



*Covenant Presbyterian Church*  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2025



— Learning God's Love, —  
Living God's Love

**Mission Statement:**

**Claimed and humbled by God's grace, we are disciples journeying in covenant with God and one another. Our disciple-forming community is called to worship and pray together; to cultivate deep and nurturing reciprocal relationships; to minister faithfully in our daily lives; and to warmly welcome all into our fellowship as we seek a Christ-centered life. We cannot journey alone; we need one another. Together, with hearts, minds, and arms wide open, we reach out to others in love.**

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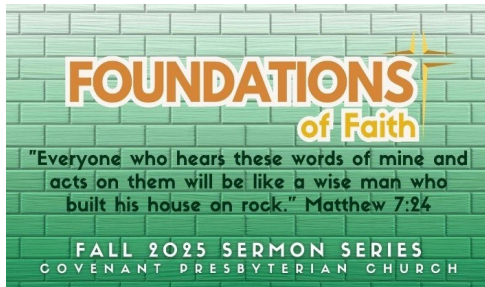
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# Pastor/Head of Staff

*Pastor Charlie Berthoud*

If I had to summarize 2025 in three words, I would go with FOUNDATIONS, CONNECTIONS, and GRATITUDE.

**FOUNDATIONS** Every time we gather for worship or Sunday school or small group study or devotional reading, we are strengthening our foundations of faith. We very intentionally did that this fall with our sermon series based on the theological statements of our church in *The Book of Confessions*.



At the same time, we made plans to strengthen our physical foundation in the parking lot with a parking lot engineering design study and launching a capital campaign for the project, with an estimated cost of \$775,000.

Previous generations laid a good foundation for us, and this is our chance to do the same for future generations.

**CONNECTIONS** Our weekly email is called CONNECTIONS. Several times a month we have CONNECT events with the recognition that many people feel disconnected from each other and from God. I'm grateful for our monthly first Wednesday pot-lucks and fourth Sunday spiritual strolls.

I was glad to travel to Guatemala in February to strengthen our connections there, and I was glad to officiate at three Covenant weddings this fall, to help couples connect to each other and to God.



I'm glad to serve a church that appreciates non-traditional sermon themes, such as our Gospel on Broadway series this past summer, which helped us make connections between popular culture and our faith.

**GRATITUDE** I give thanks to God on a regular basis for Covenant Presbyterian Church and for the privilege of serving here.







We have a tremendous staff, with a wide variety of gifts and lots of passion to serve God. They make my work and life better. Thank you.

We have tremendous volunteers, who help us learn and live God's love in a wide variety of ways. This year, I'm particularly grateful for the Building and Grounds team, for all their work around the building, especially with the new lighting and the parking lot project.

I'm grateful for our partnership with Glenn Stephens Elementary School, which will reach 10 years in early 2026. With monthly fruit, school supplies, pen pals, and more it's a great ministry.

I'm grateful for the generosity of the congregation and for the diligent spending of leadership, which has allowed us to overcome a projected \$62,000 deficit on our annual budget of almost \$1.2 million.

I'm grateful for a congregation that isn't afraid to wrestle with complex issues of racism, poverty, and political chaos, as we seek faithful, Christ-like ways of responding, seeking first God's kingdom.

One more word for the year is **PRAYER**. I'm glad to be in a church that welcomed our Easter season prayers for wisdom and courage, and that prays for and cares for each other so well.

After almost 13 (lucky!) years, I remain tremendously grateful for the privilege to be Pastor/ Head of Staff, and to be part of such a caring, vibrant, and faithful community. I pray that God guide us and lead us in 2026 to keep learning about God's love, so that we can live that love every day.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlie Berthoud



# Pastor for Children, Youth & Families

*Pastor Megan Berry*

2025 was such a wonderful year of ministry with you all! Our children's and youth programs are vibrant and full of excitement and great learning opportunities. We continue to try new things while holding onto beloved traditions and ultimately to Learn God's Love and Live God's Love together!

Here are some of our highlights from the year!

## **Children & Family Ministries**

Our Children's Choir put on another excellent musical, *Here for the Gold*, on May 18 under the amazing direction of our children's choir director, Arlene Kennedy. They worked hard on this musical all spring and learned a lot about the parables of Jesus along the way!

This year, we hosted Vacation Bible Camp (VBC) at Covenant and had a fantastic time! Alongside Bethany United Methodist, we learned about how to be good friends to each other, to care for our neighbors, and to help the community around us.

In October, we ventured out to Treinen Farms for s'mores, a corn maze, and more fun! This was a great time of fellowship and laughter with families of all ages and a great way to gear up for fall together.



## **Sunday School**

For Heifer Sunday in February, the kids did an excellent job engaging with those of all ages for some fun games and music opportunities to help raise money for Heifer International. Some classrooms made signs about their particular animal and how Heifer uses that animal to help with food insecurity, and others had prepped interesting games for people to play and donate money to Heifer with. We raised \$4,261.41 this past year!

We kicked off our latest program year on September 7 with a presentation of 1st and 4th grade Bibles in worship and our first Sunday school class of the year at 10am! We have 4 classrooms this year: PreK-Kindergarten, 1st-3rd grade, 4th-5th grade, and our middle schoolers (6th-8th grade). They have been learning how to use their Bibles (where the table of contents is, what the old testament is versus the new testament), and working on some fun nativity stained glass to take home!





## Youth Connections

Youth Connections continues to be a great time of fellowship and learning with our middle and high schoolers. We are continuing the (new) tradition of lock-ins in the spring and fall and finding a rhythm with our summer trips.

This summer, 2 of our high schoolers went to Presbyterian Youth Triennium. This is a high school retreat that happens every 3 years and was recently hosted in Louisville KY. We met up with other high schoolers from Winnebago & Milwaukee Presbytery to make the drive and have small group time with. This was a great time to meet other Presbyterians here in WI but also all around the country.

For the Fall, we have started 2 new monthly opportunities: Service Saturdays & Wacky Wednesdays. These are extra monthly opportunities for the youth to engage in a mission activity in Madison and fellowship time outside of what we do in weekly



Youth Connections. So far, we've helped out with the NAMI walk, helped prepare "Meal in a Bag" kits for our food pantry, held a movie night and a game night.



Our youth are building strong relationships with each other, but also with others within the church and greater Madison area as we engage in these mission and fellowship activities together. It's a huge blessing to be part of this work with them.

## Confirmation

In April, we confirmed 5 of our youth as new members of the church. It was a joyous day to welcome them and hear about their faith journeys in worship.

In September, we started another round of Confirmation class with five of our 9th graders. This year, we're trying something new by pairing each of them with a mentor, someone from the congregation who agrees to walk on this journey with them. It has been a joy to work with these 9th graders and their mentors so far. I cannot wait to see what they're talking about come April 2026!

2025 was a fantastic year of ministry together, I cannot wait to see what 2026 has in store for the amazing kids and youth of our church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Megan Berry

# Pastor for Mission, Spiritual Growth & Care

*Pastor Jess Scholten*

Dear friends in Christ –

I continue to be blessed to serve as your associate pastor for mission, spiritual growth, and care. Looking at photos from our recent Advent event with tall people on ladders and all ages working to decorate the church reminds me of how we're all needed to serve together as the body of Christ!



Mission highlights among many, many exciting things happening:

The **Mission Committee** continues to focus on food scarcity and hunger issues for this year and next year, a priority in these challenging days as we seek to be Jesus' hands and feet.

Our **Awaken Dane** group with the focus of building trust with our neighbors, becoming deep students of our neighborhoods, and moving into collaborative loving action, continues to meet and hopes to launch some congregation-wide learning about being better neighbors in 2026.

In February, we had a great trip to **Guatemala** where we heard from scholarship recipients and celebrated two vibrant church partnerships.

Spiritual Growth highlights:

**Small Groups:** many of our small groups have elected to meet continuously once a month in "off-seasons" for small groups, fostering deeper relationships and growth in faith. We hope for a few more to start up for our Epistle study post-Easter in April and May. Join in!

**Great Adult Ed:** our Adult Ed team is phenomenal – from congregation members teaching to community leaders, we have had some amazing speakers – don't miss out on this 10 am hour.



**Leadership Institute:** A group of us attended this annual conference to learn and grow about leadership in Christ's church in everything from media connections to small group ministries to administration and mission.



Care highlights:

**Connect Events:** our deacons are taking the call to congregational vitality seriously with deepening fellowship events creating great conversations over strolls, activities, and pot-lucks, while providing great ways for visitors and new members to connect as well. Thank you!

**Caring for Families and Young Adults:** Our under-40 crowd met a few times this year, and we have plans for 2026, and our families with young children met monthly for fellowship, support, and community.

**Congregational Care and Prayer:** Between deacon cards, pastoral visits, and prayer lists, we want you to know that you, a beloved child of God, are not alone.



On a personal note, I certified as a spiritual director this year and continue to weave spiritual practices into ministry here at Covenant (back of the prayer list, worship services, in conversations and small groups). Can't wait to see what 2026 brings as we continue to serve together!

Respectfully submitted,  
Jess Scholten



# Music Ministries

*Melissa Hinz*

*“When in our music God is glorified, and adoration leaves no room for pride, it is as though the whole creation cried: Alleluia!” (hymn text by Fred Pratt Green)*



Covenant continues to be blessed by the many contributions of Covenant members, staff and friends as we gather to sing, ring, and play music together. Music serves to bring us together in time and space to offer connection, to listen to each other, to find a sense of belonging, to inspire, to sense God’s presence, to celebrate, to challenge, to praise. Music draws us together as children of God and moves us to respond to the nudges of the Holy Spirit as we seek to love God and love our neighbor.

Our weekly worship services continue to follow the 9am piano-led worship and 11am organ-led worship schedule during the calendar year, with one 9:30am worship service during the summer months. Throughout the year, we had special services at other times on Ash Wednesday, Weekly Lenten Wednesdays, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Blue Christmas and Christmas Eve. Lenten Wednesday services were held in Bradfield Hall while the Blue Christmas service was held in the narthex.

We continue to livestream most of our services on YouTube and we are grateful for the skills of Jay Petrie, our livestream technician. Also noteworthy this year is the upgrade of our aging sanctuary lighting system which has improved the capabilities of lighting in the sanctuary.

We celebrated Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday before the beginning of Lent, with our annual Jazz Sunday as we welcomed a jazz trio to lead our worship music. The following week we welcomed Titular organist from Notre Dame in Paris, Olivier Latry, as he presented a concert featuring our Schoenstein organ. It was open to the public, and we had over 200 people in attendance. A special thank you to GMB, Doug McNeel and Anne Lawrence for their assistance in making that concert possible. Other Sundays with special music included Easter with brass, the Children’s musical in May, brass for Reformation Sunday, several Sundays with a High School Instrumental Ensemble, and a collaborative All Saints Day afternoon concert with Westminster Presbyterian Church and Covenant musicians participating.



Our 9:00am service continues to be led by Megan Angriawan on piano. Megan chooses music and leads the New Day Ensemble (NDE) as they share special music in worship most weeks. Vocalist Ben Lewandowski served from September 2024 – May 2025 as the 9am vocalist, singing with the





NDE, leading congregational singing and offering special music. He left Madison to pursue a doctoral degree, and Ben Johnson was hired in September 2025 as the new 9am vocalist. We are grateful for Megan and her desire to serve God with her gifts, and we thank New Day Ensemble and Ben for their continued leadership and musical offerings in worship.

Covenant's adult choir continues to share music in worship most Sundays each month and is accompanied by organist Doug McNeel. We are blessed by Doug's continued ministry at Covenant as he offers leadership and special music for

Sunday services as well as special services as available. Also sharing music monthly, usually at 11am worship, is Covenant's Handbell Choir. The handbell choir rehearses twice before sharing in worship and ringers can join for months when they are available. I direct both the choir and handbell choir, oversee music staff and work with pastors in worship planning throughout the year. The adult choir and handbell choir are dedicated and faithful in their commitment to these ministries and I am grateful!

Arlene Kennedy leads a children's singing time each week at the start of Sunday School. During this time, the children learn music to sing in worship or as part of a musical presentation. This spring, Arlene lead the children in presenting a musical with all ages and there was a musical presentation in December as part of the Advent/Christmas celebration. Arlene has also worked with some high school youth to provide an opportunity to play together in a small ensemble. We are grateful for Arlene's energy and spirit in working with our youngsters and bringing joy and music into their lives.

Music is a gift. Whether voices joined in song, an instrumental ensemble, an organ postlude or a hymn improvisation on the piano, music offers the opportunity to come together and sing, ring, play or listen in community. God speaks through this gift. May we open ourselves to the gift and the blessings it offers.



***“Let every instrument be tuned for praise! Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise! And may God give us faith to sing always: Alleluia!” (hymn text by Fred Pratt Green)***

Respectfully submitted,  
Melissa Hinz

# Board of Deacons

*Sherry Hershberger, Moderator*

The Board of Deacons met monthly throughout 2025 with the goal of connecting the congregation through initiatives and events that foster community. We focused our efforts on the following three areas:

## **Fellowship:**

Activities to strengthen bonds within our congregation were planned throughout the year. On a weekly basis, we hosted Bradfield Café, with our ever-popular donuts and coffee drawing people together for conversation and connection.



On a monthly basis, we planned Spiritual Strolls to various locations in and around Dane County. Some of those highlights in 2025 were strolls at Picnic Point, Cherokee Marsh, Cross Plains State Park, Festge Park, Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Owen Conservation Park, Holy Wisdom Monastery, Lakeshore Preserve, and our very own Hill Farms neighborhood.

As a new initiative this year, we also assisted with the First Wednesday Potlucks, which are a wonderful point of connection for all who attend.

We continued to offer many new and exciting ways for our congregation to gather via CONNECT events this year. Some of this year's activities were: a board game event, an MMSD Planetarium show, Pi Day, a Jigsaw Puzzle competition, Easter Brunch, All-Church Picnic, an MSCR Pontoon Boat outing, ice cream and music at the Memorial Union Terrace, a Capitol City Band concert, live music at Capital Brewery, American Players Theater outing, a UW Soccer game, Trek Factory tour, Chili Advent Event, and tour of the State Capitol. Whew!



We are excited to keep the fun going in 2026 so that all can feel more connected to their Covenant family.



## Welcoming:

With the goal of fostering a warm and welcoming environment at Covenant, we ensured that the Welcome Center and Front door were staffed each Sunday morning with friendly volunteers. We also provided support for Inquirer's classes held twice this year for visitors who wish to learn more about Covenant.

## Caregiving:

We connected with members at Senior Living Communities on a regular basis this year. Covenant staff and Deacons provided the programming, including singing, communion, treats, and conversation, to residents and guests. The time shared together was a great blessing to all! Our team also continued coordinating regular card-writing efforts throughout the year to those on the prayer list. We also sent holiday cards to the entire congregation at Easter and Christmas.

I am thankful to have served alongside the following dedicated individuals on the Board of Deacons in 2025: Ann Larget (Vice Moderator, Nominating Committee, & Welcoming Chair), Lynn Vande Sande & Cara Cavin (Fellowship Co-Chairs), Mary Kieta & Bob Cole (Caregiving Co-Chairs), Jane Bertram, Melissa Hardy, Cornelia Hемpe, Randy Holveck, Art Kanitz, and Chan Sommers. The Board was assisted throughout the year by support from Covenant staff, including Pastor Jess Scholten, Melissa Hinz, Bailey Green, and Ann Perry.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Hershberger



# Adult Education Committee *Nancy McCulley, Chair*

The Adult Education Committee supports the congregation by providing Christian-based faith formation opportunities that help everyone learn God's love and live it. Classes also emphasized and explored themes in our commitment toward a Matthew 25 Congregation.

Activities of the Adult Education Committee include Sunday morning classes, small group discussions, the church library, and help with periodic devotionals. Classes were held from January through May, and again from September through December. Committee meetings were held via Zoom, and an in-person transition meeting at the end of the year provided committee members the opportunity for fellowship as well as to become familiar with the updated sound and projection system in Bradfield Hall. The monthly Caravan newsletter and the weekly "Connections" email publicized classes and group activities.

## Sunday Morning Adult Education Classes

A wide variety of classes were offered throughout the year that included sessions led by members of staff and the congregation, as well as outside speakers. All offerings were selected to support the mission and vision of the church, keeping in mind our commitment to being a Matthew 25 congregation. The committee maintains a list of possible future topics, which includes suggestions from congregation members.

2025 began with two classes in support of the devotional series on the book of Luke, led by Melissa Hardy. Then a panel presentation about participation in Awaken Dane was held, and a presentation by Sarah Galanter-Guziewski, principal at Glenn Stephens Elementary School.

In February, Michael Whitley moderated a panel of Covenant couples who explored the intersection of faith and marriage. To acknowledge Heart Month, Joanne Pritchett, PhD, presented heart health tips for all ages.

March classes included Monica Wahlberg with The River Food Pantry, who discussed food insecurity in Dane County; a panel of Covenant members who shared their volunteer experiences that exemplify how they each "let it shine"; John Strikwerda's two sessions on "Thomas - The Fifth Gospel"; and finally Pastor Jess teaching "Soul Feast" to kick off the Lent theme of "The Bread of Life."

April included a presentation by Chris Roberts, a Holy Wisdom oblate, about contemplative prayer; a Palm Sunday class about our church paraments; and an update about plans to steward the land and water with a planned parking lot upgrade.

May began with a talk about partisan polarization in American given by Michael Wagner, UW School of Journalism and Mass Communication, through the "Badger Talks" program. An additional class about the variety of church missions was led by Pastor Jess, and seminarian Bailey Green.

Classes resumed in September with a focus on the sermon series about Presbyterian confes-



sions. Pastor Charlie kicked off the month by providing an overview, then John Strikwerda led a class on the Nicene Creed. Carrie Sanders followed with “Amid the Tumult—the Courage to Confess”—two classes about the Westminster Confession, Apostles’ Creed, Barmen Confession, and Confession of 1967.

Mission partner Eric Miller joined us in October for updates about what’s happening in the church in Kenya and East Africa. Mandy Gennermann, with the Community Immigration Law Center, gave an update on her work with immigration.

November classes included memorial planning, presented by staff; a discussion on creating a vibrant community in the midst of difficult news, presented by Michael Whitley; and Michelle Robinson from the Foundation for Black Women’s Wellness presented information about the Madison Forward Fund guaranteed income program. In addition, a book talk about “James”—the UW Madison’s Go Big Read selection--was held.

December classes included Covenant member Fred Ross providing an overview of “The Jesus Seminar”, and “Racial Justice for the Long Haul” by Christine Jeske.

### Covenant Library

Our church library contains over 1,000 books. Marty Slager, our church librarian, continued to curate and promote our collection. Monthly selections for adults and children were featured on a cart in the welcome area, and some books were offered gratis as new books were added to support study groups and sermon themes. Using specially designated funds, multiple copies of books were purchased to support small group and devotional discussions.

Thank you to our 2025 Adult Education Committee members: Nancy McCulley (Chair), Michael Whitley (Vice Chair), Marty Slager, John Strikwerda, Jenny Von Bergen, Monica Mark, Elder Tom Herschberger, and staff support from Melissa Hinz and Jess Scholten.

Thank you also to class presenters, members who participated and enlivened classes, and small group leaders. All helped keep Covenant's adult Christian education interesting, meaningful, and most importantly, useful in our members’ lives.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy McCulley, Chair



# Other Ongoing Small Groups

**Racists Anonymous Fellowship (RAF)—Contact: Jennifer Morgan, [jbmorgan@me.com](mailto:jbmorgan@me.com)**  
***Meets seasonally via Zoom on Thursdays at 7:00-8:00pm***

RAF is a fellowship of individuals seeking to achieve personal recovery from racist habits and the effects of racism. We all carry racial conditioning of which we are unaware. As in AA, everything that is said is kept in confidence- it does not leave the Zoom room. With our 12-step program and relevant book studies, we have been preparing our hearts and minds for the work of anti-racism and one of the Matthew 25 foci: dismantling structural racism.

**Fiber Friends—Contact: Alicia Mundy**

***Meets on the second Thursday of the month from 10:00-11:30am in the Lounge***

In past years the women in the group have knit and crocheted items for donation. Lately, many of them have created items to sell at the Guatemala fundraiser that is held in the fall at church. We also welcome those who are working on fiber art personal items or are needing help with their projects. It is a wonderful time to enjoy community among the women. Everyone is welcome to join.

**Mercy Mats Small Group—Contact: Laurie Jones**

***Meets on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 1:30-3:00pm***

A mercy mat is a hand-crocheted bed roll made from reused plastic shopping bags. Keeping with Covenant's Matthew 25 initiative, this group meets to sort, cut, and crochet strips of plastic into sleeping mats. Over 700 bags per mat are needed! You don't need to know how to crochet to participate. Knowledgeable people will be present at each meeting. If you can't come to the meetings, please participate by saving your clean shopping bags and put them in the receptacle in the coat room. Mats are donated to our mission partners Porchlight and Bethel Lutheran Church.

**Soul Sisters—Contact Barb Eikenberry ([barb.eikenberry@gmail.com](mailto:barb.eikenberry@gmail.com))**

***Meets in person at church on the second Sunday of the month at 12:00pm***

Soul Sisters is open to all Covenant women.

The purpose of gathering together is to grow in faith through Bible study, to have thought-provoking, inspiring, and educational discussions, to envelope each other with warmth and friendship, and to get to know other Covenant women better.

**Tuesday Talkers Small Group—Contact: Tom Bauer**

***Meets Tuesdays at 9:30am***

Join us at church for coffee and conversation.

**Wednesday Men's Group Bible Study—Contact: Jim Spilburg @ (608) 598-8951**

***Meets every other Wednesday at 8:30am***

Join us at church for coffee and conversation.

**Thursday Morning Men and a Woman Group—Contact: Eric Wendorff**

***Meets Thursdays at 7:30am-8:30am***

Join us for coffee and conversation on Zoom.

**Friday Women's Book Club—Contact: Kris Anderson**

***Meets on the first and third Fridays of the month at 10-11:30am***

Join us for book conversations and prayer, in-person and sometimes on Zoom.



# Nominating Committee *Jane Kolakowski, Elder and Chair*

Presented by the 2025 Nominating Committee to the October Congregational Meeting:

Three-year terms from January 2026 – December 2028:

## **Elders**

Brad Brown

Betsy Erickson

Tim Smeeding

Three-year terms from January 2026 – December 2028:

## **Deacons**

Shawn Conley

Raleigh Jones

Janice Walden

Pat Wilker

## **2025 Nominating Committee**

Jane Kolakowski, Elder and Chair

Jenn Sauer, Non-Session Elder

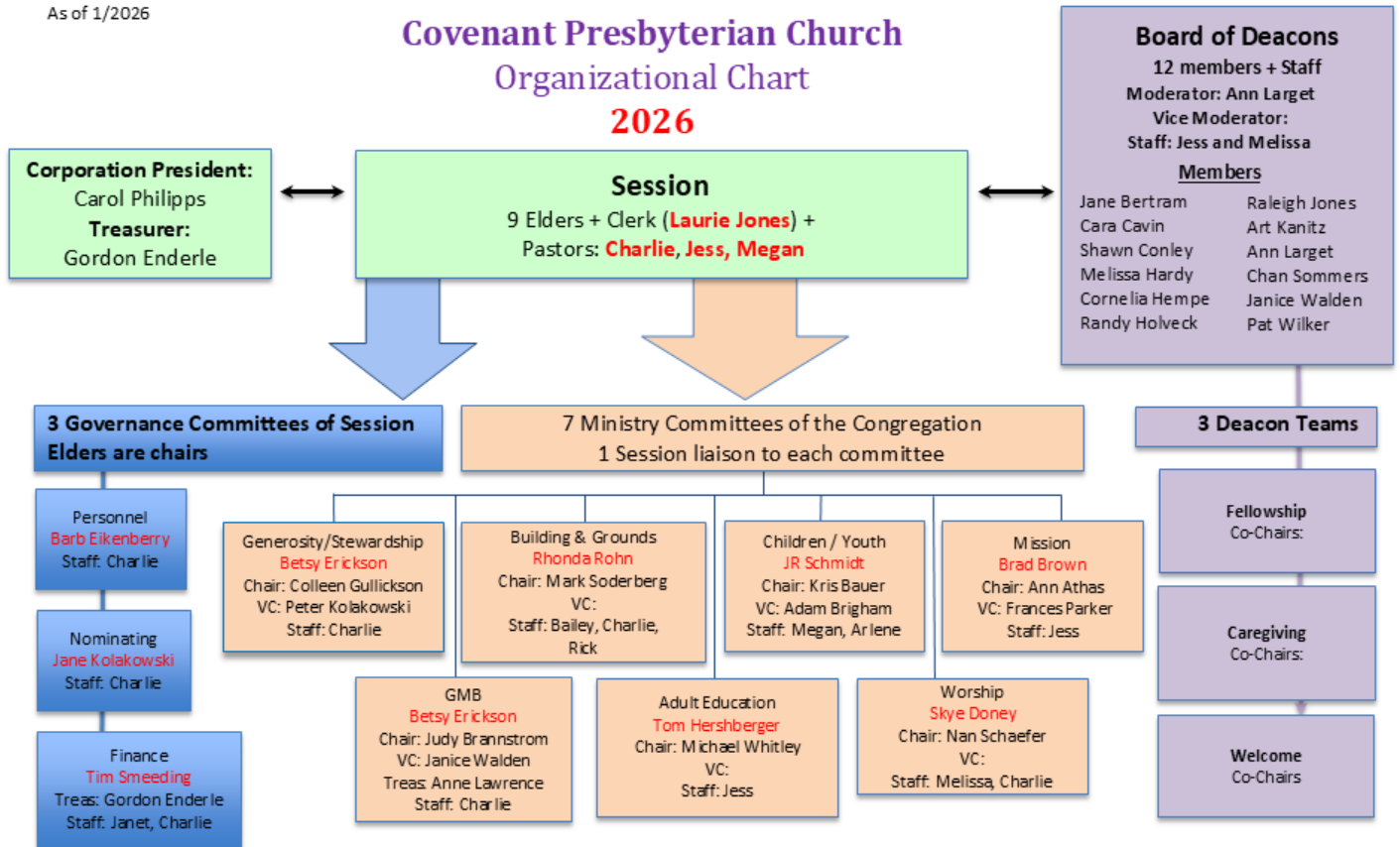
Ann Larget, Deacon Rep

Bob Cole, Member-at-Large

Polly Guequierre, Member-at-Large

James McGregor, Member-at-Large

## Covenant Presbyterian Church Organizational Chart 2026



- Session consists of 9 Ruling Elders (in red), the Clerk of Session (in red), and three pastors (in red)
- Elders **chair** the three Governance Committees (darker blue boxes).
- Elders are **liaisons** of the Ministry Committees (peach boxes).
- Ministry Committees are chaired by non-elders; vice-chairs will learn the system to become chairs in 2025.
- Deacons (purple box) have 12 members, plus pastoral care staff.



# Generosity Committee

*Peter Kolakowski, Chair*

The Generosity Committee, consisting of Colleen Gullickson (Vice Chair), Laurie Jones, Karen Best, Marilyn Krichko (Elder), and Pastor Charlie, began meeting in July in preparation for the 2026 Generosity Campaign. Initial meetings focused on reviewing Committee actions and setting the calendar for the year. In addition to the overall generosity campaign, duties for the Committee include outreach for church special offerings, testimonials to be included with quarterly statements, and the Fall giving campaign.

The Committee began working on the Fall giving campaign with the theme “Foundations for the Future” along with the bible verse: Jesus said, “Everyone, then, who hears these words and acts on them will be a wise man who built his house on a rock.” Matthew 7:24. The campaign materials included the brochure, revised serving survey, pledge card and letter from Pastor Charlie. Also, the distributed packet included the capital campaign materials provided by the Capital Campaign Team.

Prior to Oct 26 pledge Sunday, the Generosity Committee with Pastor Charlie’s coordination provided testimonials by others during Sunday services, graphics with QR codes, and announcements in the weekly church bulletin. Committee members wrote thank you notes to those who responded with pledge cards.

The campaign amounts as of December 31, 2025: **Total pledges: 186**  
**Total pledged: \$958,001.95**

Colleen Gullickson will serve as Committee Chair in 2026 and Peter Kolakowski will serve as Vice Chair. Also, Peter and Colleen will follow up on committee member recruitment for 2026.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Bailey Green for her creativity and digital talent and to Ann Perry for her organizational and administrative skills to get the materials produced and distributed. I would also like to sincerely thank all the committee members who generously gave their time and talents to make the generosity campaign a success for Covenant.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Kolakowski

# Mission Committee

*Bret Larget, Chair*

*“... I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.” — Matthew 25: 40.*

## **Food Insecurity**

Following our discernment process the previous year, the Mission Committee focused our energy on the theme of food insecurity through budgetary decisions about mission partners, proposed recipients of special offerings, congregational outreach and engagement, and seeking volunteer opportunities. Growing food insecurity locally and globally in 2025 reminded us of the scope of the problems and the continuing need. We will continue to build on our efforts in this theme in 2026. While Covenant mission giving is not on a scale to solve food insecurity in the world or locally, we act knowing we make a meaningful difference to those whom we support. In the spring we shared a garden and a food-themed display to highlight the many ways in which members of the congregation participate with their monetary gifts and volunteer hours to address food insecurity, including all those who contribute to our Little Food Pantry and who volunteer in local food pantries.

## **Mission Committee Giving and Partnerships**

The Mission Committee continued working with many local and global partners. Our activities at Glenn Stephens Elementary School included healthy snacks, school supplies, pen pals, and reading buddies. A mission team travelled to Guatemala where we also provided funds for school scholarships. Second Harvest and Extended Hands, two local groups doing excellent work to address food insecurity, were new mission partners in 2025 as was the PC(USA) Hunger fund.



## **Special Offerings**

The local portion of the Pentecost Offering was given to Rooted, a local organization dedicated to sustainable food systems through urban agriculture education. The Peace and Global Witness Offering was directed to the Starfish Campaign of the John Knox Presbytery, used to help cancel medical debt. The Christmas Eve Offering was given to support the Fritz Food Pantry program at the Goodman Community Center. Coordinated with Gifts Memorials and Bequests (GMB), we helped to direct \$5,500 to each of nine mission partners serving youth including several organizations outside our food insecurity theme, but with whom we had long-standing partnerships.



## Volunteer Engagement

The Mission Committee recognizes the many areas where the congregation engages in mission volunteer activities outside of organizing and we are thankful for the generous spirit of the congregation. The Mission Committee helped to recruit new individuals to engage in our mission partnerships at Glenn Stephens and to serve meals at Triangle Ministry and Pres House. We passed on leadership of the Guatemala Marketplace fundraiser to a new energetic team, which can sustain this important volunteer effort for the future.

## Matthew 25

The Mission Committee continues to be guided by the principles of being a Matthew 25 congregation, seeking congregational vitality through expanding the number of congregants who actively take part in mission activities with their time and gifts, maintaining strong partnerships with local organizations devoted to dismantling structural racism, such as Just Dane and congregational participation in the Black History for a New Day course, and working toward eradicating systemic poverty, especially with local partners addressing food insecurity.



## Looking Ahead

In 2026, the Mission Committee will explore becoming certified as a Hunger Action Congregation through PC(USA), will continue to seek additional engagement from the broad congregation in mission activities, will engage in discernment to identify partners for available mission funds collected at GMB and through the capital campaign, and will continue our tradition of combining fellowship, nature, and business with an August pot luck dinner and pontoon boat meeting. We will be led by Chair Ann Athas and Vice-Chair Frances Parker.

## Committee Leadership and Members

The activities of the Mission Committee were led by Chair Bret Larget, Vice-Chair Ann Athas, Elder Christine Barden, and Pastor Jess Scholten, but we are blessed with the thoughtful and engaging efforts of the full committee, including Deb Little Cohn, Deirdre Frees, Frances Parker, Friedemarie Farrar, Katie Barden, Maribeth Gettinger, Polly Guequierre, Robert Dent, and Sally Lorenz.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bret Larget



# Worship Committee

*Martha Dodds Stoner, Chair*

The purpose of the Worship Committee, according to Covenant's Plan of Organization, is to oversee, support, enrich and plan the worship life of Covenant Church and to advise the Session regarding worship. I think of the Worship Committee as supervising the part of the church that is usually around the sanctuary and gathering space... the elements of the service that include how it looks, how it sounds, what it means, who is there. Our hope is that each service reaches the heart and mind of the attendee, at home or online, and gives them something to think about, wonder about, read about, talk about.



Members of the Worship Committee in 2025 have been Martha Dodds Stoner, (Chair), Nan Schaefer (Vice-Chair), Fern Lawrence (Communion), Peggy Bugg (Adornment), John Strikwerda (Usher), and Skye Doney (Elder). Staff members Pastor Charlie Berthoud and Melissa Hinz are ex-officio members. The committee meets monthly on the first Tuesday of the month, with every other month meeting virtually.

Messages prepared by our three outstanding preachers, Charlie Berthoud, Megan Berry and Jess Scholten, have lifted our hearts and our minds to think and learn and grow. Epiph-

any started 2025 and January continued with a sermon series, "Good News for All", with sermons informed by study of the Gospel of Luke. The Sunday before Lent is Transfiguration Sunday and, at Covenant, the church welcomed a jazz trio on March 2 for morning worship.

On March 4 we hosted an organ concert by one of the organists from Notre Dame in Paris. The concert was appreciated by a large audience and concluded with an amazing improvisation on "When the Saints Go Marching In". Changing adornment quickly to Lent, Wednesday, March 5 was Ash Wednesday. The sermon series, "Bread of Life", was contemplated on Wednesday evenings following a light dinner and on Sundays in Worship. Different groups prepared the weekly dinner and attendees enjoyed an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas at the tables.



Confirmands were welcomed into the church on April 27, culminating a year of study and reflection.

The children, under the guidance of Arlene Kennedy (surely a saint in the making), presented a musical "Here for the Gold!" that started a series of services centered around the Parables of Jesus called "Stories that Shape Us".



The summer kicked off on June 8, Pentecost Sunday, with an improvisation on the Kite theme because our kite flyer, Craig Wilson, was not available. VBC Sunday was June 22 and then the “Gospel on Broadway” series went through early August. How interesting to hear what messages could be drawn from musicals like “The Outsiders” and “Hamilton”!

For the remainder of the summer, we were blessed with messages shared by our church members who are in seminary classes. We look forward to hearing more from them as they search and grow and learn about our faith and theirs.

During August we had a short, planned disruption in our sanctuary when the project to upgrade and improve the lighting in the sanctuary was accomplished. Services were held in Bradfield Hall for two Sundays. All the pews were removed so that the scaffolding could be used. It has made a significant difference in the ability to see and read both in the pews and in the choir loft and improved our online worship experience.

The Fall sermon series explored the various creeds developed by the Church with its impact on the “Foundations of Faith”. Westminster and Covenant Church choirs joined in presenting an All Saints concert on Sunday, November 2 in the afternoon.

The choirs, singing and ringing, under the excellent leadership of Melissa Hinz, have brought thoughtful and meaningful worship to our services along with Megan Angriawan and Doug McNeel as worship leaders from the keyboards. We are blessed to have members and friends who offer their talents and gifts to enrich our worship.



We anticipate another year of Learning God’s Love and Living God’s Love in the year 2026, sharing worship with our community and welcoming friends and family to connect in worship and fellowship with us.

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Dodds Stoner

# Personnel Committee

*Barb Eikenberry & Raleigh Jones, Co-Chairs*

The Personnel Committee at Covenant is made up of five church members who generally serve five-year terms. The committee is one of only three committees chaired by a current Ruling Elder. Barb Eikenberry began her second year as a Ruling Elder and again served as committee co-chair while she learned about the committee's history and procedures. Raleigh Jones was the committee's other co-chair again in 2025. Raleigh will finish his term at the end of this calendar year. Other committee members this year were Tom Popp, Fred Ross, and Chris Gomez Schmidt.

Covenant currently has 6 full-time staff and 13 part-time staff. The Personnel Committee strives to communicate with all staff regularly and work closely with our Pastor Head of Staff, Charlie Berthoud, and The Employer Group (TEG), a human resources consulting company that manages payroll and benefits for our non-pastoral staff. Our committee usually meets once a month with Pastor Charlie where we address routine and non-routine personnel matters. Maintaining confidentiality is a key part of committee work. We work to ensure that staff are treated fairly and paid commensurate with market conditions. Beyond the meetings, committee members are liaisons to one or more staff. Additionally, we are actively involved in long term planning and retention efforts. When we have a job opening, we first decide whether to fill the vacancy and /or reconfigure the job duties of the position. If we decide to fill the vacant position, we draft the job description, post it, review the applications, decide whom to interview, conduct the interviews, and make the decision whom to hire. We also ensure that staff are evaluated annually. Each fall, we make recommendations to the session regarding pay increases and fringe benefits. That involves balancing higher salaries with the reality of our church's projected budget. Staff cost is Covenant's largest expense.

Covenant has been fully staffed since 2024, meaning we had a complete staff in our pastoral, program, and administrative areas. There were some staff transitions in 2025. In January, Covenant member Ann Perry became the Administrative Assistant in the office, working four days a week helping Church Administrator Bailey Green. Our maintenance person, Covenant member James McGregor, resigned and was replaced in early August by Rick Bartz.

We are grateful for the ongoing support our staff provides for the church. They are our faithful servants and deserve our applause for their daily attention to the details that keep Covenant running smoothly.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barb Eikenberry and Raleigh Jones, Co-Chairs



# Gifts, Memorials & Bequests Committee (GMB)

*Judy Brannstrom, Chair*

*The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126:3*

The Gifts, Memorials & Bequests Committee (GMB) is charged by Session to encourage members and friends to consider financially supporting the mission and ministry of the church above and beyond operating fund pledges and to administer these special gifts according to the GMB Protocol. The generosity of Covenant members and friends was again overflowing in 2025.

**1. Memorial gifts** were received to commemorate the lives of Donald Barth, Jeri Erickson, Bill Lawrence, Joy Miller, Don Peterson, Don Schalch, Fritz Seybold, Jane Stark and Pat Thielbar.

**2. A bequest was received from Tom Kurtz in 2025.**

**3. Wish List and other requested items were funded by GMB in 2025 as follows:**

In consultation with family members associated with various memorial funds and bequests, and with guidance from GMB protocol, GMB channeled endowment proceeds and memorial gifts and bequests to the Covenant Endowment, the Guatemala Scholarship Fund, the Guatemala Transplant Fund for Jorge Ascension, the Building Reserve Maintenance Fund, Organ Maintenance Fund, Handbell Maintenance Fund, Sparks Adult Education Fund, Organ Concert Series Fund, Staff Appreciation Fund, and a Columbarium furniture project fund. In addition, gifts were sent to the youth program at Christ the Solid Rock Church, and to the Madison Learning Community for scholarships for students of color.

Funding was also approved for these purposes: Jazz Sunday guest musicians; attendance by Covenant leaders at the 2025 Leadership Institute in Kansas City; book allowance for pastors and books for adult ed classes; scholarships for Covenant members to attend Black History for a New Day classes; new music stands, handbell cart and handbell risers; shelving units for the Narthex storage room on the lower level; smart tv in the nursery for streaming church services; carpet for 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, tall “bar” tables for hospitality and display use, and kitchen equipment upgrades. GMB also provided funding for Covenant’s preliminary parking lot engineering and design study in 2025.

Covenant’s Seminars: Covenant has a unique opportunity to support four of its congregational members and one staff member who are attending seminary programs. GMB has deemed it a priority to provide scholarship funding to these students as they work toward degrees and/or certificates. Carrie Sanders, Melissa Schmidt, Marilyn Krichko and Brenda Moten were awarded scholarships in 2025 for their coursework at Dubuque Theological Seminary. Each of these scholars preaches at Covenant occasionally, and they also offer generous amounts of their time to preach at churches in our Presbytery that need pastoral coverage. Covenant staff member Bailey Green was also awarded some scholarship funding for her theological studies.

**4. The Don and Marion Peterson Ministry Fund** at the Presbyterian Foundation is designated for the benefit of children at local, national and international levels. Covenant is the beneficiary and steward of annual distributions from the Fund. In December, the year’s proceeds of \$44,440 were distributed equally (\$5,555 each) among these organizations that serve children and youth: Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, RISE, The Road Home Dane County, Briarpatch Youth Services Inc, Lussier Community Education Center, Lighthouse Christian

School, The Goodman Community Center, and Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. GMB was grateful for assistance from Covenant's Mission Committee to determine worthy recipients of the 2025 Peterson Fund proceeds. Imagine the combined impact of these gifts!

**5. Covenant's Medical Mission Endowment Fund** – Fund proceeds from 2025 were sent as follows: \$2000 to Village Partners International for medical mission work in Haiti, and \$2000 to the Medical Benevolence Foundation.

**6. Friends of Covenant's Future** members are those who have remembered Covenant in their wills/estate plans, those who funded the Medical Mission Endowment Fund, and those who have given major gifts to Covenant. As always, we greatly appreciate the vision and support of this special group of people.

**7. Many memorial gifts for Covenant** were receipted and acknowledged by GMB during 2025. When combined with the proceeds of Covenant's Endowment Fund, the Stark Family Fund, the Don and Mary Harkness Donor Advised Fund, and the Peterson Children's Ministry Fund, these gifts have broadened Covenant's impact on both ministry and mission. Thanks be to God for the generosity of our church family and friends and for the foresight of many planned givers.

**8. GMB policy for allocating unrestricted bequests:** An unrestricted bequest received in 2024 was the largest bequest ever received by Covenant. The formal GMB Protocol document guides the allocation of each unrestricted bequest, including a mandatory allocation of 50% of the total bequest to the Covenant Endowment Fund. The Covenant Endowment Fund is nearing \$1 Million at the close of 2025, and Session has asked GMB to review its formula for allocating unrestricted bequests. The review is underway, and GMB will report its recommendations to Session early in 2026.

The GMB Committee was honored to steward Covenant's memorial funds, bequests and endowment proceeds in 2025. These monies have been spread far and wide to do good works on behalf of our Covenant Family. As GMB Chair, I am grateful for the dedicated service of fellow committee members in 2025: Janice Walden (Vice-Chair & Secretary), Anne Lawrence (Treasurer), Marilyn Krichko (Elder), Deb Cohn (Mission Committee Rep), Margie Coons, Faith Windsor-Leonard and Steve Veazie. Thanks, too, to Pastor Charlie Berthoud (ex-officio member), Fern Lawrence (gift acknowledgement writer), Ann Perry and Bailey Green in the Covenant office, Covenant Treasurer Gordon Enderle, and Financial Coordinator Janet Cresson - they are trusted resources for the GMB Committee.

***God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good gift. II Corinthians 9:8***

Respectfully submitted,  
Judy Brannstrom



# Finance Committee *John Guequierre, Elder and Chair*

Covenant remains fiscally strong, with substantial resources that support its capacity to carry on God's work. In January 2025, Session approved a budget reflecting its faith and unique in its recent history, calling for \$1.2 million in spending which it anticipated would result in a \$62,000 deficit, which would be funded from reserves. That faith was warranted. While 2025 financial results will not be complete until mid-January, preliminary year-end results suggest that Covenant will end 2025 with a surplus before the impact of the sanctuary lighting project. While total giving and other revenue for 2025 seems likely to exceed budget, the main source of a surplus is cautious spending by staff and committees.

Early this year, the Finance Committee recommended that a proposed sanctuary lighting project be funded from reserves (in addition to funding the possible deficit). Final lighting project costs will be about \$87,000. Covenant's financial reserves at the end of 2025 are likely to be in the range of \$550,000 to \$600,000. Some years ago, Session set a goal for reserves of one year of operating expenses, which would mean a target of about \$1.2 million in reserves. Knowing that Finance, Session and the congregation would be considering a capital campaign to fund reconstruction of the parking lot, Finance concluded that strategies for rebuilding reserves would be part of those deliberations.

With an expert opinion on cost of the parking lot project of \$775,000, and a commitment of \$150,000 approved by GMB from its dedicated maintenance account, Session, with Finance Committee input, approved a three-year capital campaign of \$800,000 in September and presented it at the October 18 congregational meeting. Adhering to tradition, the capital campaign includes 10% (\$80,000) for mission purposes. To fund construction in 2026, Covenant applied for a loan from the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program (PILP). How much to borrow and the resulting amount of interest Covenant will pay depends in part on the amount of capital campaign pledges that will be paid early in the three-year campaign horizon.

Based on strong early pledging and payments for the capital campaign, Treasurer Gordon Enderle submitted an application for a \$475,000 loan on December 4. As of January 6, 2026, we know that the capital campaign goal has been met, and early payments will allow Covenant to minimize borrowing.

Wegner, Covenant's accounting firm, completed their review of 2021-23 statements this past May. Importantly, they provided a "clean" report, which will be very helpful for our PILP loan application for the parking lot project. To further resolve the limitations of our accounting software and its management of dedicated accounts, Wegner has recommended that we continue to do a three-year review, but assemble some of the records on an annual basis. Finance Committee, Treasurer Gordon Enderle and Finance Coordinator Janet Cresson are working on implementing the recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

2025 Finance Committee: John Guequierre (Elder and Chair), Dennis Joosse, Dick Lovell, Tim Smeeding, Jim Locher and Dan Leonard. Rev. Dr. Berthoud, Treasurer Gordon Enderle, and Finance Coordinator Janet Cresson serve as ex-officio members

# Building & Grounds Committee

*Mark Soderberg, Chair*

The building and grounds committee is made up of a small group of dedicated individuals devoted to maintaining the church. They do many things that you would expect and some that might surprise you.



Like everything in our economy, cost of maintenance service and parts has increased. Our maintenance costs have more than doubled in the last few years. These costs continue to rise even though members contribute over 500 hours of labor every year maintaining the church, saving us thousands of dollars.

Our church is seventy years young but needs regular care and nurturing to literally keep the lights on, the heat and AC flowing, and keeping the grounds in reasonably presentable order.

The committee is supported by a small contingent of members who freely give their time to assist in a variety of projects. The work crews show up with little notice or for planned events to perform holiday decoration and event setting and striking, pull weeds, trim trees, wrangle scaffolding, and clean gutters, to name a few of the many jobs they happily perform.

A smaller contingent of members repair toilets, water fountains, coat racks, doors, kitchen appliances, and ceiling tiles. In other areas we work to prevent future damage, e.g. installing bird decoys to prevent woodpecker damage, installing bird nesting abatement fixtures, and replanting trees.

Sometimes we need to call professionals to do work. Though, professionals need a local expert to guide or assist them in their work. We have assisted with replacing pumps, audio equipment, upgrading fluorescent light fixtures, and routing clogged drains.

We completed two major projects in 2025 including replacing and upgrading Sanctuary lighting dimming controls and fixtures and performing the engineering work necessary to rebuild the parking lot. All this work, while done



by outside professionals, is done with devoted individuals and committee member engagement. For all of this, we are truly blessed, and I offer my heartfelt appreciation for contributions from everyone.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark Soderberg







# Clerk of Session

*Laurie Jones*

The following summarizes the change in membership of  
Covenant Presbyterian Church 2025:

<b>Active members as of December 31, 2024</b>		<b>575</b>
Plus new members during 2025		
By letter of transfer:	2	
By reaffirmation/confession of faith:	22	
<b>Total new members in 2025:</b>	<b>24 →</b>	<b>+24</b>
Less membership losses in 2025		
By letter of transfer:	2	
By death:	15	
Other:	2	
<b>Total loss of members in 2025:</b>	<b>19 →</b>	<b>-19</b>
<b>Total membership as of December 31, 2025</b>		<b>580</b>

## Other Statistics

Sacrament of Holy Communion served to entire congregation:	25
Sacrament of Holy Communion served to individuals/small groups:	13
Weddings:	4
Memorial services and funerals:	11
Baptisms:	2

## 2025 Session Members:

### Class of 2025

Christine Barden  
John Guequierre  
Marilyn Krichko

### Class of 2026

Barb Eikenberry  
Skye Doney  
Jane Kolakowski

### Class of 2027

Tom Hershberger  
Rhonda Rohn  
JR Schmidt

Laurie Jones, Clerk of Session  
Pastor Charlie Berthoud, Moderator





COVENANT  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

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