anderson
- 3/12 Greg Cobaugh
- 3/13 Zach Stetson
- 3/17 Rebecca Zager
- 3/18 Nicole Pittera
- 3/19 Ashley Austin
- 3/21 Dylan Lindeberg
- 3/23 Kristina Meyers
- 3/24 Ann Boyle  
Logan Meyer
- 3/27 Dom Mastrianno
- 3/28 Terry Morgan  
Jim Norkawich  
♥ Bob & Linda Fiscus ♥
- 3/30 Bobby Lewis



# Gary & Pauline Carlson Prayer Update

## Missionaries – Shonan Community Church, Japan

We are back in the United States!

In the midst of a wonderful Christmas and New Year's season, we spent many hours packing up and moving from our rental house in Fujisawa to the mission-owned house next to Covenant Seminary in Tokyo, a house we lived in during our years helping to plant Nakahara Christ Church. There our belongings will wait for us until July.

We moved back to the U.S. on January 13, and are now living in a nice two-bedroom apartment in Eden Prairie. We have also been able to renew friendships at Excelsior Covenant Church, our home-base church during our many home assignments. So many at this church have helped us find our apartment, move in, and get a car!



We have now brought a report about our work in Japan, including the ministries of Shonan Community Church and relief work in the tsunami-stricken areas, to three supporting churches. We are grateful for the welcome we have sensed and the eagerness of people to hear what we have to share.

As we write this, we are attending the Covenant's Midwinter Conference, a wonderful gathering of clergy and spouses from around the U.S. and Canada. This has given us the chance to reconnect with so many friends we have made over the years.



**Bagging supplies for distribution in the temporary housing units in Miyako**

A brief word on our sons. Adam and his family (including their third child due in April!) are in Tokyo working with YWAM outreach teams. Andy is now on the second half of his walk of the length of Japan. All are doing quite well, and we are thrilled at the ways they are finding to serve our Lord Jesus.

This is written in haste in the midst of a busy schedule. A more complete prayer update will follow next month. We simply ask you to be in prayer for our church visits in the U.S., for Shonan Community Church in our absence, and for our sons, daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

Thank you for your prayers on our behalf! We hope to see many of you on our travels in the U.S. over these next six months.

*Gary & Pauline Carlson*

**Editor's Note:** Gary & Pauline Carlson will join us during both Worship Services on Sunday, March 11.

## Prayer Meeting

Prayer meeting is held every Tuesday at 8:15 pm in the Chapel. Come and pray for one another, for the Pastoral Search committee, for our church families, and for our community. Those who regularly attend often speak about the blessings received as we spend time together in prayer. All are invited and welcome!

# News of the East Coast Conference

We opened our meeting on Friday evening January 22 at 5:30 at the Bethany Covenant Church in Berlin, Connecticut with the reading and discussion of the Task Force Report Presentation on the reorganization of this board.

The next day started at 8:00 and after devotions and prayer we got about to the business of the East Coast Conference.

During the morning session Jason Condon introduced three new churches in our conference: Hope Church of New York City — Drew Hyun, Church Planter; Highrock Covenant Church in Quincy, Mas-

sachusetts — Stephen Sharkey, Church Planter; and Highrock Covenant Church also in Massachusetts in the town of Salem — Aaron Engler, Church Planter. Each planter and their wives talked to us about themselves and their churches. We were able to sit, talk and listen to them share their lives and dreams during lunch.

At the beginning of our morning session we heard Pastor Martin Chang and some of the church leaders tell us about New Vision Community Church in Queens, New York in their adoption for ECC Membership Application. Howard showed the new church plants and pictures of the churches that closed this past year and reminded them that because of the heritage of these churches they are able to start their ministry. God's work will continue!

Bob Lindquist along

with my husband Jim and myself visited the Harlem Metro Hope Church last month. It meets in Harlem's historic National Black Theater on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 125<sup>th</sup> and 126<sup>th</sup> Street. It was so easy to get there by train by getting off at 125<sup>th</sup> Street and walking 2 blocks. It's a church that is truly reaching out to their community. You can learn more on their web page ([www.metrohopenyc.org](http://www.metrohopenyc.org)) or find them on Facebook. God's voice was heard during that morning in East Harlem. We plan to go back soon.

Our next meeting of the East Coast Trustees will be held in Christ Covenant Church, 2200 Mainland Road, Harleysville, Pennsylvania. It will give the trustees from the southern area of the east coast an easier commute.

Look for more information from the January meeting in the April edition of the Salt Shaker.

*Alma Kearns*



## Pilgrim Pines Upcoming Events

**family work and worship weekend**

Enjoy a fun-filled weekend of work, play and worship together at beautiful Pilgrim Pines

**May 25-28**

Adults: \$55; Children 8 & Under: Free

What to Bring: Your own linens, work gloves, rakes, small hand tools, your smile, a Bible, family and friends, and your favorite coffee mug. Brochures are available in the Welcome Center or by visiting [www.pilgrimpines.org](http://www.pilgrimpines.org).

**registration is open for  
camp squanto**

**You don't want your kids to miss out on the  
Camp Squanto experience!**

Path Finders	Entering Grades 2-3	June 27-30
Trail Blazers	Entering Grades 4-5	July 1-7 <b>or</b> July 22-28

Register online at [www.pilgrimpines.org](http://www.pilgrimpines.org). Camp Squanto offers a sliding scale, and our church has Schneider Camp Scholarship available. For more information, please speak with Roseann Slater.

# The Flame of Hope

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On August 28, 1995 I filed my business name "**THE FLAME OF HOPE**". It was a wonderful feeling because back then I was getting orders coming in from all over the world. I was only 7 years into programming speech software to sing when the word got out. I had no idea that other people who couldn't talk also wanted to sing. I had a worldwide business without even trying. I felt like my music gave everyone a *flame of hope* for the future. It had a nice ring to it and it reminded me of when we put some kind of powder into our fireplace to make the flames turn all different colors. So I went with the name "**THE FLAME OF HOPE**".

It was cool because I released everything in flame colors. The colors gave me a camping feeling because sitting around a campfire somehow gave people the feeling of unity. Of course, no one ever asked what was behind my business name, so it got boring and lonely.

In 2005 my business name expired. I never stopped my business, but I felt it was pointless to even have a name. So I kept doing music without an official business name. Then I had other jobs and my music became just a hobby. It was sad.

Then in August 2011 I finally quit a job that I deeply hated and I decided I wanted to get fully back into music. Maybe I'm beating a dead horse because there isn't a big interest for synthetic singing. I can't help it, I just don't feel like giving up. So this past week I decided to re-register my business name. It actually means totally nothing, yet being official actually motivates me. So I'm very excited to get my business filed again.

This time I'm changing my target. Yes, synthetic singing is still for the disabled even though the interest is next to nothing. So I'm changing my target. This generation of regular teenaged kids live in a virtual world surrounded with Avatars. So I'm going to market my singing instructions as a way of creating a new synthetic category of music. This will give every person an equal opportunity of being a virtual star. I have no clue if this will work, but I'm going to give it my best shot. I'm hoping my new video will get people's interest.

In a time when many churches are struggling, maybe it's time to also change the target. Maybe it's time to share God's love in the virtual world. I have no idea how that can be done, but it seems to me that virtual reality actually affects the entire world. The smallest tweet can become part of a top story on CNN.

I don't think the real world exists any more because everything is online. I'm 12 hours before the deadline for this newsletter with no clue what to write. So, I'm simply tossing out the idea of sharing the love of Jesus in a virtual way. It gives a deeper meaning to "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel*". The year is still new, so maybe if everyone changed their target it could create a *flame of hope* for everyone.

*Snoopi Botten*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByexaQRThK0>



## Senior Luncheon — March 18

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The Foundation students will be hosting a luncheon for all Seniors on Sunday, March 18th after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Worship Service. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Marilyn Steel. Cost is \$6.00 per person.

# A Culture of Generosity

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Are we good stewards?

In the material world, a steward may be thought of as one who manages another's property or financial affairs, or one who administers anything as the agent of another or others. Certainly we could agree that anyone who was asked to carry out these duties must, above all, be trustworthy. Such a person must be blessed with a high degree of honesty and integrity. Would you want anyone acting as your agent or representative to be missing any of these qualities?

But let's suppose the steward is managing his or her own resources — resources of time, talent and treasure. Does that make any of the aforementioned qualities any less important? Obviously not, but what's been overlooked? Are our "own" resources really our own, or are they a gift from God?

Last November, Pastor Craig preached a sermon on stewardship and he quoted Adolphe Monod, a renowned French Protestant preacher who lived from 1802-1856. He said,

***“Another way of looking at stewardship is to think of it as recognizing that all we have is a gift from God, all we have belongs to God and all we have is to be used to serve God and enjoy God.”***

Once we can look at “our” resources in this way, it becomes easy to be a good steward.

Too often we limit our thinking of resources to financial resources. But God has given us much more, the gifts of time and talent. Just as we must be good stewards of God's financial gifts, we must also be good stewards of His gifts of time and talent. We are all

beneficiaries of God's abundant gifts. We don't all have the same gifts of talent and treasure, but we all are given 24 hours, 365 days a year. How we use that time is a reflection of whether we think all of it as God's time, or whether we think it is our time and what is left will be God's time. The same applies to God's gifts of talent and treasure, regardless of the scope of those gifts.

Look around our church and you will see many examples of good stewards and the sharing of God's abundance. Much time and talent is shared through the music program, the choir, praise leaders and instrumentalists. The Fellowship Ministry and the Children's and Youth Programs would be non-existent without good stewards. These activities require weekly and sometimes week-end commitments. The church staff and ministry chairs must be good stewards of the money you all so generously contribute to the church, so

it is spent wisely and in accordance with plans you approve. Many other people contribute through ushering, teaching Sunday school, preparing communion, putting on drama presentations, decorating (and de-decorating) the church during the Christmas season, preparing for the East Coast Conference Annual Meeting to be held at our church in April, donating and installing the new mailbox, as well as the new plantings surrounding it, and a whole host of donated building improvements.

You may not even notice these things or stop to think about the huge amount of volunteer resources so generously given to maintain and honor the Lord's house. Look around and you'll see the work of many good stewards. It will be a good time to ask yourself, “Am I being a good steward?”

***The Stewardship & Finance Ministry***

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## Visitor Parking

Please note that 5 parking spaces directly in front of the church have been designated as “VISITOR PARKING”. Please leave these spots open for those who are visiting. It's another way to help people know that they matter to us and that they really are WELCOME! Thank You!

# Holy Week Schedule

## Maundy Thursday

Thursday – April 5<sup>th</sup>

7:00 pm

### HOLY COMMUNION

We commemorate Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples.



### TENEBRAE

Tenebrae means “darkness”. It is a worship service first experienced in the 4<sup>th</sup> century that helped Christians enter into the darkness of our world that led Jesus to the cross. Together we will be called to listen, reflect, and pray . . . allowing the Holy Spirit to impact us as He will!

## Good Friday

Friday – April 6<sup>th</sup>

### COME SIT AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Spend time in quiet prayer and reflection. The church sanctuary will be open 12:00-3:00 pm and 7:00-9:00 pm. Everyone is invited and welcome to attend!

Good Friday Services 12:00-3:00 pm in Trumbull at Calvary Evangelical Free Church, 498 White Plains Road. For more information visit their website [www.calvaryefc.com](http://www.calvaryefc.com).

Good Friday Services will also be hosted by the Golden Hill United Methodist Church, 210 Elm Street in Bridgeport for the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport (an ecumenical partnership of people of faith in the Greater Bridgeport, Connecticut area). Services will be held 12-3:00 pm and Pastor Craig is scheduled to preach sometime during the afternoon.



## EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday – April 8<sup>th</sup>

6:30 am Easter Sunrise Service

9:00 am Easter Worship Celebration

10:45 am Easter Worship Celebration

*"It is true! The Lord has risen!"*

Luke 24:34 (NIV)



# March



## COVENANT CHURCH OF EASTON



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Covenant Children's Center: 203.374.3049

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## MARCH WORSHIP

WORSHIP at 9:00 am & 10:45 am

### NEW TESTAMENT FLYOVER

March	4	2 Thessalonians	<i>HANG IN . . . HE IS COMING!</i> Holy Communion	Pastor Craig
March	11	1 Timothy	<i>CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP</i> Mission Moment: Gary & Pauline Carlson	Pastor Craig
March	18	2 Timothy	<i>GOD'S WORKOUT STRATEGY</i> Children's Message	Pastor Craig
March	25	Titus	<i>TBA</i>	Nate Johnson Missionary in Austria