



# Connections

540 SE 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Owatonna MN 55060  
507-451-1032

Website: [www.owatonnacovenantchurch.org](http://www.owatonnacovenantchurch.org)  
Email: [ccc@owatonnacovenantchurch.org](mailto:ccc@owatonnacovenantchurch.org)

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Our mission as Christ Community Covenant Church is to glorify God and seek His will for our personal lives and our lives together.

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Connections is a monthly publication of Christ Community Covenant Church, Owatonna, Minn. Articles for Connections must be submitted by the 15th of each month to Betty Wells.



## Monthly Musings from Pastor Brent

### Light and Thanksgiving

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

As Christians we have Jesus, the Light of the world, shining in our hearts; and in that we have "the knowledge of God's glory" in each of us. Wow! That means that we, as Christian believers, have God, the creator of this universe, living inside each one of us. However, according to these verses in 2 Corinthians, this reality is not just for our own benefit. "This treasure," God, is in each one of us as earthen clay jars (ordinary containers) so that people around us will see that the "all-surpassing power" in us is not of our own doing but from God.

However, also according to these verses, even though we have the Light of the World living inside, life is not always easy. Even Paul wrote that he was "hard-pressed," "perplexed," "persecuted," and "struck down;" but this did not mean that he was overwhelmed in sorrow and self-pity. Instead, he wrote that he was not "crushed," "in despair," "abandoned," or "destroyed." Moreover he then wrote, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). In fact, he was not feeling sorry for himself at all. He was resting with confidence in the truth that his own difficulties in life were there to demonstrate the Life that is in Jesus.

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All of us know beyond a shadow of a doubt that life is not always easy. In fact, it is sometimes downright difficult and painful. We face physical illness and emotional stress. We grieve in the death of friends and dearly loved members of our own family. All of us also face the spiritual warfare of our own growth in Christ as He seeks to transform us into His image. Then there are issues at work and problems at home. There are personality conflicts and the pressures of managing our time and money. This list could go on, but that could get depressing.

Even so, we need to be reassured with the truth of God's Word that He is living in us. We may feel "hard-pressed," "perplexed," "persecuted," and "struck down;" but that is not the end. Instead we can claim on the basis of the promise of God that we are not "crushed," "in despair," "abandoned," or "destroyed." The reality is that in the midst of these desperate difficulties we can show off, not ourselves, but the Life that we have in Jesus Christ.

Meet my friend, George. On the surface, things in life looked great for him, but, underneath the thin veil of a busy and successful life, things were difficult and challenging. There isn't time or space to tell of the struggles he faced. However, George was always smiling with a genuine countenance of peace. He always had an encouraging word for his co-workers and friends, and, though he had a position of power and authority in his place of employment, he was a faithful and cheerful servant doing even the menial tasks around him, wherever he could be of assistance.

He knew the power of the Light of the world that was in him, and he was not going to allow the spirit of this age overwhelm the Spirit of God who was in him. By God's grace he was not going to be knocked

down in despair. Since George knew the Spirit that was within him, he could apply Paul's teaching in Philippians 4:4-7 which reads:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

We live in difficult days and we all face hardships and challenges in our lives. This is normal, but we can join with Paul and George who would not allow the challenges of life to overwhelm them. We too can claim the power of the Spirit of God within us and realize that the life of Christ is shining through us to those around us. We can rejoice and not be anxious because, as we earnestly pray with thanksgiving to God, He will give us peace beyond our understanding.

Therefore, all year long, but especially at this time of Thanksgiving, let us be thankful! We have so much for which to be filled with gratitude. Let us be thankful not only for the good things that God gives in his gracious love to us, but also for the hard things and challenges in life. In Christ we will not be overwhelmed because we know that He is at work and his light is shining brightly in and through us. May we be light-houses of his light so that many others may be blessed by his light and join us in our thanksgiving.





**November 7**  
**6:30 p.m.**

Everyone is invited to a movie night at the church. We will meet at 6:30 p.m. for a light supper followed by the showing of a movie and, of course, popcorn!



**Supper with Carl and Karen Groot**  
**November 18**  
**5:30 p.m.**

On Tuesday, November 18 at 5:30 pm, Carl and Karen Groot will be with us for a pot-luck dinner. Carl and Karen are our missionaries with Covenant World Mission serving in Bangkok, Thailand, and they are coming to tell us about their mission in that great city. This is a delightful opportunity to meet with them around the supper table to share and reflect on all that God is doing in their lives and ours as we fellowship together.

Please bring a "dish-to-pass" and come prepared for a good meal and excellent conversation. This will be a wonderful evening of blessing from the Lord as we gather.

**Owatonna Care Center**  
**November 30**



On Sunday, November 30 we again have the great opportunity of bringing our church "on the road," and joining in worship with the residents and their families at the Owatonna Care Center. That will be first Sunday of Advent so we have the privilege of bringing the joy of Christmas as we begin this glorious season of celebrating Christ's birth.

People are encouraged to begin gathering at 9 am and go out into the Care Center to invite the residents to our worship service. The worship service begins at 9:30 am and will include the singing of Carols, some special music, a testimony of faith in Christ and a brief message from God's Word.

Please be in prayer for this ministry of worship in our local nursing homes and plan on attending as we gather at the Owatonna Care Center on Sunday, November 30.



Toys for Tots of Steele County and Family to Family of Steele County are two major resources in our county looking after needy children (15 and younger) on Christmas. All donations to these two programs (cash, gift cards, or unwrapped toys) remain under local control and are used for local families.

2014 has been another tough year on families and both of these agencies expect to see many families in need of assistance. If anyone knows a family in need of this kind of assistance, please call the church office or contact Pastor Brent for an application form. The deadline for an application is November 19.

**Reminder: Harvest Brunch is Sunday, November 9. Sign-up sheet is posted in the foyer.**





Save the Date  
for our  
Christmas Party  
December 7

Happy  
Thanksgiving



The mission of Covenant World Relief is to love, serve and work together with the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized. What follows is an overview of CWR values and examples of how those values have been lived out through CWR partners and projects in the last year.

## MISSION FOCUS



**Transforming Individuals, Families and Communities:** 100+ households receiving clean water in Honduras for the first time

We value the quality of our impact more than the quantity of people we impact (depth over breadth).

**Working in Partnership:** \$1.7 million distributed to 65 partner programs around the world.

We collaborate with local partners, relying on their expertise, experience, and networks. We value Covenant connected relationships.

**Restoring Dignity:** 11 programs with refugees, showing respect and nurturing self-reliance.

We affirm that all people are made in God's image and we seek the restoration of their God-given identity.

**Representing the Kingdom:** 11 churches started because of one development program in India.

We seek to demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

**Strengthening Local Communities:** 18 projects providing vocational training and creating jobs.

Our programs are initiated locally and local assets are utilized. We work with the community, rather than for the community.

**Serving the Most Vulnerable:** 20 disaster relief projects in 12 countries.

We love and serve the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, or age.

**Seeking Justice:** 25 children of commercial sex workers in India are now receiving an education.

We work too address the root causes of injustice through reconciliation, peacemaking, and advocacy.