



The Salt Shaker

Lent: A Time for Self Reflection

As Easter draws closer and we walk through the season of Lent, we cannot help but think of the sacrifice Jesus made for each one of us. It's a good time to reread the story of the crucifixion in each of the Gospels. He loved and sacrificed Himself for us. Because of that, as a Christian I want to find ways to use the talents He has given me to reach out to others.

I look back through my life and see how He led and directed me to being the person I am today. I grew up in the Boston Covenant Church in Forest Hills and dedicated my life to Him at a Billy Graham Rally that the young people attended. I went to North Park College and became closer to God because of my friends, my classes and my instructors. I was fortunate to have had Zenos Hawkinson as one of my instructors. I remember the day he sat students in the center of the room and asked, "Tell us who you are". Names were not enough. That question encouraged us to look inside ourselves and to come up with some answers. That answer doesn't stay the same. It is a good question to ask yourself as your life changes and you grow older.

I taught kindergarten in a school in Norwalk, Connecticut and was led to attend Syracuse University summer school so that I could be qualified to teach the blind within the classroom. After a few years I married and moved to Milford, Connecticut and taught school until I retired when I was 72. I believe God gave me the ability and understanding to teach children and I did that in Sunday School as well as public school.

I'm older now but still trying to listen to God so that I will use the skills He gave me to reach out to people. (There are no retirement plans for Christians.) Therefore after retiring from teaching, I became a docent at the New Britain Museum of American Art. On Mondays we have a training session so that we can take school children through the museum and make the art interesting for them. Hopefully it will teach them to visit museums and enjoy the experience.

Seeing God's Hand at Work

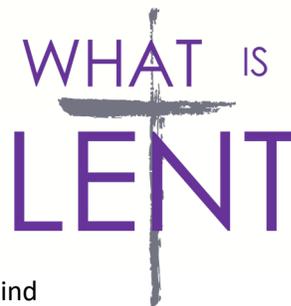
Just recently, after reading a program that MoMA (Museum of Modern Art) had for visitors with dementia, I attended a conference for social workers

from different facilities in Connecticut interested in meeting the needs of patients with dementia. At lunch one of the women at my table told us of an incident at her care center. A gentleman had traveled to visit his father at the facility and stopped in at the office to ask about his dad. The social worker talked to him about his father who enjoyed entertaining everyone by playing piano. The son got very agitated since he thought they were careless and had gotten his father mixed up with someone else. Not at all. The son was brought down to the common room and there was his father playing piano. He had never played as his son grew up, but that long ago talent had been remembered.

I talked with other docents and they became interested in learning how to take a group of adults with memory loss through our museum. We were ready to conduct such tours but very few people took advantage of the offering. A few weeks ago a representative from the Hospital of Central Connecticut called and asked if the museum would be able to give tours for individuals with memory loss. I see God's hand in this initiative. These individuals live in various facilities connected with the hospital and a bus will pick them up and drive residents to our museum. It is so exciting to find a way to reach out to these people and interact with them to make their lives fuller.

One afternoon this month the hospital brought a group of

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This reflective service will follow the Stations of the Cross, a devotion that was developed in the Middle Ages by the Franciscans as a way of walking where Christ walked on the day of His Passion. We will pray, sing, and reflect on Christ's journey to Calvary.



Maundy Thursday
TENEBRAE SERVICE
"Service of Darkness"
April 13, 7:30pm

It's Time to Order Easter Flowers

FLOWERS ARE \$10 EACH

- Daffodils - 8" pot, multi-blooms
- Tulips - 8" pot, 8 blooms
- Hyacinths - 8" pot, 5 blooms

Place your order on the poster in the Welcome Center or contact Gail Lent in the Church Office by Sunday, April 9. Make checks payable to "Covenant Church" with "Easter Flowers" in the memo line and give to Gail Lent.

Lent: A Time of Self Reflection

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adults to our museum for a tour. They were from different facilities and were divided up into 5 groups made up of from 4 to 6 adults with care givers that were needed to push their wheel chairs through our galleries. We had our names printed with large print on tags and they did also. We kneeled down at eye level and introduced ourselves to them so they would feel comfortable with us and share their thoughts about the various paintings. We had chosen works that might remind them of their youth and encourage discussion. When I engage these men and woman and encourage them to talk about themselves, it enriches my life too.

Lent is a time of self discovery; a time when we need to come closer to God so that we can look within ourselves, the church and also out into our communities to see how each one of us can use the talents that God gave us to serve. There are so many ways to show God's love to our church's family and people we meet outside our church.

In closing, let me tell you a story of the way a church several years ago showed that kind of love. The homeless living around the Boston Church discovered the coffee hour and they came in, not to go to church, but to take advantage of the food that was served at that time. The people in the church, instead of trying to keep them out, started making bags of food that those people could take with them. How fortunate for the church that they were given this opportunity to show God's love. Look around and discover how you can be God's hands reaching out to the world.

Alma Kearns



OUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL HEALTH

Treasurer's Report

The financial results of the General Operating Fund for the two months ended February 28, 2017 were as follows:

INCOME:

Offering Receipts	\$112,231
Investment & Other Income	<u>1,767</u>
Total Income	\$113,998

EXPENSES

	<u>\$95,229</u>
Excess of Income over Expenses	<u>\$18,769</u>

The year-to-date surplus is entirely due to higher than projected Offering Receipts. In fact, receipts are running 14% ahead of the Financial Plan and an astounding 46% over last year, due to the **outstanding generosity** of the congregation.

Expenses are very much in line with projections, except for the Properties & Maintenance area, which has been hit with unexpected HVAC system repairs. At the same time, expenses are 21% more than last year, mostly because all staff positions are filled this year (for the first time in the last few years) and the HVAC repairs. For the past several years, the annual financial plans have been based on a full-year staff complement. Annual surpluses have been generated because some positions were not filled, or were not filled for the whole year. That is not the case this year. If there is to be a surplus at the end of this year, it must come from Offering Receipts since it is expected there will be little, if any, expense savings. Other big expenses, electricity and snow plowing are, so far, in line with projections.

It is a true joy to see the congregation's outpouring of support for the work of the staff and ministries of this church. As we enter the Vitality Process, there undoubtedly will be new ministry avenues to be identified and pursued. A healthy financial situation will allow us to follow the Lord's leading into these new ministry opportunities. Thank you for your continued outstanding and faithful generosity!

Bob Fiscus, Treasurer



Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 4/2 Leanne Austin
- 4/4 Richard Pittera
- 4/5 Estuardo Estrada
- 4/6 Lillian Furedy (99!)
Jessica Goddard
- 4/7 Michelle Wilber
- 4/8 Jeff Munley
- 4/9 Samantha Nilsen
- 4/12 Dot Svenson
- 4/15 Carl Otten
Iain Munley
- 4/17 JoAnn Gibbs (Sr.)
- 4/18 Luke Gibbs
- 4/21 Christina Avila
- 4/22 Anastasia Svenson
- 4/25 Anna Morin
- 4/26 Margie Royster

APRIL 4

♥Sam & Paula Keegan♥

APRIL 7

♥Diego & Patricia
Castiblanco♥

APRIL 18

♥Joe & Karen Domena♥

APRIL 22

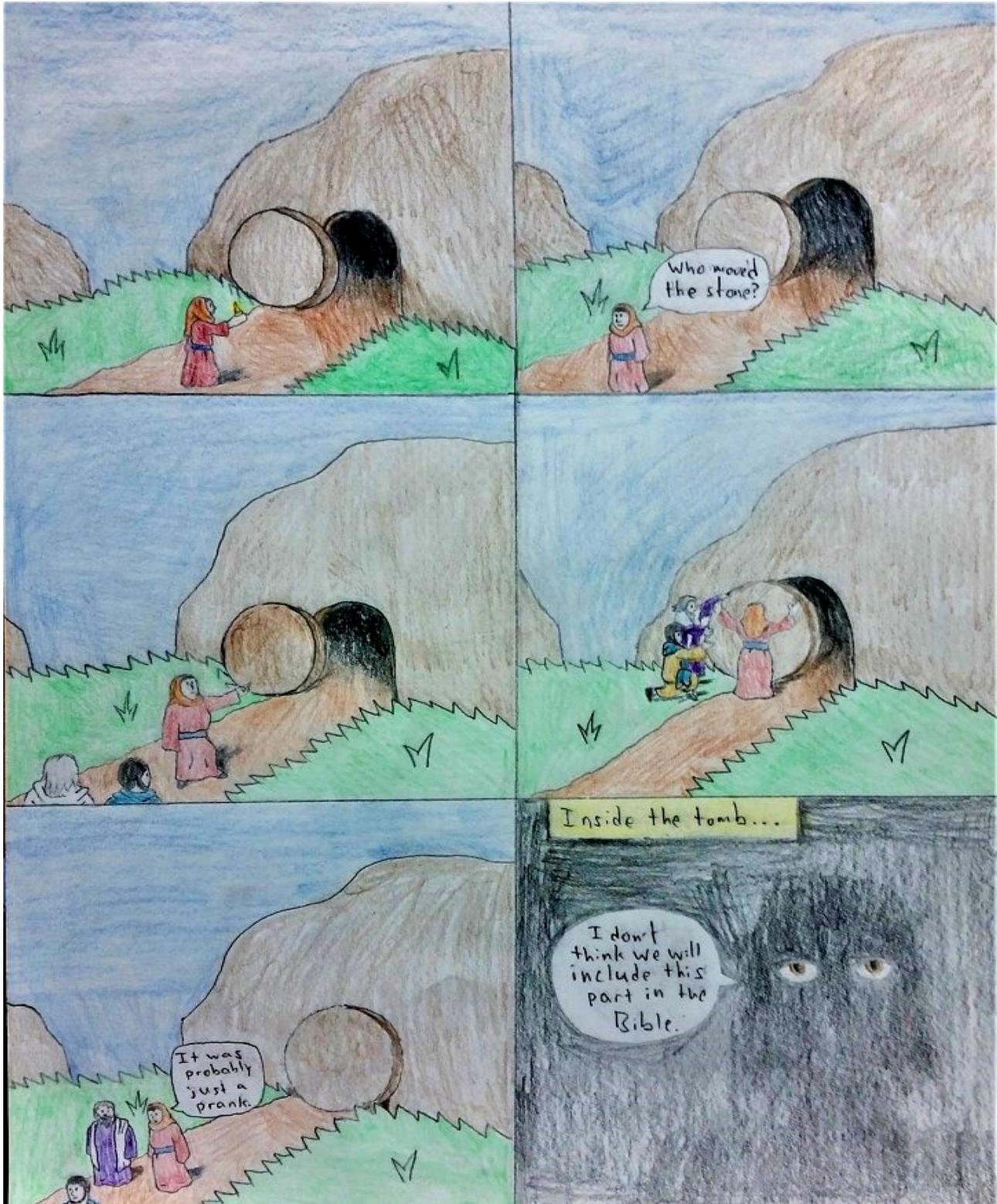
♥George & Karen
Sheridan♥

APRIL 28

♥Ron & JoAnn Gibbs♥

Bible Bloopers

by Cory Sharp



Annual Secret Pal Brunch

Saturday, April 29th, 10:00 am



Spring is here!

It's time to find out who your Secret Pal has been all year!
Senders, remember to bring a \$15 gift for your pal.

RSVP to Mindy Hatfield
(mininct@sbcglobal.net or 203.650.2424)

Want to participate in the Secret Pal program?
Contact Mindy Hatfield.

RSVP by April 24

Celebrate **EASTER** With Us

9:00 am Blended Worship
10:45 am Contemporary Worship

Director of Discipleship Update

Over the past few months, I've been praying and seeking God's Will for our Discipleship Ministry. I've had the privilege to take a "deep dive" into not just reading about Small Group (Life Group) models, formation, the "how to's", group term limits vs. perpetuity, open vs. closed, or what's our next book, to crafting a group covenant . . . But then took a deep pause and prayed to God "what are the deep needs of this Covenant Community and how can we support our Life Groups to enable Your Holy Spirit to really encourage and counsel us to grow in Christ-likeness where it is tangible, intimate, and transformational?" So, I took my head out of my e-books (Kindle App of course) to engage and collaborate with the Covenant (Chicago), our Pastor and Pastors in our community, Ministry Chairs and Liaisons, Life Group leaders and participants, InterVarsity, Millennials, and pretty much anyone who would sit down and share with me. I also lead a Life Group where the group teaches me every day with great passion and real life examples just what a Disciple looks like today in Fairfield County and how we need each other on this Faith Journey!

Here's what I've learned and want to share with you as both an encouragement and a challenge for you to "go deeper" to hunger and thirst in your Life Groups:

1. Truly "one size (or way) does NOT fit all"!

We're all unique individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, social relationships, talents. We are individually "wired" for how we best connect with our Loving Father in Worship, Growing (in Discipleship), and in Serving Others. Sounds a "wee bit" like our Mission statement, eh?

2. It begins with individual "sweat equity" in our 1:1 time with God in prayer, study, and the discipline in becoming a Disciple. Yet in our next step, we are meant to share in Life's Journey TOGETHER in COMMUNITY (our Life Group and in the World).

3. Life Group Mission and Vibrancy Test:

- a. Is the Holy Spirit fully present and ALIVE? (were not our hearts burning)
- b. As a group - WHO are we and WHAT are we about?
Academic Bible Learning; Prayer Warriors; Service focused; Stage of Life or Topic focused; Social; Deep study, discerning reflection, forgiveness, and growth; Other . . .
- c. In our Study:
A book of the Bible? (study commentaries); Topical books by reputable Christian authors; Are we loving, yet accountable in our reading? (so we can share with our group); What Media Formats – a book, DVD, video, etc.?; What is the truth and ask "where is it written (in Scripture)"; How can we learn and apply this new truth in our lives?
- d. During our Praise and Prayer Requests:
Are we at a level of trust, vulnerability, and confidentiality to share the deeper hurts and needs in our lives?; Do we write these songs of our heart down in our prayer journals? ; Do we pray for each other during the week? (a follow up call or text?); Do we go back months later and encourage the group where God has answered prayer or brings us to a closer walk in trust and obedience?
- e. Where's the FRUIT?
Are we growing in Christ-likeness or just comfortable in our groups?; What's

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Director of Discipleship Update

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the “So What” or Action Items?; Are we going beyond the Worship and Growing and now Serving with our life group brothers or sisters? Doing a small task in a Life Group member’s life outside of church (help to move, paint a room, drive, community service, etc.).

- f. Sacrificial giving of our time for the greater good and investing in Life Group relationships:

Are we encouraging each other? (life is hard, we need encouragement); Are we investing in these Life Group Relationships – (My dear brother in Christ and mentor - Paul Linder – he always took the time to talk with me, to know our kids’ names and what mattered to them or me, remembered all our past conversations, and made you feel like you were the most important person in the world)! (Cary mentioned this in his message on 3/19); Are we coming alongside one another in tangible ways, acts of love, even sacrificial love for the Kingdom?

In “Growing Together” we must fully walk alongside our brothers and sisters as Jesus so sacrificially and beautifully modeled for us . . .

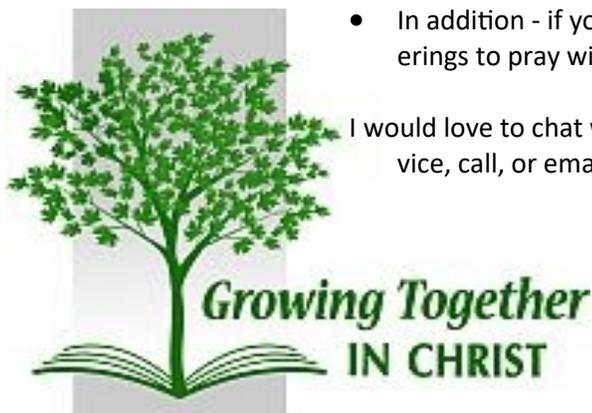
Is our Life Group and our Covenant family truly a city on a hill being a loving light in the darkness of this world? Can He use our gifts and our scars to advance the gospel (at home, our church, our Life Groups, our work, and in our communities) . . . It’s not that we are fully equipped – we are called TO DO with WHAT God has given/gifted to us to do (the few fish and loaves of bread, the 1 vs. 5 vs. the 10 talents) and we are to TRUST Him to use our offering and to multiply it and meet the need in a way that only God could equip, do, and birth HIS MASTERPIECE!

Support:

- I will continue to pray for all of you and your Life Groups!
- I'm available to you as a prayer warrior, encourager, mentor, or resource to you for any of your Life Group questions, needs, suggestions, or want to join or start a new Life Group.

- In addition - if you'd like for me to attend one your Life Group gatherings to pray with you, share, listen, and offer ideas - let me know.

I would love to chat with you! Please feel free to talk with me after service, call, or email to share with me your heart and thoughts!



Bob Rieger, Director of Discipleship

brieger21@gmail.com

bob@coveaston.org

203.727.8523



Youth Serving Others

Our Junior High and High School youth have some great opportunities to live out our church mission to **Serve Others** this month.

Many of our youth will participate in two local mission projects through Urban Impact this month. Urban Impact is a Christ-centered organization in Bridgeport that provides special programs for at-risk children in the P.T. Barnum Community. On Saturday, April 1st students will help coordinate a special children's Easter event that includes games, crafts, a time of reflection and pizza! Two days later, on Monday, April 3rd, there is another opportunity by helping serve an Easter meal to those same children and their families at Cesar Batalla Elementary School in Bridgeport. An Easter message will be shared with the families and the evening will end with some fun indoor recreational games.

Our High School Seniors are doing an awesome job assisting in leadership at Youth Group. We were blessed to hear recent testimonies from Frankie Swindon and Amelia Crosley!

Foundations to Host Senior Brunch

Students in our Foundations Class will host the Annual Senior Brunch on Sunday, April 30 between worship services in the Fellowship Hall.

Seniors will be blessed with delicious food, entertainment, games and prizes! Don't forget to RSVP to Debbie Packnick!

LET'S DO

Brunch

SENIOR BRUNCH

Sunday, April 30
10:00 – 10:45 am
Fellowship Hall

RSVP: Debbie Packnick
(203) 371-8335

Hosted by the Foundations Class

Service Ministry

2017 PIVOT MINISTRIES ANNUAL



PRAYER BREAKFAST

Good Friday, April 14th 2017
7am-9am

Special Guest Speaker: Runner and Olympian
ABBEY D'AGOSTINO

WOODWAY COUNTRY CLUB
540 Hoyt Street, Darien, Connecticut 06820

Your attendance will help support the vital role of Pivot Ministries within our communities.
Tickets are \$50 per person or \$600 per table of 12, available for purchase online:
www.pivotministries.org

To purchase tickets (\$50 per person or \$600 per table of 12) visit:
<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2899875>

Urban Impact Service Project

Youth and adults are invited to help prepare Easter craft decorations for Urban Impact's Easter meal at P.T. Barnum. If you would like to help out, meet at Black Rock Church on Saturday, April 1st from 10:00 am—2:00 pm. Kids from Urban Impact's 5Loaves program will join in the preparation fun. On Monday, April 3rd from 5:00-7:30 pm you have an opportunity to help serve an Easter dinner to the Urban Impact children and their families at Cesar Batalla School in Bridgeport. Adults can contact Bill Morin to RSVP or to get more information (whmorin@gmail.com or 203.402.9200) and students should RSVP to Debbie Packnick (debbie@coveaston.org or 203.668.5350).

Easter Baskets for Children

Bless some "bunny" for Easter by providing an Easter basket for children of Family ReEntry of Bridgeport. Charlene Skok will be available after each Worship Service or you can contact her directly (crskok@gmail.com or 203.373.0547). Baskets need to be returned to church prior to Palm Sunday, April 9. Family ReEntry is a non-profit 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. To learn more, visit <http://familyreentry.org/>.

April Food Pantry Needs

Suggested donations for the Food Pantry at Summerfield United Methodist Church in Bridgeport for April include:

**Peanut Butter
Crackers**

TOILETRIES
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Facial & Bath Soap
Shampoo, Deodorant

Your donations can be left in the white wicker hampers located in the church entry.

Light on the Hill

Food Pantry



THERE'S SOMETHING FOR ALL AGES AT CAMP SQUANTO!

PATHFINDERS (Grades 2-3)

Games, activities, and worship are packed into a four day and three night stay. Fun and safety are of the utmost concern for this group, so campers are never without a counselor.

TRAILBLAZERS (Grades 4-6)

Energy levels are through the roof when the Trailblazers come to Camp! Campers get a taste of every activity we have to offer at Camp, and they get to hear from excellent speakers gifted in youth ministry. Mini-week & Full-week options are available.

JUNIOR HIGH (Grades 7-9)

This age group is where we see wonderful spiritual growth and a desire to dig deeper in faith and relationship with God. We include more intentional times with cabin groups, small groups, and discussions with camp counselors.

SENIOR HIGH (Grades 10-12)

A week at Camp Squanto offers a unique opportunity for Christian teens to participate in an array of activities like zip lining, rock climbing, BIG GAMES, and other great opportunities like workshops that focus on specific areas targeted towards strengthening and developing their faith.

Gear Up for Summer at Pilgrim Pines

Work & Worship Weekend May 26-29

Enjoy a fun-filled weekend of work, play and worship together at beautiful Pilgrim Pines. Use your talents and willing hands to help prepare the Pines for another exciting summer season. In exchange for your work, Pilgrim Pines will provide excellent meals, lodging, recreation, group activities and worship times.

You, your family and friends, and anyone are invited to participate in the Work and Worship Weekend.

You don't need any building or carpentry skills to pitch in! We need all kinds of people to make contributions with energy and a willingness to get dirty, try new things, be flexible and enjoy the company of others who want to pitch in, too. We need cleaners, painters, rakers and electricians, as well as plumbers, carpenters and handy people. All of us have contributions to make, so come on out and enjoy some physical activity with your friends at Pilgrim Pines!

INFORMATION & REGISTRATION FORMS ONLINE:

<https://www.pilgrimpines.org/>

Family Camp at the Pines

Many families say that their week at Mayflower Family Camp is a hybrid between a traditional New England summer camp and a fun filled, memory-making family vacation. Mayflower Family Camp creates a unique oasis for adults and children alike. Parents can choose to participate in morning Christian education time with outstanding speakers from across the country while their kids learn new skills, Biblical lessons and share new experiences with their new friends and develop an appreciation for the friendship and God's creation.

We also offer many outdoor recreational opportunities such as volleyball, bocce, tennis, basketball, a small 9-hole golf course, disc golf, beach, paddle boards,

canoes & kayaks and some great play areas for kids.

Each week we are proud of the camp community that is built and the lasting friendships that develop. Since opening Family Camp many years ago, generation after generation return each summer to renew, reconnect and grow. In fact, we are happy to put you in contact with past campers to hear for yourself why Mayflower Family Camp is considered their summer home. We hope you will consider joining us this summer and see why so many families return to Pilgrim Pines year after year. Come and experience all kinds of fun events, fantastic kids programs, safe and experienced staff, great worship and so much more!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2017
 July 31–August 4, 2017 9 am to 12:15 pm Ages 4 thru 6th grade
 COST: \$35 (\$30 sibling/\$25 2nd sibling/\$100 max per family)

Name: _____ Age: _____

Birthdate: _____ Grade entering in Fall: _____

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Allergies: _____

I give my permission for _____ to attend VBS 2017 at the Covenant Church of Easton. I understand that all precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of the children. I agree to hold harmless the Covenant Church of Easton or its agents for any and all claims for injuries, illness, cause of action, the rendering of emergency care, or liability related to participation in this event. In the event that I cannot be reached in an emergency and my child requires treatment, I hereby give permission to the physician selected by the church staff to secure proper treatment for my child.

Photographs of the children participating in our program may be taken and may appear in brochures, the church newsletter, church website or other publicity material. Your permission for photographs including your child is part of this agreement.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Please **PRINT** Name _____

_____ Date _____ For Staff: Date Received _____ Paid: _____



Covenant Church, 1 Sport Hill Road, Easton, CT 06612
Loving God, Growing Together, Serving Others
 Phone: (203) 371-8335 Fax (203) 373-9025 www.coveaston.org



CHILI COOK OFF SQUARE DANCING

★ Saturday, April 8, 5:00 pm ★

Event is Free, but a "Tip Boot" will be provided to help defray costs.

SIGN UP ON THE POSTER IN THE WELCOME CENTER



COVENANT CHURCH

Loving God, Growing Together, Serving Others
1 Sport Hill Road
Easton, CT 06612

203.371.8335

www.coveaston.org



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

