



Covenant Church of Easton

The Salt Shaker

Our Greatest Need

I recently read the following quotation – attributed to an “unknown source.”

*If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.*

This Advent at Covenant the sermon series is based on Lee Strobel’s book [A CASE FOR CHRISTMAS](#). Lee, formerly an investigative reporter for the Chicago Tribune, searches for truth about “who” is in the manger of Christmas. Now as a Pastor and educator Lee certainly informs us and helps us learn about Jesus. Is that enough?

This Holiday time will provide opportunities for us to get up-to-date and up-to-speed on all the latest technological gadgets for our computers, our communication devices, our GPS’s . . . All this will give us ways to gather information, communicate more quickly, and always know where we are and how to get where we want to be. But can they help us deal with our deepest need?

What can be said about the economy that is good? More people are losing their homes, more people are losing their jobs, more people are depressed over the condition of their resources. There may be some who would want God to send an economist. But would that really help us? When things were really booming a few years ago, there were people with houses but not living in a happy home; there were people working, but unfulfilled in their jobs; and depression has been a condition for many people even in the “good years.”

Television has become our major source of entertainment. Whether it be sports or talk shows, unreal reality contests or dancing with the stars – has all this helped us with living . . . with loving . . . with being truly happy? Hardly! In fact, a vast majority of people are over stimulated and under productive.

God knew exactly what we needed. Though there’s much to be gained by education; much for which science has enhanced our lives; much that money makes it possible for us to do for good; and much positive pleasure from the entertainment we enjoy – there’s nothing that satisfies nor fulfills our life like the love, the hope and the relationship we have with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

May this Christmas be overwhelmed for each of us by the incredible gift we have from God; the one who satisfies our deepest need; the one who redeems our life: JESUS!

Pastor Craig



Pastoral Search Committee Update

This is the first of many updates the Pastoral Search Committee will be sharing with you during our search for a new pastor.

First of all, we'd all like to thank you for entrusting us with this tremendous responsibility! We are all deeply honored to be chosen and are excited to get started. We have already met as a group and have begun the first steps. First and foremost we begin and end every meeting in prayer.



We met with Howard Burgoyne, Superintendent of the East Coast Conference for a quick course on the steps necessary to accomplish our task. There are seven steps we must follow to accomplish our goal of presenting a new Senior Pastor to the congregation. We have already gone through step one – forming a search committee and meeting with the superintendent. The next step involves designing and developing a self-study survey. To do this we will be giving out a survey to all church attendees regarding your perceived needs and preferences for a pastor. As well, we will prepare a church profile with a de-

scription of who we are as a church. The survey will be available on our church website as well as in your mailbox.

Many of you will be contacted personally by our committee so that we can get your personal feedback. This is not a substitute for the survey, but in addition. You may have thoughts that don't fit into the survey. It will be difficult to personally meet with every member so if you would like to speak to one of us, please be sure to let us know!

We are interested in everyone's input and suggestions.

Most importantly, please be praying for us each day as we prayerfully prepare ourselves for the task ahead.

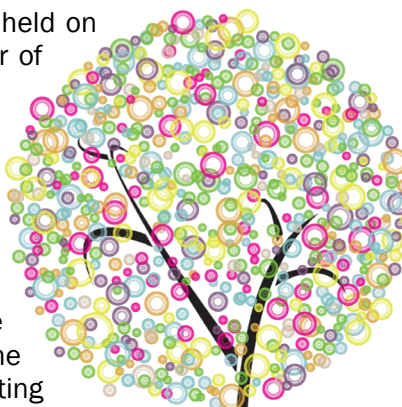
PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

Bill Austin	Bob Lindquist
Barbara Drummond	John Monroe
Chuck Forstrom, Chair	Bobbie Morgan
Judy Goyette	Paul Veerman

Annual Meeting of the Congregation—Part 1

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation - Part I will be held on Sunday, December 11th at 12:00 noon. The main order of business will be to review and vote on the 2012 Unified Fund Financial Plan. The Plan will be available to you ahead of time on Sunday, December 4th in your church mailboxes.

The minutes of the Congregational Meetings held on Sunday, September 25th (to recommend Pastor Cary for ordination) and Sundays, October 16th/30th (to elect the Pastoral Search Committee) have been approved by the Council. The minutes are available in the Council Meeting Minutes Binder in the Welcome Center.



Annual Meeting ²⁰¹¹


Stewardship – What is it Really?

Stewardship is something that we hear a lot of talk about, but not a lot of understanding. I truly believe that understanding what stewardship is and how it applies to our lives will change the way we make decisions each day. If we really understand what it means to be good stewards, we will begin to not only see our lives change, but also the world around us.

So what are we actually stewards over?

Personally, I believe it applies to everything we have been given. Our time, our money, our God-given gifts and abilities, our influence; it all comes from God. There are lots of stewardship verses that show us how we should act, but my favorite is the Parable of the Talents since it gives such a great illustration of what a good steward does. Put simply, the good stewards were the ones who took “risks” and action in order to multiply what they had been given. The bad steward was the one who, out of fear, decided not to take a risk and was called lazy as well.

This reminds me of another scripture, *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” Luke 12:48*



*What will you give back
to God from the blessings
you have received?*

Stewardship
A WAY OF LIFE

How should “stewardship living” affect our lives?

Our finances tend to be the key area that people refer to when speaking of stewardship. I think the main reason is that often money is one of the most difficult things for people to give. At least for me, that used to be the case. I was okay giving my energy, time, or sharing my abilities, but money was not something that I was interested in giving away. That is probably why God had to work on me for so long to help me lose my attitude!

One of the things that helped me was keeping focus on the fact that I came into the world with nothing and would leave with nothing. I began to look at all my possessions as merely being “on loan.” This has helped me begin to see myself more as a “steward” rather than a “possessor”.

Stewardship of a violin

I read a story of a well-known violinist talking about his violin. The violinist mentioned that the violin was a couple hundred years old and worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars. The interesting point I remember from the story was the way the violinist viewed himself as a steward of the instrument. He knew that many great musicians had played the instrument before he was even born. He was also not naive to think that he would be the last to play the fine instrument. He understood that it was just temporarily passing through his hands.

The violinist’s outlook on his violin has really helped me get a better understanding of the role possessions should have in my life. Changing my thinking in this way has affected how I handle my money and even my weekly buying decisions. It’s not that having possessions is a good or bad thing it’s just that it needs to be in the proper perspective.

Bobbie Morgan
Stewardship & Finance Ministry

News from Our Missionaries in Japan

In October Gary finally had the opportunity he had been waiting for - to go to the tsunami disaster areas, see the situation, and help out in some way. The date for the trip was significant - exactly seven months since the earthquake and resulting tsunami hit the northeastern part of Honshu Island.

We've posted details of this trip on our blog, and would encourage you to go there to read about it: blogs.covchurch.org/carlson/

For this prayer letter, though, here are some of the highlights of Gary's trip:

- Getting to share the trip up north with mission co-workers Tim Johnson and Grant Buchholtz, along with Byron and Judy Amundsen, visitors from our Covenant's Department of World Mission.
- Seeing the towns and cities along the coast of Iwate prefecture which were devastated by the tsunami, from Kesenuma to Miyako (about 130 kilometers, or 80 miles).
- Working with Grant Buchholtz (Tim Johnson & the Amundsens returned to Tokyo the same day) and a team of volunteers over



Gary & Pauline Carlson
Shonan Community Church

the next two days to make and distribute food to people affected by the disaster.

Back in Fujisawa, we held a charity concert at our Shonan Community Church in October. Hayumi Ino shared a wonderful program of classical vocal music, interspersed with testimony & scripture. We had about 15 in attendance, all from nearby Japan Covenant churches. We were thankful for their presence, but disappointed that no one from our church neighborhood responded to the flyers we had distributed. Still, we know that we are only just getting to know these neighbors, & are in the process of earning their trust.

On Saturday, November 5, we'll be having another children's ministry program, this time with a fall theme. We've distributed hundreds of flyers in the area around the church, and are eager to see children who have come to previous events return this time. We also hope some first-time children will attend.

We're now very much in the process of transitioning from our work here to our six-month home assignment, which begins in January. We're starting to get in touch with supporting churches about dates to visit and share about our work, and are looking forward to those times of reconnecting.

Thanks for your prayers. Please be praying with us. . .

- That God will continue to bless relief efforts in the disaster area as residents look to put their lives back together.
- For Shonan Community Church and its continued outreach to our neighborhood, especially the 11/5 children's event.
- For our preparations for home assignment.

With thanks for each of you,
Gary & Pauline Carlson



Japan

Presently there are 23 churches that make up the Covenant Church of Japan (NSKK). There is also a seminary, a camp, a Christian center, and a daytime care center for the elderly. Individual churches are reaching out to their communities with a wide variety of approaches such as English classes, elder care, child care, music, and much more. Pray that people's interests will go deep, and hearts and lives will be changed for Christ.

History The Covenant missionary work in Japan began in 1949. A national church, the Covenant Church of Japan (NSKK), was organized in 1951. The Covenant Seminary, located in Tokyo, was started in 1952 and continues to train pastors today. In the summer of 2010, the NSKK consecrated a missionary couple to serve in the United States alongside Christ Covenant Church (C3) in Novi, Michigan, in reaching out to Japanese people in this community.

21st Annual TREE OF LIGHT



T O R E M E M B E R

Thursday, December 8, 2011 — 6:30 pm
Easton Firehouse Green
Center Road

Join the Covenant's Choir and the King's Kids along with the Easton Community for a Celebration of Life to Remember those who have been inspirational in your life. The ceremony promotes fellowship and includes a candle and tree lighting celebration with music, spiritual readings, the memorial roll, and an informal reception.

This ceremony is one of many taking place simultaneously in 11 towns throughout Fairfield and New Haven Counties. Come support our Easton Community friends and neighbors; as well as, our Sanctuary Choir and King's Kids. Refreshments will be served. In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held inside the Firehouse on Center Road.

All proceeds benefit the Visiting Nurse Services of Connecticut Hospice at Home Program. For more information, please speak with Dan Wolgemuth.

**SAVE THE
DATE**

Jr. High Retreat

For kids in grades 7 & 8

February 10-12, 2012

Don't miss out on this awesome retreat!

Spend time on the ice, sledding, enjoying great outdoor games, fantastic worship, sipping hot cocoa & learning about Jesus!

REGISTRATION FORM COMING SOON

SAVE THE DATE – WINTERFEST 2012

\$120 - LESS THAN LAST YEAR!



PILGRIM PINES presents
WINTERFEST 12
 LAKE CHAMPION • GLEN SPEY, NY

- CHIC 2012 Giveaways!**
- WORSHIP
 - midnight concert
 - late night pizza party
 - AWESOME SEMINARS
 - games & prizes
 - frisbee golf
 - 40-PERSON HOT TUB
 - indoor basketball
 - 800' ZIP LINE
 - Squano friends!

WWW.PILGRIMPINES.ORG • JAN 6-8, 2012



Winter Storm Cancellation Notice

If you are wondering whether or not Covenant is open during a winter storm, please turn on your TV to Channel 8 (WTNH). You can also go online at www.WTNH.com. Additionally you can tune your radio to either WICC (AM 600) or WEBE (FM 108).

Every person needs to decide for themselves whether or not to venture out in a winter storm. If you plan to attend, please check the above locations first to make sure that the Worship Service (or other event) has not been canceled.



December Birthdays & Anniversaries



12/1 Chloe Gustavson
12/2 Larry Boyle
12/3 Bob Rieger
Kyle Lent
12/4 Julian Rosa
12/7 Kasey Kellerman
Savannah Rae Bradley
12/8 Sadie Linnen
12/9 Lyn Wemple
12/9 Michael Blair
12/10 Carol Mojcher

12/11 Randy Cobaugh
12/11 SNOOPI Botten
12/13 Mike Mahoney
Emily Monroe
12/14 Sam Keegan
Mark Hatfield
12/17 Bob Forstrom
Monica Schaper
12/19 Jill (Stetson) Miller
12/21 Carolyn Carlson
12/24 Carola Perez
Joyce Fiscus
Sara Jane Meachen
12/26 Christina Contacessi
12/28 Bobbie Morgan
Elena Meachen
♥ Tom & Nancy Wilber ♥
12/30 Cliff Swanson
Benay Shive



Common Sense

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, **Common Sense**, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain.
- Why the early bird gets the worm.
- Life isn't always fair.
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies; don't spend more than you can earn, and adults, not children are in charge. His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.



Common Sense lost ground when parents attached teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims. It also took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault. And then finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death, by his parents, Truth and Trust, by his wife Discretion, his daughter Responsibility, and his son, Reason. He is survived by his 4 stepbrothers — I Know My Rights, I Want It Now, Someone Else Is To Blame, and I'm A Victim. Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone.



MAGNIFICAT

J.S. Bach: *Magnificat*
John Rutter: *Gloria*

Friday, December 9, 2011, 8 pm
Church of St. Mary the Virgin
145 West 46th Street

Thea Kano, *conductor*

Paige Cutrona, *soprano*
Nancy Strohmeier, *mezzo-soprano*
Augustine Mercante, *countertenor*
Douglas R. Benoit, *tenor*
Skip Teel, *baritone*

Tickets \$20/\$30
nycmasterchorale.org

**NYC MASTER
CHORALE**
Thea Kano, Artistic Director

The TALE OF the Firefly's TAIL

Saturday, December 24 at 5:00 pm

Family Worship with Live Animals

Join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. The King's Kids and Friends will bring a whole new meaning to live animals at Covenant!



Christmas Events at Covenant



Sunday, December 18

4:30 pm

Covenant Children's Center presents
The Christmas Story

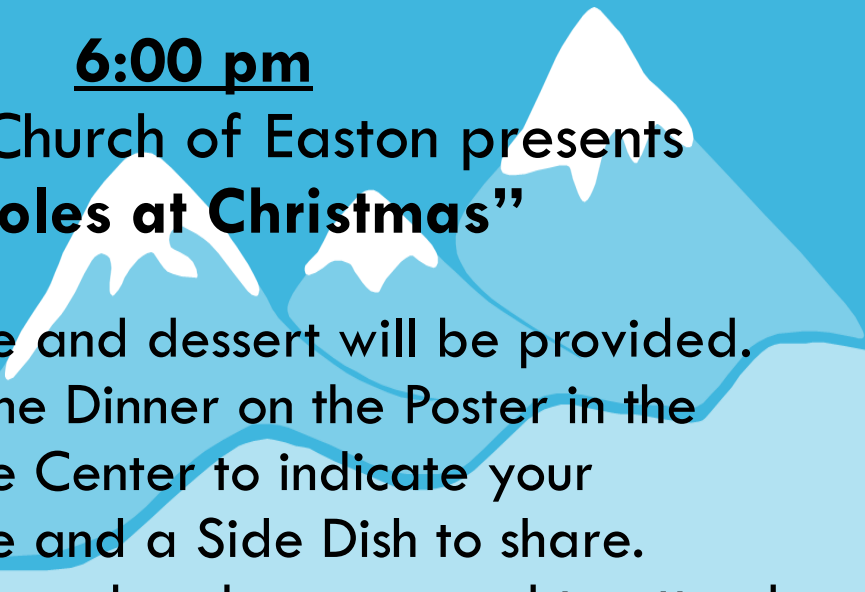
5:00 pm

Church Family & Children's Center
Pot Luck Dinner

6:00 pm

Covenant Church of Easton presents
"Caroles at Christmas"

The main course and dessert will be provided.
Sign up for the Dinner on the Poster in the
Welcome Center to indicate your
Attendance and a Side Dish to share.
Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to attend.



Open Hands

**come to you with only karate...my empty hands,
I have no weapons,
but should I be forced to defend myself,
my principles or my honor, should it be a matter of life
or death, or right or wrong, then here are my weapons
karate, my empty hands.**

It is said that the tongue is the most powerful weapon in the world. I have been thinking about that and I'm starting to think that's wrong. I personally have a yellow belt in karate, but I was studying for my blue belt before I dropped out. I dropped out because I was getting scared of my own abilities. We were learning pressure points and how in one single move you can bring someone to their death. In one way it felt cool because at the time I was a big fan of Xena and I found it fascinating that there really are pressure points, just not exactly like in the show. Like if you do a move, you can't simply undo it like Xena did. So before you make a karate move, you need to be 100 percent sure you want to make that move because once it's done, it's done.

But I was thinking, this is not only about karate, this should be about everything in life! Like when a newborn baby is held for the first time, it starts the bonding process. When a child gets their first good grade in school, that pat on the back totally inspires them for a lifetime. Using your hands to throw a ball to a kid creates a fun memory that shapes who they will become. Hands can offer support in hard times. A hand can write letters or email and touch anyone anywhere in the world; and if saved, it can continue to touch people for generations to come.

So hands can inspire and change the world! And at this time of year, hands can rip open presents on Christmas morning. I've seen people who very carefully open presents so they can re-use the wrapping paper. In my opinion, it takes the fun out of Christmas. We need to be excited with what people give us because we should be giving to each other as if we were giving to Jesus. And with what we find when we open that gift will be with us for the rest of our lives because everything creates both memories and inspiration.



I have just moved back to Ohio from New York and after paying ahead on a hotel in hopes of getting an apartment, I only have around \$100 to live on until I get on assistance. So every gift I give this year has to come from my soul because I have nothing to work with at all! BUT, God is blessing me with my very first Christmas concert. I do concerts all the time, but I have never been able to book a Christmas concert. So even though I'm in a hotel with nothing to live on, I can finally do the concert of all concerts and use my heart and my hands to share Jesus, the greatest gift of all.

This Christmas, use your hands, but handle with great love and care.

Merry Christmas!

SNOOPI BOTTEN

December



COVENANT CHURCH OF EASTON

1 Sport Hill Road
Easton, CT 06612

www.coveaston.org

Phone: 203.371.8335

Fax: 203.373.9025

Covenant Children's Center: 203.374.3049

E-mail: gail.lent@coveaston.org

December Worship

Advent/Christmas Series "WHO'S IN THE MANGER?"

December	4	John 5:1-15	SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE Does Archaeology confirm or contradict? Holy Communion	Pastor Craig
December	11	Many passages	PROFILE EVIDENCE Does Jesus possess the attributes of God? Drama: "I'm Here!"	Pastor Craig
December	18	Isaiah 7:14 Daniel 9:24-26	DNA EVIDENCE Does Jesus alone match the Messiah's ID? Children's Message	Pastor Craig

Saturday, December 24th
Christmas Eve Services
5 PM – Family Service, Live Animals
THE TALE OF THE FIREFLY'S TAIL
11 PM – Candlelight Communion Service

CHRISTMAS DAY – BIG SUNDAY – 10:00 AM

December	25	Matthew 1:18-25	JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD!	Pastor Craig
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