

Youth Pastor Search Committee Final Update

This will be the final update from the Youth Pastor Search Committee. We are so grateful and thankful for this congregation; we want to recognize everyone who prayed, not only for our future pastor, but also for us as your search committee. All of us have felt so prayed-for throughout this entire process. Thank you. We also want to reminisce and praise God for all the ways we saw Him work during this time. We were so thankful at how fast this process from start to finish was, especially considering that it was on all of our minds how long the last pastoral search ended up taking. We were amazed at how many qualified applicants we had for being a small, rural town in northern Minnesota.

We also saw His power at work in us, as the search committee, as He united us in prayer during this time and how we came to a unanimous decision for Marco. God's power was exemplified again during the congregational vote when Marco was overwhelmingly accepted there as well. Most of all, God was working in Marco's and his wife, Rachel's hearts. It is truly amazing to hear their story of how they came to apply to the position through fasting, prayer, and seeking the Lord's will in their lives.

God's hand is definitely upon this church, and we can expect Him to have big plans for us and the youth of this community going forward. We are honored to have served this congregation. We would ask that you continue to pray for Marco and Rachel as they readjust to their lives and careers here in the Falls and that God would show you how to best support our new pastor and his family. God is truly great and worthy of praise!



What is Your S.H.A.P.E.?

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God. Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking actual words of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4.10-11 NASB)

God is consistent in His plan for each of our lives. He would not give us inborn talents and temperaments, spiritual gifts, and all sorts of life experiences and then not want to use them! Getting plugged into a ministry area of our church is a perfect way to do just that.

I would like to take a moment to highlight and thank a few individuals who have started serving in new roles in just the past few weeks. Mikaela Hultstrand began leading a Teen Girls Bible Study. Mike Silvers is now preparing our Communion. Ian Hall has stepped into the Sound Booth. Wayne Schrock has started ushering. Each is a perfect example of being uniquely fitted for their ministry.

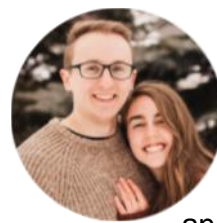
It is so exciting to see our church grow and new faces mix in with those that are so well known. As we began restarting ministries, we are going to need both familiar and new faces to serve in many places.

If God has been speaking to you about plugging back into our church ministries or plugging in for the first time, please contact me. stacy.hall@ifallscovenant.org or 218.324.2709 I would love to help you find a ministry role that fits your S.H.A.P.E.



When are we going to go back to worship in the sanctuary?

Minnesota Health Guidelines have recently removed the restrictions on the number of people that can attend a worship service. We are still required to mask and practice social distancing, however, so we will still be in the Family Life Center to be able to do that and fit the most people. In the summer when the weather is good we may have parking lot services if we know that there are people who would come to an outdoor service but not an indoor one. When the guidelines no longer require social distancing we will go back to worshiping in the sanctuary again. Some of the other Sunday morning ministries such as Kids and Adult Sunday School and the coffee bar will be opening up as the guidelines permit and there are volunteers who are ready to serve in those areas.



Incredibly Excited!!

ECC Family, I am incredibly excited to be back in International Falls! Both my wife Rachel and I grew up here attending ECC and many of you have been used by our gracious God to significantly impact our lives. We look forward to the continued blessings of being a part of this body of Christ and to start blessing all of you as well.

Since graduating from Falls High School I have been pretty busy. I attended Moody Bible Institute in downtown Chicago and graduated with a Masters in Pastoral Studies. During this time, I had a wide range of jobs. I was a valet, a server for a high-end catering company, and also attended and volunteered at a church in West Garfield Park. During work, I would serve very wealthy individuals who had all the money in the world, yet I often noticed a lack of peace and joy. At church I saw people who didn't have much money at all, but were incredibly generous with what they did have, while maintaining a tremendous amount of peace and joy! Seeing this joy from the Lord despite hardships in life was very formative for me.

I've been around the States at a few different internships/jobs as well. I interned in Manhattan at a very liturgical Episcopal Church, in Orange County California at a very charismatic church, here at the Covenant Church, and most recently worked for nearly three years at FaithPoint Lutheran Church in New Prague, MN. From these experiences I saw different churches worship God in different ways, yet all praising Him and in submission to His Word.

That is what I have come to understand the most from my internships and jobs; how utterly essential it is to seek after God and meditate on His Word. Some may be rich, some poor, some charismatic, and some more formal/liturgical, but all are in desperate need of a Savior. He gives us the peace and the joy, but He alone gets the glory!

Again, Rachel and I are very excited about the future ministries here in International Falls and embracing the loving community that we grew up with!

Grace be with you,
Marco



- April 1 -- Carol Anderson -- Jeff Zahn
- April 8 -- Sonja Arch -- Betty Peterson
- April 9 -- Rosa Christianson
- April 10 -- Brock Averill -- Kim Schmidtbauer -- Steve Schrock
- April 11 -- Pam Rooney -- Dale & Mary Boyum
- April 16 -- Andy & Laurie Hedlund
- April 18 -- Nan Sether
- April 24 -- Chase Bernard -- McKenna Holt -- Michael Schrock -- Jon & Cathy Blankman
- April 25 -- Tom Vollom
- April 28 -- Christian Hufnagle
- April 29 -- Avery Dowty -- Tanner Gustafson

Good Friday Prayer Stations



Hello church!

Happy Holy Week! With Good Friday being right around the corner, it is important that we take the time to reflect on its importance and meaning. Good Friday gives us the opportunity to not rush into hope, but sit with what weighs heavy on our heart. This year, we will be offering Good Friday prayer stations in the Family Life Center on Friday, April 2 from 2-4pm and 6-8pm. We pray that this is a time to reflect on the cross, repent, and remind ourselves that Christ put himself in the place that we deserved to be so that we could spend eternity with Him.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2.24

These prayer stations are an interactive way to invite the Spirit into prayer. These stations seek to engage all of our senses as a way to encounter God in new and creative ways, all while reflecting on the different events of Good Friday - from Pilate washing his hands to the crucifixion. We hope that you are able to join us in this experience.



New Testament		Old Testament	
▶ MARK	▶ 1 COR.	▶ PSALMS	▶ JOSHUA
1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-8	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 72	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:9-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:18-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 73	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:21-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 74	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-7
4. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:35-45	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 75	<input type="checkbox"/> 8-9
5. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 76	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-12
6. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:13-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 77	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-14
7. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:18-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 78:1-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-17
8. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:12-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 78:40-72	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-19
9. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:20-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 7:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 79	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-21
10. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 7:17-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 80	<input type="checkbox"/> 22-23
11. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:21-41	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 81	<input type="checkbox"/> 24
		▶ JUDGES	
12. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 9:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 82	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3
13. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:21-43	<input type="checkbox"/> 9:13-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 83	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5
14. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 10:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 84	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-7
15. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:14-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 10:14-33	<input type="checkbox"/> 85	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
16. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:30-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 11:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 86	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
17. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:45-56	<input type="checkbox"/> 11:17-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 87	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-12
18. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 12:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 88	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-15
19. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:24-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 12:14-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 89:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
20. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 89:19-52	<input type="checkbox"/> 17-18
21. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:14-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 14:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 90	<input type="checkbox"/> 19
22. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:22-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 14:26-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 91	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-21
		▶ RUTH	
23. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:31-38	<input type="checkbox"/> 15:1-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 92	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
24. <input type="checkbox"/> 9:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 15:29-58	<input type="checkbox"/> 93	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-3
25. <input type="checkbox"/> 9:14-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 94	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

The Family Messenger

April 2021

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A Cup of Coffee with Pastor Seth . . .

I have a confession to make. Even though the title for my monthly article is “A Cup of Coffee with Pastor Seth,” I went all of last month without coffee. It’s something that I do every couple years to prove to myself that I don’t need it. While I wasn’t drinking coffee I tried to find other ways to somehow enjoy it. I listened to a radio program on how to make the best cup of coffee, I asked people if I could smell their coffee, and I even missed the routine of making coffee so much that I asked people if they would let me make their coffee for them. Those things are nice, but nothing compares to actually drinking coffee!

There are people, even people who call themselves Christians who know about Jesus, go to church, and even do good things but don’t know Jesus! That was the story of the Apostle Paul, but when he met Jesus he was able to say:

*“Nothing compares to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus!”
Philippians 3.8*

On Easter Sunday I am so excited to get to share about how you can know Jesus! We are going to have two services in the Family Life Center, 9 and 10:30am (live stream at 10:30), with Nursery and a Mother’s Room available. This will be a great opportunity for those with young kids, those who have been waiting until they have received their vaccine, and those who are having family come for Easter to worship with us in person. As you read this newsletter article make sure to note the Good Friday Prayer Stations, April 2 at 2-4pm and 6-8pm. We have many reasons to be excited, but nothing compares to knowing Jesus!

Mercy, peace & love be yours in abundance.
Pastor Seth

In This Edition...

- Cup of Coffee with Pastor Seth
- Getting to know Pastor Marco
- Leadership Team
- People to Celebrate
- Celebrate Recovery
- Grief Share
- Worship Update
- S.H.A.P.E.
- Missions Update
- Guidelines
- Bylaw Meetings

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Missions Corner

It was good to see a few of the missionaries that we support on the video clips they sent. Here are some of their prayer requests:

Craig Wickstrom, going to Congo - Praise that he has raised enough support to begin service. Pray for all the logistics of traveling to Congo, hopefully in June or July. Also pray for the reconciliation of the 2 Covenant groups in Congo, and pray for the refugees that are pouring in on the northern border and the groups of people caring for them.

Johnna & Fabio Muniz-Covenant missionaries in Lyon, France - Praise for a good, brief trip to the US for Johnna to visit family. Pray for Christian friends for their daughters in school, pray that the many relationships they've established will bring people to Christ, and that they can communicate clearly the Gospel in each situation that is opened to them.

Cathy Campobello-Covenant missionary in Columbia - Praise that the churches have reopened and ministries are starting again. Pray for the people who are "dropped in her lap", that she would have wisdom in how to minister to them, and be able to prioritize what needs to be done next. Pray for the country as they have received 1,000,000 refugees from Venezuela.

Anna and Peter Kim-Covenant missionaries in Taiwan - Praise that God answered numerous prayers about their move from China to Taiwan, specifically that the borders opened the end of July, that they didn't need expensive COVID tests before coming, that they had a direct flight, so they didn't need to transfer 6 large bags, and there was a home to rent when they arrived. Pray for greater understanding as they learn the Taiwanese culture, and to have wisdom to encourage the pastors they work with.

Reuben and Susan Mains-school administrator in Grenada - Praise that their church and school are open, and that people are meeting in person again. Praise that he could teach across Grenada via zoom for the Bible Institute classes. Pray that all the building projects are finished, pray that school activities will be back to normal as the year goes on, and that they can come to the US to visit relatives.

Peter and Karen Groot-Covenant missionaries in Thailand - Praise that the school has opened up, and businesses are slowly opening. Praise for how God has worked through hardships to bring good things. Pray for the business

part of their ministry, for people to start buying their products again, so their workers have an income. Pray for effective ways to move into long term sustainability. Pray for their plans after their term is finished in two years.

2021 Missions Conference Wrap-Up

The 2021 Missions Conference is in our rear view mirror with many challenges to put into practice.

- **Friday, March 5**, we joined the Voice of the Martyrs virtual event and heard messages from Petr Jasek, Andrew Brunson, & Dan Baumann who have been imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. All had different stories, but the same challenge to us: Be prepared to stand for Jesus!
- **Saturday, March 6**, we had a Zoom dinner with Galen Johnson. Each family prepared a meal, most of them trying the African Tigetege Sauce. Galen talked about the different customs and practices for meals in Congo.
- **Sunday, March 7**, Galen challenged us to keep moving towards Jesus, train the children to reach others, and for all people to know about His salvation, here and across the world.
- **Wednesday, March 10**, Pastor Seth and Mike Wulff hosted a Zoom meeting talking about how to decide which missionaries to personally support. There was discussion among the participants on what criteria to use to help decide.
- **Saturday, March 13**, was an amazing time of praying with our missionaries across the world. We joined Johnna Muniz, Tim & Mary Sue Austin, Craig Wickstrom, Cathy Campobello, Lorraine Green, George Schultz, Megan Herrly, and Matt & Heidi Keller. The missionaries shared their requests and people from church prayed for each one.
- **Sunday, March 14**, Matt & Heidi Keller joined the worship service. Matt challenged us to do "whatever it takes" to get the gospel out. Are we willing to give up everything so people hear about Jesus? We are to Pray and Go!

As we look forward in 2021, we are praying that you will seriously pray about your Faith Promise to support our missionaries this year. If you haven't, please let the office know your amount, so we can plan the budget. The goal is \$73,000; as of this printing we have \$48,848 promised.

Also looking ahead, we are planning a short term missions trip for 2022. If you have suggestions about this, let Lynn Peterson know.



A Fantastic Thing is Taking Root

These are interesting and encouraging days as our congregational leadership structure transitions to the Team/Leadership model of governance that was approved by our congregation some years ago and is finally taking root. One leader who was part of that original constitutional committee is expressing excitement that "after six or seven years of waiting we are finally making the transition."

About twenty five years ago I was pastoring a church where our chairman astutely observed that "half our council is sleeping at any given time. When we talk finances, property, and policies the ministry people fall asleep, and when we talk about ministry the finance, property, and policy people fall asleep." Both halves were being true to how the Holy Spirit had gifted them, both were vital to the church, but they were visibly interested in different things.

We began looking for a solution and were delighted to learn that the Team/Leadership model had just been approved by our denomination to solve this problem. This model separates the ministry people and the administrative people into two groups that overlap in the middle, which is precisely what we are implementing at I Falls Covenant. The two groups are the Leadership Team and the Ministry Leader Team, and they overlap their meetings for sharing and prayer.

The Leadership Team, led by the church chair, is learning to let go of some of the ministry burden they have carried through the years, except as a support team to help our ministry leaders succeed. They are thereby freed to give greater focus to administrative concerns. When the ministry leaders need financial support, technical support, property-building support, or any other form of administrative help, the Leadership Team is there.

The Ministry Leaders are carefully putting together the teams they will lead in seven vital areas, but are also discovering that as they gather together every month, led by Pastor Seth, they can offer support to each other's areas and even work together on some larger ministry goals. No ministry area stands completely on its own.

When I began working with the Team/Leadership model, after years of working with Church Boards and Church Councils, I could hardly believe the transition. This form of governance elevated ministry to a heightened level, and allowed teams to form around people's passion and gifting. We immedi-

ately began to see the effect as we moved into areas of ministry like never before. And the Leadership Team loved it too, as more defined meetings gave time for shared prayer, and allowed these administrative types to do what they really loved doing.

The Team/Leadership model is a time-tested and incredibly effective model of governance. With God's help and teams of great people, we are very excited for what is unfolding.

Alan Johnson, Church Chair



I Falls Covenant Proposed Bylaw Changes Schedule

On March 23 & 27 there were informational meetings held to begin the process of making changes to the church constitutional bylaws. There will be another set of meetings on Tuesday, April 27 from 6:30-8pm and again on Saturday, May 1 from 9-10:30am. Please come and join the discussion with others. The proposed changes include the qualifications for serving on the Leadership Team and the use of technology such as Zoom, conference calling, etc in the congregational voting process. Then on Sunday, May 16 at 11:45am, following the worship service, we will once again meet to vote on the proposed changes.

