

November 2011
Volume 18, Issue 11

THE COVENANT

Smiling For Jesus

It's easy to be grumpy. Bad news makes news. As it gets darker and colder in these months of fall and winter, depression sometimes kicks in. And yet...we are the people of God. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). When Jesus began his ministry, He quoted Isaiah 61, stating, "the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...to provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." God has given us reason to celebrate: in His Son's life, death, and resurrection, we know we can be forgiven and set free to live anew in His love!

When I think of "smiling for Jesus," I think of Sasha Tsutserov. He is the director of Moscow Evangelical Christian seminary. Take a moment and read his testimony:

My parents were members of the Communist Party. They never spoke of God or the Bible. However, when I was five years old, my grandmother insisted that I be baptized in the Orthodox Church. This was all done in secret—miles outside of Moscow, inside a dimly lit sanctuary. Although I was young, the Holy Spirit touched a hidden yearning in my heart for spiritual reality.

Russia had lost virtually all traces of Christianity during 70 years of Communist captivity. Her legacy to me was one of atheism. I became a member of the Communist Party and secured a position in the KGB. I had a beautiful wife, Natasha; a precious daughter, Julia; good friends; a bright future; and all that I dreamed of as a young man.

Julia befriended an American girl whose father was a missionary in Moscow. Soon after, Natasha became their private Russian language tutor. As the head of my home and a KGB agent, I felt obligated to investigate these foreigners who had made such an impact on my family. I was awestruck by the humanitarian aid distributed by their church. And I was irresistibly drawn to their joy for life, for each other and for the Lord. Step by step, I began to realize their generosity and joy stemmed from their love for God.

At first, I gave God a 50/50 chance: since no one could prove God's existence, then no one could deny Him either. I stepped away from my aggressively atheistic realm. Then, while praying at one of the church retreats, I had a vision. I saw God standing on the top of a mountain. I felt I was a jar of clay. God was pouring down pure gold of the Holy Spirit right inside of the jar—me. From that moment on, I needed no evidence of God's existence, for I knew God in Jesus Christ.

I returned home that day. Natasha met me at the door and asked, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "What do you mean, honey?" She said, "You are smiling!" You see, I had never smiled before. But that day, Jesus made me smile. Now, my smile gave me away. I admitted that I had become a Christian. She, in turn, confessed to me that she had become a Christian even earlier than I did, but she had been scared to tell me, a KGB agent! In July 1993, I was baptized and openly proclaimed my faith in Jesus Christ.

Sasha quit his esteemed job at the KGB and left a life of relative luxury. Yet he found in Christ the joy he had always been missing. Is your spiritual life stuck? Does God feel far away? Remember that He loves you and wants to turn your sorrow to joy. Let Him speak to your heart, wipe away the sin and shame, and restore a smile to your soul.

Pastor Jason

MONTH OF THANKSGIVING

This month we thank the Lord for our many blessings including our homes, family, friends and church. On Nov. 6 we will help feed the hungry through our offering to Bread for the World.

Later in the month we have the opportunity to give our financial pledge for the work of the church. As your family returns its pledge for 2012, please also bring a canned good to make a basket of food which will be donated to a needy family.



Nov. 18th - Free Meal & Movie!

The COTC Outreach Team is hosting a free family meal and a movie night on Friday, November 18th at 6:00 p.m. as a way of showing thanks with a grateful heart for all the Lord has given to us.

That same night we are also extending the invitation and opening our doors to families in our community whom may also need a free box of food from our Deacons' pantry.

We encourage all member families to sign up in the narthex to signal your participation, to offer a hand of friendship to our visitors, and to enjoy this special night of bounty and entertainment. Happy Thanksgiving!

NOV. SCRIPTURES & SERMONS

Nov. 6

Scripture: Romans 14:1-13, 19; Hebrews 3:12-15; Galatians 5:34-6.2

Sermon: "Discipleship 101: The Report Card"

Nov. 13

Scripture: Ephesians 5:15-20; Colossians 3:12-17; John 4:5-26

Sermon: "Discipleship 101: Pep Rally"

Nov. 20

Scripture: Proverbs 18:24; Philippians 3:20-4:8; I John 1

Sermon: "Discipleship 101: Study Buddies"

Nov. 27

Guest Pastor

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

According to the Presbyterian Book of Order*, all persons who believe in God and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of His church are welcome as members.

Church members are entitled to vote in congregational meetings and have family members baptized, confirmed, married or their relative's funerals conducted in the church. Members may be nominated for leadership positions such as Elder or Deacon.

Please consider joining Church of the Covenant, either by a transfer of membership from another Presbyterian Church or by professing your faith after taking a short class with Pastor Jason.

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privileged. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission and to be involved in the ministry of the church.

(*2011-2013 Book of Order, G-1.03 thru G-1.0304)

ELDERS

The church elects two elders each year for three year terms. These Elders meet together as the Session; they are the governing board of the church. Each Elder is the chair or co-chair of one of the standing committees of the church. They decide on programming, budget, staff, finances, outreach, mission, worship and Christian Education. Soon we will be nominating Elders for a new term. All the standing committees are in need of assistance, and you do not need to be a church member to help on a committee.

Deacons

Deacons are part of the Covenant ministry. They prepare communion, send cards for birthdays or illness, visit people in the hospital or at funeral homes and are in charge of the food pantry. If you would like to help the Deacons with any of their ministry, please speak to the Pastor or Sandy Haapala.

COVENANT FOOD PANTRY

Please remember to bring canned or boxed food for our emergency food pantry. Suggested items to purchase are frozen meats, soup, peanut butter & jelly, cereal, spaghetti and jars of sauce, macaroni and cheese, and cans of tuna, chili or stew. When you contribute to the Deacon's Fund on the first Sunday of the month, the money helps to restock the food pantry. We are able to give people enough food for a few days and then refer them to the Hope Center Pantry.

BEST WISHES

November birthdays

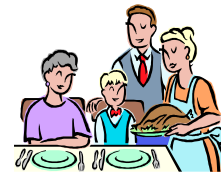
November 2	Jill Alm
November 3	Margaret Neebes
November 4	Andrew Byks
November 11	Diane Rhodes
November 14	Doug Tilly
November 19	Ed Pokrzywinski
November 24	Kevin Chadwick
November 25	Barbara O'Mara
November 28	Jacob Lechniak

november anniversaries

November 6	Loan & Shawn Gallagher
November 20	Norm and Phyllis Haase Walt and Mary Lechniak

Heading To The Hospital?

Some congregation members remember not so many years ago when a pastor or elder would show up at the hospital to pray with you or a friend or relative. They didn't have a hotline to God, though! At one time, it was standard practice for doctors and hospitals to call pastoral staff before scheduled surgeries or in emergency situations. However, due to modern privacy laws, your doctor and hospital will **not** notify the church. Pastor Jason and the elders would be happy to go with you or visit with you at the hospital, even for minor situations. If you would like a visit – even a regular home visit – please call the church office at 948-2440 or email us at pastorjasonhuff@aol.com. It is a blessing to stand with you in prayer in both joyous and difficult times...so please let us know how we can be in prayer with you!



If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact a Deacon or Gloria Cynowa. We want to celebrate with you on your special day.

CHURCH OF THE COVENANT VOLUNTEERS

Head Usher — Gloria Cynowa

Elder of Month —

	<i>Nov. 6</i>	<i>Nov. 13</i>	<i>Nov. 20</i>	<i>Nov. 27</i>
Ushers	Gary & Coleen Heacock			
Greeters	Gloria Cynowa	David & Margaret Neebes		Sandi Haapala
Scripture Reader	Tracy Cascio	Gary Cynowa	Gay Rapin	Ed Pokrzywinski
Coffee Hour	Gay & Ed Rapin	Mary Jane Harcourt	Vicki & Curt Reynolds	Jerri Portlance
Cookies	Scottie Sowden & Kristie Brackett	Gloria Cynowa & Phyllis Haase	Jean Plonkey	Jerri Portlance & Betty Kamps
Nursery	Natalie Heacock	Gay Rapin	Sara Byks	Mackenzie Alm

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

THE ARK

We are looking forward to fun-filled adventures in the ARK and more great conversations with Nick and Cooper. Join us every Sunday because you don't want to miss a minute of fun!

WE NEED YOU!

The Christian Education Committee is looking for adults and youth to help us as an extra pair of hands in the classroom on Sunday morning. Whether its one Sunday or once a month we welcome everyone who was a kid, has kids, has grandkids, or is still a kid themselves (you should be able to find yourself in this list somewhere). Please see Catha Huff, Diana Byks or Barbara Chadwick for more information or to volunteer. We appreciate your continued support as we strive to provide creative, fun and educational learning opportunities for Church of the Covenant.

SHOW ME JESUS

The children's Sunday morning program is called "Show Me Jesus" and it will concentrate on families. As the children begin to develop relationships outside the family circle, home becomes a core/foundation of their life and a way to teach them about what it mean to be a part of God's wider family. They will be challenged to trust and obey the loving heavenly Father who has called them to belong to His family and has revealed who He is through His Word.



OUTREACH

Thank you to everyone who filled a backpack for the children in the Head Start class at Carcanord Elementary School. All back packs were distributed and returned. The teacher and children are very happy and thankful for their gifts.

A new Usher and Greeter list is being prepared. Please sign up for one or more Sundays. Ushers pass out bulletins and later collect the offering. Greeters stand at the door before church service and welcome people. All volunteers will be greatly appreciated.

On March 4, 2012 the Outreach team will be serving a meal to the homeless in Mt. Clemens at Zion UCC Church. About 12 people will be needed to cook, serve, and clean up after the meal. Please let Gary Cynowa know if you can help with this project.

COMING EVENTS

SENIOR CARDS & SACK LUNCH

A group for fellowship and card playing meets at the church at 11 am on the 2nd. and 4th. Tuesday of every month. Please come and chat or play Euchre or Pinochle. Bring your sack lunch, coffee will be available and there is a 50 cent donation to defray expenses. This group is open to everyone in the community; talk to Phyllis Haase if you have questions.

EUCHRE NIGHT

The next Euchre Night is on Saturday, November 26 at the church. Registration begins at 5:30 and play starts at 6:00 pm. Refreshments and pizza are for sale and prizes are given. Please be on time as seats fill up fast.

WOMEN'S GROUP

The Women's Group met on October 22 at the Pancake Factory. We honored Maxine Stephenson because she is moving soon to Washington State. Then we had a fun demonstration of card making. The next meeting will be in December at the home of Catha Huff.

Bible Study

Our evening Bible study is meeting on Wednesday evenings at 7:00pm. We are using a video lesson about the end times. If you would like to be in a small group to study the Bible, please come. We'd love to have you!

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

On Friday, December 2 will be the annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Church Decorating. Please meet at 6:00 pm and the meal will start at 6:30 pm. Following the delicious dinner everyone will start decorating the church until it is done. Please join us as we begin the Christmas season together.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

There are many opportunities for volunteer work here at church.

- We need a few more people to bring cookies once every two months for coffee hour.
- There is also a need for a few people to prepare and serve at coffee hour once every two months.
- Ushers are needed to pass out bulletins and take up the offering.
- Greeters are needed to stand at the door and welcome everyone.
- The Memorial Committee is in need of a person to write thank you cards for donations made after a funeral.

Sign up sheets will be on the front hall table.

NOVEMBER 2011



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Administration, Deacons, Outreach & Worship meet 7pm	2 Bible Study 7 pm	3 Praise Team 7 pm	4	5
6 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship Communion Congregational Meeting	7 7pm AA Meeting	8 11-2 Senior Cards Session meeting 7 pm	9 Bible Study 7 pm	10 Praise Team 7 pm	11	12
13 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship	14 7pm AA Meeting	15	16 Bible Study 7 pm	17 Praise Team 7 pm	18 Meal & a Movie 6 pm at church	19
20 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship	21 7pm AA Meeting	22 11-2 Senior Cards	23	24 Happy Thanksgiving	25	26 Euchre 5:30 pm
27 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship	28 7pm AA Meeting	29	30 Bible Study 7 pm			

PRAYER CONCERNS:

Armed Forces Members, including: Mark Alm, Trevor Brown and Cory Cynowa
 People affected by Hurricane Irene
 People who are moving away
 Marge Fuller & the Fuller Family
 Norm & Phyllis Haase
 Ruth McGraw
 Margaret Neebes
 Peace in the World
 Annetta Pokrzywinski
 Melissa Putt
 Betty Radcliffe
 Rev. Mary Kay Saap's husband



Contemporary Worship Sun. 10 a.m.
Come and praise the Lord
Sunday Morning Classes for Children
Coffee hour after service

23401 23 Mile Road, Macomb Twp., MI 48042
 (586) 948-2440 www.covenantmacomb.org
 Pastor Jason Huff

Opening doors in Vietnam

by Rev. Michael Parker, Coordinator of the Office of International Evangelism



A Presbyterian house-church movement is committed to spreading the gospel

For an entire generation of Americans, images of Vietnam are frozen in time from the 1960s and 70s: jungle warfare, soldiers coming home in body bags, Americans fleeing from the U.S. embassy in helicopters at the war's end. But since then much has happened.

Vietnam's government has largely abandoned communism, and embraced the market economy. It has made peace with its neighbors, ending a military occupation of Cambodia, and now enjoys normalized relations with the United States. And though the government has generally been hostile to Protestant churches, in the last few years it has given official recognition to eight of them.

An outdoor Christmas worship service last December in Ho Chi Minh City drew an unprecedented crowd of 40,000 people. One of the organizers of the service, Ho Tan Khoa, is a pastor in the United Presbyterian Church of Vietnam, a house-church movement and mission partner of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). "The heart and soul of Vietnam's house church movement is evangelism, and this core value is deeply embedded in every pastor and leader," says Paul Friesen, the PC(USA)'s regional liaison for Southeast Asia.

Birth of a church

Vietnam is traditionally a Buddhist country. Because of the efforts of French Catholic missionaries in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Vietnam today has about 6 million Catholics, about 8 percent of the country's 87 million population. The first Protestant missionaries entered Vietnam in 1911. Today there are about 1½ million Protestants, or about 1.2 percent of the population.

In 1988 a small group began to meet in the home of Khoa and his wife Mary Lien in Ho Chi Minh City. This became the nucleus of the United Presbyterian Church of Vietnam. Another small Presbyterian church also exists in Vietnam, but is not currently in partnership with the PC(USA). As Khoa's group sought resources for training leaders and learning the Bible, they were aided by Mercer Island Presbyterian Church, in Seattle, Wash. The church's membership has grown to about 6,500, divided among 62 congregations and about 50 other small fellowship groups. Most are located in the southern part of Vietnam, but the northern city of Hanoi now has four congregations. The members gather in homes or rented facilities. Among the church leaders are 10 pastors, 16 candidates for the pastorate and 33 evangelists.

U.S. Presbyterians are supporting the fledgling church in Vietnam in a variety of ways. The PC(USA) office of international evangelism is helping provide leadership training. The Mercer Island church supplies medicine for the poor, short-term teachers for a medical school and scholarships for more than 70 students from primary through university education. Smyrna Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Ga., regularly builds churches, schools and community centers in Vietnam. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, through its World Mission Initiative, is cultivating Christian leadership as part of a long-term engagement with one of the country's minority ethnic groups.

Toward a more public witness

In order to gain official recognition by the government, the United Presbyterian Church of Vietnam is preparing to submit a list of its members and church locations. The PC(USA) is providing funds for the church to rent office space for a headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City to satisfy another governmental requirement.

Official recognition will enable the church to proclaim the gospel publicly and reach out more visibly to the non-Christian population. It may also open the way for the church to host a mission worker from the PC(USA), should both sides be in accord. Mission leaders expect a growing number of house churches to surface in Vietnam as more and more Protestant denominations receive official recognition.

Despite the government's somewhat ambivalent stance toward religious liberty, the long-term prospects for Christianity seem very good, says Don Dawson, director of Pittsburgh Seminary's World Mission Initiative. "It's clear that God is at work in Vietnam, and we can anticipate much fruit in the years to come."

What you can do

Thank you for all that you do in God's mission! If you would like to support the work of OIE in Vietnam, give to the Extra Commitment Opportunity account for Vietnam, ECO 040079. You may also give to the General Frontier Evangelism account, ECO 863001.