

Hi there, Covenant Family!

We are a little more than halfway through the summer so we thought it would be a good idea to send out a short update about how things have been going, how they are right now, and what is upcoming through the rest of the year.

How Things Have Been

So far this summer has been a really wonderful time. We enjoyed an amazing time at our Inspire Maker Space Camp with about 80 kids, 30 youth leaders, and 30 adult leaders. It was a privilege to be able to engage our community together to continue to introduce them to Jesus in ways that were genuine and fun and engaging. In addition to leaving with amazing things they made, the kids also practiced serving others by making snacks for the entire camp and by preparing over 160 letters or pieces of art that were delivered to residents at a local nursing home. It was a ton of fun to have several families from our community come on the Sunday morning after our Inspire Maker Space Camp to sing the songs from the camp, review the stories and lessons we learned, and tell us about their favourite parts of the week. We are incredibly thankful to all of the volunteers who helped make the week possible, the kids who came out for the week, the families who trusted us with their kids, and all those who contributed through donations and by praying for us throughout the week.

In addition to our Maker Space Camp we have done a variety of different gatherings on Sunday mornings. Each one has been special and significant in unique ways.

- It was amazing to see and hear about some of the artwork that has been significant to people in our congregation. Hearing people talk about their art really helped us get to know each other better. And it was encouraging to hear how we each connect to God in different, but similar ways.
- We enjoyed the beauty of creation during our walk at Wye Marsh and several people were able to walk with someone they hadn't previously interacted with very much.
- We enjoyed a musical worship Sunday where we were able to enter into various postures of worship and spend some time praying for each other.

- Our time at the Paillés was a literal breath of fresh air as they hosted us in the beautiful space they have brought to life on their property. Again, our sharing time was a real encouragement to us as we heard where God is clearly apparent to different people in our Covenant family. And hearing people from a variety of ages share was a beautiful family experience.
- And this past Sunday, gathering around a bountiful meal was a reminder of the generosity of God and the invitation from Jesus to come and participate in this life with him. It was a great family time together and a beautiful context in which to receive communion.

I know the things we are doing each week aren't everyone's cup of tea. But it seems that those who've participated in them each week have been blessed and encouraged. I have enjoyed engaging as a church family in ways that we just can't do when we're sitting in rows.

So things have been going well so far this summer. We are grateful for God's clear presence among us as we've been together. But how are things right now?

How Things Are

A part of why we wanted to send out this message is to let you know of a concern we have as we are now heading into the second week of August. It is a financial one. Most of you are aware that we rely on contributions from you, our Covenant family, to maintain our building, operate our programs, and pay our staff. Throughout our 43-year history, God has provided. It hasn't always been easy and at times some difficult decisions have had to be made, but we are still here building on the foundation that was set in those earliest days of Covenant. At this point, mid-summer 2023, we are again asking God to provide!

Year to date in 2023 in our general fund, we have spent about \$30,000 more than we have taken in. Now, I don't want you to be super concerned. We estimated at the beginning of the year that we would spend about \$26,000 more than our income. And, due to generosity and God's graciousness in past years, we have money to cover this deficit in the bank. But we do want you to be aware of our current financial situation and the needs that exist.

In addition to our general fund, we have a compassion fund that supports people in our church and community who have needs. And we continue to raise money for our capital fund looking towards when we can build an addition to make our building accessible. There are many things we believe are important for us to do, but we need finances for it.

I'm aware that financial challenges exist for many of us and many are already contributing at a level that is challenging. Thank you for your generosity. We take your generosity very seriously and want to manage the funds contributed with wisdom. We just feel it is important to keep you in the loop as to our current financial position so that you can pray about it and contribute if it is something you are led to do and able to do.

What Is Upcoming

There is so much upcoming that I *could* talk about, but we'll focus on four things quickly.

1. We have a few more special Sunday morning gatherings between now and when things get rolling in the fall. We'll be walking on the Tiny Trail this Sunday. We'll be meeting and leaving from the parking lot where Robert St. meets Overhead Bridge Road in Penetang. And Wilfried and Ursula will have a rest and refreshment stop set up about a 30-minute walk down the trail so you can get a coffee or cold drink, rest, and prepare for the walk back. There are some good hills on the trail, but it is paved and smooth. The following week, Brent will be leading a musical worship Sunday at Covenant. And then the final Sunday in August, we'll be participating in The Church In the Pines out in Tiny Township. Brent will be leading some songs and Jon will be speaking. The details for all of these weeks are at www.covenantchurch.ca/events. On September 3 we'll be doing a kick-off service outside including a BBQ and communion.
2. We are using the fall to explore the possibility of an exciting new global partnership with a BIC Church in Cuba. We are considering connecting with a local church in Santa Clara Cuba for the purposes of mutual encouragement, shared learning, and practical service. The president of the BIC in Cuba is excited about it, but we need to travel to Cuba to meet with them to prayerfully discern if this would be a fit for us. BIC

Canada-Global, the global engagement arm of Be In Christ Church of Canada is planning a learning trip to Cuba that we would like to have two people from Covenant participate in. In order to send these people on our behalf we need to raise around \$3,000. For more information about this potential partnership visit www.covenantchurch.ca/news and click on the "Global Engagement" news item. You can contribute to the beginning of this global partnership by clicking "Give" on our website and selecting our "Global" fund.

3. The third thing we want to highlight as we look to the fall is something that Brent would like to share. Take it away, Brent!

Hi Church Family,

As you know, the Limmers will be on sabbatical during September – November. What this means for us, as a church, is that there will be many areas of need. One of my main worries is with our Sunday morning children's ministry. We are very short on leaders and could use at least three more. If we do not have these leaders in place it likely means that some Sundays we will not be able to offer kids church. Even if you do not want to teach but are willing to simply be downstairs once a month as a helper, it would go a long way to making sure kids' church is still a regular priority for us. I also want to be very careful of not overworking our children's volunteers.

Another area of need is with our Sunday morning youth ministry. Ken, Anj and myself offered this before the summer. Since I will likely be focusing a lot of effort on worship, overseeing services, kids ministry and other Sunday needs, I am worried that I will not be available to our youth as often. If you are willing to teach our youth on Sunday morning, please let me know.

Realistically both of these areas of need take ~40 minutes of your time and effort once a month (if you volunteer once a month). I will provide all lessons and teaching materials. It is not a huge commitment, but many hands make light work.

Please consider stepping out and helping us so that we still have all the available ministries to keep our Sundays running well during the busy fall. Thank you so much for everything you do! You can contact me at brent@covenantchurch.ca.

Brent

Thanks to Brent for sharing that! And thanks for all that you do in leading our children and youth workers in engaging and blessing our Next Generations. Brent juggles a lot on Sunday mornings with music, children's ministry, and youth ministry. He, and our kids and youth, really need us to rally around him as we're able to ensure that we are building into the lives of the youngest people in our Covenant Church family!

4. And the fourth thing to mention about what is coming up this fall is just a reminder that I'll be on sabbatical from early September until late November. I'm grateful for this opportunity to get some deep rest and refreshment and to come back reenergized for the next many years! We are blessed as a church family to have a diverse and gifted group of speakers who will be preaching throughout the fall and I *know* that God will speak through them in significant ways while I'm off. My prayer for Covenant is not that we'll just *get through* the fall while I'm off waiting for when I get back. My prayer is that it will be a time when our connection with each other and with God will really deepen and grow. When our love for this family as *our family* will flourish and when our care for each other will be on display in powerful ways. My prayer is that when I come back at Advent that there will be people that I don't know because God has brought them here and you have embraced them in the name of Jesus. I'm looking forward to hearing stories about what God has done in your lives and among you in my absence. And I pray that some of you will have emerged into new and important ministry roles during this time. I'm privileged to be a part of this Jesus-centred family and I'm trusting that we'll all be reminded in my absence that it is a Jesus-centred family and he doesn't need to take a sabbatical! He'll be here with you leading and guiding and moving among you by his spirit just as he always has been.

I hope this update has helped to both inform you and encourage you. God is at work among us and through us. Let us, as the author of Hebrews implores us, "Run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

I'm looking forward to the rest of the summer together. I love you all and I hope to see you soon! Until then, may the peace of Christ be with you.