

Covenant Call – March 2026

A Letter from Caitlin

Dear Covenant Family,

Johnny Lee's 1980 song "Lookin' for Love" goes like this:

"I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places

Lookin' for love in too many faces

Searchin' their eyes

Lookin' for traces of what I'm dreaming of"

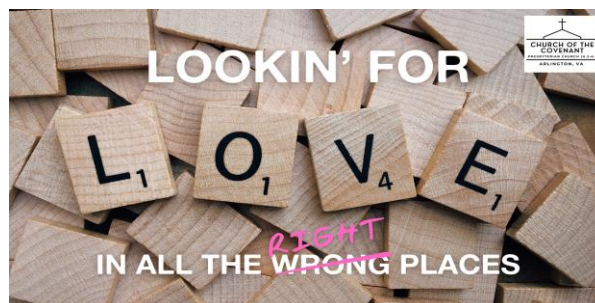
This Lenten season we're on a journey to look for love in all the right places. I've been reflecting on where I look for love and if I'm looking in the right or wrong places. I wonder how I might look for love in God instead of in things our culture values. Here's a couple of my personal reflections:

- Instead of "eating my feelings" after a hard day (lookin' for love in temporary satisfaction), perhaps I could go to God and find scripture that resonates with my feelings (lookin' for love in God who meets me where I am).
- Instead of stressing myself out to complete everything on my "to-do list," (lookin' for love in productivity) I could look to God and remind myself that we don't have to do anything to deserve God's love (lookin' for love in God who loves and claims us before we even take a breath).

Covenant family, where do you look for love? How might we look for love in the "right" places together?

Our Christian scriptures offer countless images of where love, grace, forgiveness, righteousness, and healing can truly be found. We look for love in God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, Mother of us all. I'm excited to continue lookin' for love alongside y'all.

In God's Love,
Caitlin



**Lent resources from Worship Design Studio*

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Second Isaiah Study Begins in March

The Book of Isaiah originates from three different periods in Jewish history. On Tuesday mornings we've been studying the oracles of "First Isaiah," primarily from the time before the Babylonian Empire destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Beginning March 24, we will begin the study of "Deutero-" (or Second) Isaiah, chapters 40-55. These oracles provided comfort and hope to the people of Israel during their forced exile to Babylon. For Christians, this section most clearly anticipates God's saving gift in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ more than 5 centuries later.

Second Isaiah will comprise a 6-week Zoom study through May 5. Want to check it out? Contact Susan Tarr for the Zoom link (starr4321@aol.com or 703-527-7816).



Special Lenten Lecture with Shani McIlwain – March 15, 2026; 12:30 pm



Shani McIlwain works as an independent writer at the intersections of faith, justice, and pop culture. A bestselling author, preacher, speaker, and executive coach, she believes freedom is central to faith and that truth-telling is a spiritual practice. A ruling elder at Faith Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, and former moderator of the National Capital Presbytery, MLP board member, and coach for NEXT Church, Shani helps communities interrogate power, challenge oppressive systems, and imagine more liberated ways of living and believing. You can find her on Substack with her weekly series Sometimes Church Looks Like and co-hosting the podcast Embracing Race: Conversations with Truth and Intention.

We are honored to welcome Shani McIlwain to Covenant on Sunday, March 15th at 12:30pm immediately following worship. Lunch will be provided. Mark your calendars now!



Maundy Thursday “Love Feast” on April 2 at 6 PM

In the Upper Room on the night Jesus was betrayed, Jesus spoke to his disciples about love; he said: “Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you must love each other.” We’ve been “Lookin’ for Love” during Lenten; on Maundy Thursday, we’ll share the love of Jesus and remember that night with a simple meal, scripture, music and communion around tables in the fellowship hall. Come join the Love Feast; all are welcome.



Calling for Old, Gently-Used Soup Bowls

So far this year we’ve had Soup-er Bowl for AFAC and bowl-ing for Covenant families and youth. In March, our “bowl” event will be for the Covenant kitchen! On the many times we share soup together (as we’ll be doing at the Love Feast), it would be good to have washable bowls. So we’re wondering if there might be folks in the congregation with soup bowls to spare—from downsizing, or replacing old bowls with new ones? We’ll be collecting bowls for the next few Sundays; just set them on the credenza in the fellowship hall or give them to Susan Tarr. Start your spring cleaning by reducing cupboard clutter!



Easter Lilies



Church of the Covenant will be decorating the sanctuary with Easter Lilies on Easter. Price is TBA. If you would like to purchase one or more lilies, please let Gloria Hurdle know by Palm Sunday, March 29. Gloria.hurdle@gmail.com or 703-509-8666.

Make a check payable to **Church of the Covenant** and write **Easter Lilies** on the memo line and give the check to Hille or place it in the offering plate.

Thank you for your donation to the Easter celebration.



One Great Hour of Sharing

History:

Immediately following World War II, U.S. Protestant churches made appeals for relief and reconstruction in areas devastated by the war, primarily Europe and Asia. In 1949, the leaders of several denominations formed a committee to organize an appeal for support of the separate campaigns of their churches. Their joint statement in support of this effort remains remarkably contemporary:

A program called One Great Hour was broadcast on the evening of Saturday, March 26, 1949, over major networks and many independent stations. The script was written under the direction of playwright Robert Sherwood. The cast included some of the foremost dramatic and musical talents of the time, such as Gregory Peck and Ida Lupino; President Harry Truman brought greetings. The broadcast closed with a request that listeners attend their local church the following morning and make a sacrificial contribution. No exact measure of receipts was possible, but it was estimated that more than 75,000 churches participated. The next year, the offering was repeated, using the name "One Great Hour of Sharing" for the first time.

From the beginning, this has been an ecumenical effort. While each denomination allocates its gifts differently, all use their funds for ministries of disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development aid. Today, projects supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) are under way in more than one hundred countries, including the United States and Canada.

The Prophet Micah asks *What does the Lord require of you?* To act justly and to love mercy and to walk *humbly with your God* (Micah 6:8). The OGHS is the single, largest way Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world. Received during the season of Lent (Feb. 18–April 5), each gift to OGHS helps to improve the lives of people in challenging situations. The work done in support of the causes supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) — disaster, hunger, poverty, climate change, and immigration/migration and refugees - serves individuals and communities in need. It provides people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

Covenant will collect the 2026 One Great Hour of Sharing offerings with the Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday Offering. Last year our congregation donated over just over \$1,000.00 to OGHS. What will we give this year?

Fish Banks:

Throughout the years, various coin banks have been used to help encourage children to participate in the Offering. Eventually the fish-shaped banks caught on. Using Fish banks encourages our congregation's newest generation of disciples to participate in the One Great Hour of Sharing by collection change or doing tasks that allow them to earn 'fish credits' to add to their fish banks.

Fish banks will be distributed during the March 08 worship service. Fish banks will be collected during the Easter Sunday worship Service. Last year you contributed \$94.00 in coins. Can we reach \$100 this year??





2026 Session Happenings

At its January meeting, Ruling Elders agreed to a mixture of in--person and Zoom Session meetings for 2026. In addition, Ruling Elders reviewed and reorganized their teams to better reflect our current priority of a structured, caring outreach towards both our church family and the community in which we worship. All program teams meet monthly. Program teams were realigned and structured to allow Ruling Elders to follow their passion. New teams and their chairs are as follows

Worship and Christian Formation. Chair: Susan Tarr

Together with Rev. Caitlin Culp, the Worship team determines all matters regarding worship – themes, music, special worship services including, Lent, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Pentecost, World Communion Sunday, All Saints Sunday and Advent.

New this year the team will work together with Kent to help develop and encourage Christian learning for all from our youngest members to our eldest. This currently includes Godly Play, Tuesday morning Bible study, Thursday Lunch time devotional and the Lenten Lecture. Future plans include a Confirmation Class a new Sunday School program to supplement Godly Play.

Meets via Zoom at 7:30 pm the 1st Tuesday of each month

Congregational Care and Membership Chair: Mary Margaret Whipple

Provides the care needed for our church family. This includes keeping in contact with our members who can't make it to worship in-person, providing support as needed in times of emergencies and, together with the pastor, sharing communion at home with those who are unable to attend church.

The team hosts after church refreshments and memorial service receptions.

The team will actively reach out to all members on our rolls who are currently not active participants in church activities and invite them to rejoin us in any way they can.

Meets 1st Wednesday of the month in person at Covenant at 12:30 pm

Mission and Outreach Chair: Mary Gibson

The Mission team will review what Charities we currently support and how we may become more involved with their work beyond a donation.

Outreach involves reaching out to the community to tell them why we are here but also to listen and work to provide programs, space for community events, and a space to learn about and know God's love.

Meets via Zoom 4th Monday of the month.

You are Invited

Friends, the nine Ruling Elders on Session and our two staff members cannot do this work on their own. All are welcome to serve on a team, and this is your invitation to find your **passion** and join with us as we work together to live out God's call for Covenant and the immediate surrounding community!



Save the Date: Spring Alive! April 25, 2026; 2:00-4:00 pm

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 25th, when Church of the Covenant will be putting on “Spring Alive!” The event will feature booths from our mission partners, music, fun activities for children, and more! Look for the flyer in next month’s Covenant Call.



Outreach Corner

On the morning of Ash Wednesday Pastor Caitlin headed out to the Ballston Metro station to impose Ashes-to-Go on all commuters who asked. There were approximately 30 who asked for ashes!



DOORWAYS

Caitlin and Kent visited the Doorways office in Ballston for a tour and learning about the process their clients go through when they are in need of help. It was inspiring and informative! Doorways will have a table at our Spring Alive event on April 25th to promote their excellent work in the Arlington community.

The Mission & Outreach team works closely with Kent & Caitlin to support programming, plan events, and engage in the ministry of meeting people where they are.

