**Coming this Spring**

March 6: Ash Wednesday, service of prayer and ashes at 12pm, soup luncheon to follow.

March 12: BOLD Choice Theater presents *Bloom*! Free show! Begins at 6pm.

March 24: Community Dinner at 4pm! Everyone is Welcome!

March 31: Church kitchen “shower”! (see p. 5)

April 18: Maundy Thursday Communion Service

April 19: Community Good Friday service, details TBD.

April 21: Easter Sunday! Join us for breakfast at 9:30am!

April 25-27: NWC Annual Meeting in Grand Forks, ND.

April 28: Community Dinner at 4pm! Everyone is Welcome!

May 4: Spring rummage sale!

May 26: Community Dinner at 4pm! Everyone is Welcome!

**Soup and Prayer**

Please join us **Wednesdays during Lent at 12pm** for a time of prayer and contemplation followed by a soup and bread luncheon!

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**Spring Cleaning: Jesus Style**

Dear sisters and brothers,

Sometimes it’s easy to get so used to something that you forget it’s even there. Maybe it’s a chronic ache. Maybe it’s that leaky faucet that that you’ve been meaning to fix for the past fifteen years. Maybe it’s the clutter stuffed into the corner of your living room. Maybe it’s the chaos and dysfunction in your family, in your job, in our community, in our nation, in our world. If we’re not careful, we become numb and complacent and begin to think that "this is just the way things are."

But the clear message of the Bible, the clear message of Jesus Christ is that “*the way things are*” *is not the way things are supposed to be!* The promise that we see from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation is that God is making all things new! *(Continued on page 2)*
(Continued from page 1)

God intends and desires for us to know life in all of its goodness and abundance. But, of course, that is not the way we experience it in the day to day; we still suffer and see suffering all around us, and it’s easy to forget that God created us for so much more.

The season of Lent (beginning this year on March 6 and running through Easter Sunday, April 21) is traditionally a season of repentance, a time to take stock of our lives, to root out the darkness and sin that creeps in, and to prepare ourselves for the great celebration of Christ’s resurrection on Easter Sunday. In a way, it’s like spring cleaning: we finally deal with those dusty, cluttered corners of our lives, we purge the junk that’s hiding in the dark basement of our hearts, we let the bright light of Christ shine in to cleanse us and let the fresh wind of the Spirit blow through to fill us with new life. Lent is a season for noticing and dealing with the things that we have become numb to and for reminding ourselves of the glory that God intends for us even right here and now, today!

In many traditions, part of the practice of Lent is choosing to give something up: a habit, a certain food, TV, whatever it might be that you feel is getting more attention in your life than God. Often it can be helpful to also think of taking something on: more deliberate devotions or prayer, doing something for a neighbor, looking for joy in small things, etc. If giving something up or taking something on might help you “clean house,” to realign your priorities, or to recognize those things that you have become complacent about, I would encourage you to do so! Even if it is for the sake of reestablishing a sense of discipline and self-control in your life, this can be a healthy practice! (When I really want to test my self-control and whether I am “mastered by anything,” I try giving up coffee for a while!)

Sometimes Lent gets a bad rap as a “negative” season, a time when we are supposed to feel horrible about what awful sinners we are, that we are supposed to beat ourselves up and deny ourselves anything good and fun. That’s not what Lent is for! In fact, I believe it’s quite the opposite: if we are willing to open ourselves up to what God has for us and to look for the ways in which God wants to clean out our lives so that God can bring us into something greater, then Lent can be a season of great joy and peace!

As we pass through these weeks of Lent, may God renew each of us, grant us that joy, and fill us with the life of Christ.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Luke

Financial Update

We have some good news to celebrate on the financial front at the end of 2018! Though we ended the year with a budget deficit (as expected), that deficit was significantly less than anticipated and nearly $20,000 LESS than our deficit in 2017! This is huge, wonderful news! The difference came largely through increased giving, through a gift to the general fund from Ruth Lintelmann’s estate, and through continued efforts to cut and reduce unnecessary expenses. Thank you all for your generosity and faithfulness to our church in 2018!

As we look forward into 2019, we will again face financial challenges and shortfalls and we encourage you again to consider what you are able to give to our church that we might continue in ministry. May God bless our giving.

2018 Financial Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018 General Fund</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$94,277</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td>$101,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>-$7,323</td>
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</table>

2018 Total Income/Expense

| income          | $100,678 |
| Expense         | $106,543 |
| Deficit         | -$5,865  |
Getting to Know You: Danny Wendt

Introducing Clifford! Or as you may know him: Danny Wendt! (We’ll get back to Clifford later...)

Danny was born in Superior, one of four children. He now resides in Billings Park and has been a member of First Covenant since 1994. In July, he will celebrate his 66th birthday.

Danny has worked in a variety of jobs through the Challenge Center. Currently he works in the shredding department, shredding documents for the public and businesses. Previously, he worked in the greenhouse. He can still you exactly how to pack a box of Bay Produce tomatoes without squishing them!

At home, Danny likes to help plan meals and cook. His specialty is chocolate chip cookies. Jenelle Robinson (team leader in Danny’s group home) says Danny is a bit of a jokester, so he might be kidding when he says that his favorite meal is liver and onions!

Janelle says that Danny is very caring and considerate to his roommates and he daily prays for the people on our prayer chain. This comes out at church, too! Pastor Steve recalls a time when Dawn Anderson came into church dressed as homeless person. Without hesitation, Danny got up and sat alongside of her. There was hardly need for a sermon that day!

Danny loves to sing and enjoys playing his harmonica. You can see his enthusiasm whenever the Alpha class sings for us in church! Pastor Luke says (Continued on page 5)

Updates from the Leadership Team

A few things you should be aware of:
— Our Annual Meeting took place on February 3. There were no business items. Copies of our 2018 Annual Report are available from the church office.
— The Leadership Team Officers for 2019 are Sally Thompson (Chair), Kathy Skandel (Vice-chair), Sandy Petzold (Secretary), and Lynn Johnson (Financial Officer). Pastor Luke also sits on the Leadership Team. Delores Staurseth will continue to serve as Financial Secretary.
— Thank you to Ulla Gustafsson-Carlson for serving on the Leadership Team for the past two years! Also we give thanks for Nels Hursh’s two years of service.
— Pastor Luke is planning an opportunity to explore what our church and denomination are all about and to invite participants to formally join our church as members. If you are interested in membership or just learning about our church, please contact Pastor Luke. This will take place in March.

Minutes from the Leadership Team meetings and congregational meetings are always available from the church office or are posted in the Fellowship Hall. You can also feel free to ask any Leadership Team member what’s going on!
Cook’s Corner

Blueberry Pie Bars

Mix together:
– 1 cup butter
– 2 1/2 cup flour
– 1/2 cup sugar
– 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
Press 3/4 of the mixture into an ungreased 9x13 pan.

Now mix together:
– 3 cups blueberries
– 3 tablespoons cornstarch
– 1 cup sugar
– dash of salt
Sprinkle the berry mixture over the crust.

Combine the remaining crust mixture with 1 tablespoon of water.
Roll out and cut into strips. Lay the strips diagonally over the berry mixture.

Bake at 350° for about 45 minutes.

Thanks to Sandy Petzold for sharing this recipe!

Greeter Schedule

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Don Johnson &amp; Carol Edwards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Steve Asher &amp; Ulla Gustafsson-Carlson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tom Levin &amp; Peggy Nelson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bill &amp; Bonnie Peterson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Judy Fairbanks &amp; Gloria McDonald</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dave Elmgren &amp; Virginia Elmgren</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Catherine Eliason &amp; Kathy Skandel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Marsha Adams, Sandy Petzold &amp; Chloe</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Marge Smith &amp; Sally Thompson</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Don Johnson &amp; Carol Edwards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Steve Asher &amp; Ulla Gustafsson-Carlson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Tom Levin &amp; Peggy Nelson</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Bill &amp; Bonnie Peterson</td>
</tr>
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If you are unable to make it for your assigned date, would prefer to not participate, or would like to be added to the rotation, please contact the church office or find your own substitute!

Birthdays and Anniversaries!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
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<th>Names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mason Parker</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Don Johnson</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lynn Johnson</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Dan Deck</td>
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<td>Bill Greely</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Carolyn Oliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Marsha Adams</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Are we missing your birthday or anniversary? Let us know! We’ll add you to our list!
(Continued from page 3) of Danny: “He is such a passionate person! He throws himself into everything he does and lives with such excitement for big and small things.”

For relaxation Danny enjoys watching cooking shows while rolling yard balls. He also loves classical music and can't live without his radio. His love for animals takes him on visits to the shelter and he will participate in just about any activity that is put in front of him: parades, walks, dragon boats, and more!

Which brings us back to Clifford! One of Danny's favorite activities is acting. He is part of BOLD Choice Theater Company and will be performing in their latest play Bloom next month right here at first Covenant! Danny plays Clifford, a World War II veteran. He has previously appeared in the BOLD Choice productions of Earthlings from Outer Space and Whodunnit? (which also played at First Covenant!). BOLD (Battling Obstacles Living with Disabilities) Choice was created by CHOICE, Unlimited, a non-profit agency dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities. Be sure to come out and see Danny and his fellow artists when they come to First Covenant: March 12, 6pm! This is a free show and a great community event, so be sure to invite your friends and neighbors!

Thanks to Carol Edwards for interviewing Danny!

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Camp Fundraising

First Covenant has a long history of supporting our Bible camp, Covenant Park. In years past, we have committed to sending any kid who is a part of our fellowship to camp. Since we do not currently have any kids eligible and able to go to camp from our church, this year we have decided to try and raise funds to donate to Covenant Park for scholarships for other kids. The Leadership Team has set a fundraising goal for our church of $500. This would basically cover the cost of two campers. Additionally, we will contribute a portion of our rummage sale proceeds camp.

Church Kitchen “Shower”!

On March 31, let’s join together after worship for a kitchen “shower” to help stock our church with supplies for the coming year! We'll share in a potluck meal together and perhaps even have a game or two and some prizes!

A list of needed supplies will be available in the church foyer and in bulletins in early March.

Spring Rummage Sale

Our spring rummage sale is set for Saturday, May 4! Proceeds from the sale will go toward Covenant Park Bible Camp and Harbor House Crisis Shelter. You can start bringing your donations to the church and putting them in the garage!
**What is a Covenant Church?**

With all the different Christian denominations out there, what makes the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) different? And does it matter? Are we just splitting hairs? While we certainly prefer to emphasize what binds us together with other followers of Jesus over what divides us, the ECC holds a unique place.

Founded by Swedish immigrants who recognized that we do God’s Mission better when we do it together (the first Covenanters were called “Mission Friends”), the Covenant is a “big tent” kind of fellowship where we declare “I am a companion of all who fear thee” (Psalm 119:63). The Mission Friends deliberately chose to form a “non-creedal” denomination where anyone who sincerely desires to follow Jesus can find a home. To this day, we have only one single doctrinal statement that defines us: *We believe the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct*. Everything else flows out of this and there is room underneath this for a wide swath of practice and belief.

To help give some greater guidance and shape to our life together, we have since adopted the six Covenant “affirmations”:

- We affirm the centrality of the word of God.
- We affirm the necessity of new birth.
- We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of God.
- We affirm the Church as the fellowship of believers.
- We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm the reality of freedom in Christ.

May we cling to these affirmations, holding loosely to all else, as we pursue God’s purposes in our community and in our world.

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In fulfillment of the Great Commandments and the Great Commission...

First Covenant Church exists to love God and neighbor and to make disciples for Jesus Christ in our community and around the world.

We fulfill this calling through...

**Worship**: …gathering as a community to proclaim and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for God’s Mission.

**Discipleship**: …nurturing growth in the Way of Jesus among women and men of all ages.

**Hospitality**: …welcoming all people—no matter their appearance, circumstances, or spiritual condition—into our community.

**Mission**: …carrying the Gospel into our community by building relationships with our neighbors and engaging in acts of compassion, mercy, and justice.

Our vision is to be an inter-generational community of Jesus’ followers, actively engaging in worship together, seeing spiritual growth in all of our congregation, welcoming and loving all who enter our doors without condition, and purposefully building God’s Kingdom in our community through word and deed.