

Community Covenant Church
122 S Main Street
PO Box 278
Upsala, MN 56384

Phone: 320-573-2672

Email: covenant@upsalacov.org
www.upsalacov.org

Pastor Steve Weihsmann
Senior Pastor
steve@upsalacov.org
(218) 428-8010

Zach Klein
Youth Ministries
zach@upsalacov.org
(763) 242-7237



COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH CHRONICLES

Publication of Community Covenant Church, Upsala, MN

January/February 2025

Hi Friends at Community Covenant Church,

Thank you for the extra gift that you sent to our family and ministry. We appreciate you! Your support enables thousands of people in Tanzania to access Scripture in their own language. It's so exciting! We thank God that Ben recently finished typesetting the New Testament in the Zinza language.

Praise the Lord.

Love,

Ben & Jeanette Gerth, our missionaries to Tanzania.



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"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

Luke 8:15

Community Covenant Church Welcomes You!



2025 Church Motto:
Sow the seed God has given you

Thank you to everyone who participated in Operation Christmas Child.

We sent 60 boxes this year!

Prayer is the foundation of Operation Christmas Child. Please pray for the following requests as shoeboxes are processed across the country.

- Pray that the volunteers at processing centers will grow closer to God and to one another as they serve in Jesus' name.
- Pray that the logistics in processing centers will be smooth and the shoeboxes will be processed with care and efficiency from start to finish.
- Pray for the health, safety, and joy for those serving in processing center leadership roles and for their families, and that they would see the eternal impact of their service.
- Pray that God would open the hearts of the boys and girls who will receive the shoeboxes and that they would invite Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

"OWNERSHIP"

The first car I owned was a 1969 Pontiac LeMans four door. It was kind of an ugly color on the outside. It had a nice interior and was a pleasure to drive. It took me through my last two years of college at the University of Wisconsin. It was the first big thing I owned. Since then, I have owned or co-owned quite a variety of cars and trucks, five motorcycles, five hunting rifles (I went through all five before I got a deer), a couple houses, a raft of musical instruments and recording equipment, and many smaller acquisitions too numerous to name. I am reminded that I live in a first world nation. All these things have had my name attached to them in some way - on a registration, or deed, or warranty, and so I owned them.

As Christians we are to have the understanding that we are not so much owners as stewards of our "possessions." God is the real Owner. Psalm 24:1 tells us that *"the earth is the LORD'S and all it contains,"* so that makes Him the Proprietor. It is not easy to concede this point, especially when there is something of which we are especially fond. The term "mine" springs to our lips, and even very young children can say it with ardor and with an accompanying look which defies another child to think differently. If God should ask us to give up one of these things that are "mine" and we argue with Him, we discover we have drifted into idolatry, which causes us to be miserable if we are truly trying to live for Him. Note: the misery need not be permanent.

Even more difficult is the concept that we, and all people, belong to God. In Ezekiel 18:4 God says, *"Behold, all souls are Mine..."* 1 Corinthians 6: 19 adds, *"do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"* Perhaps if we apprehended this better, we would sin less.

We are acquired by God as "fixer uppers." There is no chip to replace as in a robot that can make us obedient to God. He chooses to work with our humanity and to let us choose to give Him ownership of ourselves. Some of us require a good deal of fixing over a long period of time. All of us, at some juncture, encounter the term "surrender," and to our surprise it makes sense...finally, and there is peace...finally.

About the time we surrender, we also discern our "calling," our purpose for being on the earth...and life becomes more abundant, which Jesus said it would. We **accept being owned** and we are happy.

May you be happy in your surrender to Christ in the New Year.

---Pastor Steve



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship	3 1 PM & 7 PM Women's Bible Study	4	5 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam/ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	6	7	8
9 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship	10 1 PM & 7 PM Women's Bible Study 8 PM Men's Bible Study	11	12 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam/ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	13 March/April Newsletter Items Due	14 Valentine's Day Ignite Winter Retreat Friday- Monday	15
16 No Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship with Communion	17 President's Day	18 7 PM Worship Team Mtg.	19 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam/ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	20 7:00 PM Leadership Meeting	21	22 Camp Lebanon Annual Meeting
23 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship	24 1 PM & 7 PM Women's Bible Study 8 PM Men's Bible Study	25	26 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam/ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	27	28 Spring Renewal 2025 NWC Mankato, MN	

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 No Activities New Year's Day!	2	3	4
5 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship	6 12-6 PM Red Cross Blood Drive	7	8 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam /ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	9	10 Mega Fun at CL, 3-6 grades Annual Reports Due Today	11 Mega Fun at Camp Lebanon thru Sunday AM
12 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship 11:30 AM Baked Potato Fundraiser 1:30 JMT 	13 8:00 PM Men's Bible Study	14 7:00 PM Property Team Meeting	15 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam /ALand 6:30 PM Ignite 7:00 PM CW Meeting	16 7:00 PM Leadership Meeting	17 5:30 PM Ladies Night Out With Susie Larson	18
19 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15 AM Worship w/Communion	20 Midwinter Conference, Denver, CO (January 20-24) Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	21	22 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam/ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	23	24	25
26 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:15AM Worship 11:30 Meal 136th Annual Meeting	27 8:00 PM Men's Bible Study	28	29 6 PM meal 6:20 PM JTeam/ALand 6:30 PM Ignite	30	31	

<p>Office Hours</p> <p>Tuesday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM Wednesday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM Thursday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM Friday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM</p> <p>122 S. Main Street PO Box 278 Upsala, MN 56384 320-573-2672 covenant@upsalacov.org www.upsalacov.org</p> <p>Evangelical Covenant Church www.covchurch.org Northwest Conference www.northwestconference.org</p>	<p>January Worship Servers</p> <p>Ushers: Ken & Betty Olson</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Prayer</td> <td>Scripture</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 Pastor Steve</td> <td>Sharen Gaebel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12 Sandi Soderberg</td> <td>Tina Yorek</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19 Anne W.</td> <td>Tanya Olson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26 Sheri Johnson</td> <td>Robin Block</td> </tr> </table> <p>Nursery Workers: <i>The Nursery is open but unstaffed</i></p>	Prayer	Scripture	5 Pastor Steve	Sharen Gaebel	12 Sandi Soderberg	Tina Yorek	19 Anne W.	Tanya Olson	26 Sheri Johnson	Robin Block	<p>February Worship Servers</p> <p>Ushers: Kirt & Tanya Olson</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Prayer</td> <td>Scripture</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 Pastor Steve</td> <td>Evan Yorek</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9 Karen Hoffman</td> <td>Betty Olson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16 Anne W.</td> <td>Sharen Gaebel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>23 Leif Johnson</td> <td>Suzi Johnson</td> </tr> </table> <p>Nursery Workers: <i>The Nursery is open but unstaffed</i></p>	Prayer	Scripture	2 Pastor Steve	Evan Yorek	9 Karen Hoffman	Betty Olson	16 Anne W.	Sharen Gaebel	23 Leif Johnson	Suzi Johnson
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Staying Connected

We send out Sunday bulletins and bi-monthly newsletters via email. If you aren't receiving them, call the church office at 320-573-2672, or send us an email: covenant@upsalacov.org

Publication Deadlines:

Sunday Bulletin: 10pm Wednesday
 Monthly Newsletter: February 13, April 14, June 15, August 15, October 15, & December 12



Want to Save a Life?

It takes one hour of your day to donate one pint of blood which can save up to three lives. Consider donating at our Red Cross Blood Drive on: **Monday, January 6, 2024, 12-6pm.** Sign up at the Welcome Center or sign up [online](http://redcrossblood.org) at redcrossblood.org.

During the first semester of the school year IGNITE focused on studying a book of the Old Testament (Numbers) and a book of the New Testament (1 Peter). We learned to lean into God's promises even during times of suffering, along with amazing ways God showed Himself to people in the Old Testament, even talking through a donkey. We finished the Christmas story from the perspective of Mary and Joseph like they were on a late night talk show. This gave some of our students the ability to stretch their wonderful acting skills. :)



- IGNITE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY!



On December 18th, we had our annual Ignite Christmas Party which included our White Elephant gift exchange. Each year there are funny gifts given and this year was no exception. The highlights this year were an old tv with VCR that actually worked, two creepy clown dolls, a gnome that I believe has been passed around for YEARS! The candle with Zach's face on it made an appearance again, for the 4th year in a row. Evie Aleckson's painted portrait of Zach appeared once again, which is flattering but weird. :-) Thank you to Paul and Susie Ripplinger for hosting again.

WINTER RETREAT IS COMING!

IGNITE Winter Retreat will be February 14-17 at Adventurous Christians in Grand Marais. We will join Karmel Covenant youth group and Linwood Covenant youth group. It will cost \$200. Registration forms will be coming soon.



COMING THIS SUMMER! JUNE 20-26, 2025

This summer will be doing something completely new for our high school students. A mystery road trip full of service projects, fun sight seeing, lots of bonding while sitting in the van, and each day the students will be leading devotionals. This will be a very unique and fun opportunity for our students. Registration is now out and it will be \$300 per student. There will be fundraising.



Mokahum Ministry Center - Cass Lake, MN

Just before Thanksgiving we finished the Design for Discipleship series from the Navigators and spent a few days reviewing the gospel and sharpening up our testimonies. We are now working our way through *Victory over the Darkness*, a resource that focuses on our identity in Christ. This will help us meet one of our big picture goals. Here are all three:

- We want to be humble.
- We want to desire to serve others.
- We want to understand our identity as believers in Jesus Christ.

We will work in *Victory over the Darkness* until Christmas break. We will then spend the first two months of 2025 doing a Bible overview. Our class sessions have been a delight with great questions and discussions.

Thank you for praying for this ministry. Would you pray for these things?

1. That the prospective students considering Mokahum would know clearly what God wants for them
2. That the finances to continue this ministry would come in
3. That our students would continue to grow in their understanding of who they are as followers of Jesus
4. That we would find more teachers and mentors to accompany our students

Will & Jo Ruck, Our missionaries in Japan

Our mission at CBI is to equip Christians in Japan for the work of gospel ministry. We have been trying a variety of different ways to connect with and equip people. I recently had the chance to get Gary Watanabe, one of our retiring missionaries, in the studio for an interview. It was a great opportunity to hear him share his years in ministry and the lessons that he has learned. I'm hoping that this will be impactful on its own but also lead to a series of interviews that can pass on the lessons learned through years of ministry.

Aging infrastructure is a constant battle. We recently began having internet connectivity issues in the building and as I opened the cabinet with the modem and router, I discovered that our hardware predates my time at CBI. We've outgrown our antiquated hardware, and we need to make some improvements to handle our current needs. As the number of missionaries and students grows, it is my job to make sure that we can support them. Network administration is the new skill that I'm learning.

Please pray for Will and Mary Jo as they work in their ministries but also pray for them as a family. Pray that God will meet their needs and bring them strength and encouragement.

2025 Jamaica Mission Trip

The 25th year of CCC sending teams to share the gospel in Jamaica

Last Year's Project: The dorm we built is now housing two young women who are taking housekeeping, health care (CNA training), and driving classes to increase their ability to get a job. Improvements made in the dorm by the center include a small burner and microwave for cooking, completed plumbing for the bathroom, two chairs, and roof repairs after the hurricane.



2025 Project: We will build a similar structure which will be used for a laundry room/building for the vocational center.

The Children: Randy has received grants for their after-school program which we assist with when we are there: devotions, snacks, games, and crafts from 4 pm to 6 pm.

Our Team: Jim & Bella Warga, Dave & Linda Piasecki, Kyle, Ethan, & Kelsey Bergem.

Items needed for construction: 2", 3", and 4" paint brushes, full size fuzzy paint rollers (Not with handles)

Items needed for children's program: construction paper, Go Fish cards, toothbrushes, and toothpaste

Please pray for the people of Jamaica and the team as we prepare and go to serve.

*******PLEASE JOIN US ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 12 AFTER CHURCH *******
Fundraising Baked Potato Luncheon— all proceeds go to mission projects in March.



Christmas Program



Spectacular!

The Children's Christmas program was spectacular.

We are truly blessed to have so many talented children and Servant-hearted adult volunteers in our midst.

Once a year the kids come together to tell us the Christmas story in a extra special way.

"It was excellent, the best ever!" Pastor Steve

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).



If you missed the program and would like to see it, please contact Elizabeth Vandergon at (320) 309-1764 to check out a recorded DVD.

News to Know 6

136th Annual Meeting

All members and friends are welcome to attend the **136th Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 26, 2024**. Members are able to vote on motions; attenders are welcome to observe. The meeting will be held immediately following the meal after church. Please have all **Annual Meeting reports** to the office by Friday, **January 10**. Email is preferred.



Family Game Night will resume in January, please watch the bulletin.



Camp News

Save the Date:



January 10-12,
2025 JTeam Mega
Fun at Camp
Lebanon for 3-6
graders.



Summer Family Camp at LBBC

We are looking at possible dates for our 2025 summer's family camping weekend at Lake Beauty Bible Camp. We will pass that information on to you as soon as it becomes available.

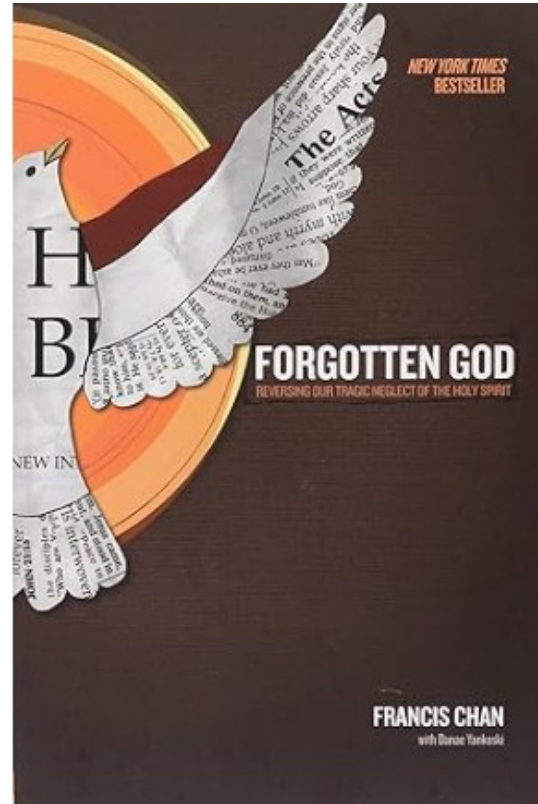


Covenant Women 7

Mission Statement:

To equip, support, and disciple women to live in God's purpose. May God find us faithful; may our hearts be receptive to the needs of each other, the church, and the community

Women's Bible Study - Forgotten God by Francis Chan



Join together with other women this winter for a bible study on the Holy Spirit.

What if the thing our churches are missing isn't a *something*, but a *Someone*? Francis Chan's *Forgotten God* seeks to reverse our neglect of the Holy Spirit by exposing the enormous gap between what Scripture says about the Spirit and how most believers and churches operate today.

Through solid scriptural support and compelling narrative, Chan reveals the Holy Spirit as the Bible describes Him. His goal isn't merely to educate readers - it is to infuse readers' lives with the presence of the Holy Spirit in profound ways.

Mondays - 1:00-3:00 pm & 7:00-9:00 pm
Feb. 3, 10, 24 & March 3, 10, 17, 24

Book and workbook - \$10.00

If you have questions, contact:
Nancy King @ 651-271-3360

Covenant Women Committee

It is time to restructure the serving committees maintained by Covenant Women. The committees serve for funerals, baby showers, wedding showers, and other church functions as needed. If you want to remain on a committee, no action is required. If you would like to serve with us, want to change your committee assignment, or want to take a sabbatical, let Wanda Erickson @ 320-733-2411 know by January 6. Thank you all for helping our fellowship care for one another.