

# THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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## Interview with Jim Curtis

By Rev. Sean McCann

*This month we will welcome our new Assistant Pastor and his family to our church. Jim and Madeleine Curtis are moving here from Pittsburgh with their daughter Charlotte, and over the past few months Lindsey and I have really enjoyed getting to know them. I hope this interview can be a jumping off point for you as you get to know them and welcome them to Asheville.*

*Tell us about yourself: Where did you grow up? What did you study in college? How did you and Madeleine meet?*

I grew up in a non-Christian home just outside Atlanta, GA in Lawrenceville (only 15 minutes from the PCA's denominational offices!). I was converted through the youth ministry of a PCA church plant, which unfortunately closed their doors after some financial problems when I was still in middle school. During High School, I followed most of my friends from that church to an Associate Reformed Presbyterian (ARP) Church down the road. Just after I turned 18, I enlisted in the Army National Guard and then went to Erskine College after Basic Training and Infantry Training. At Erskine, I studied Biblical & Theological Studies and Philosophy, before heading to Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Charlotte. When I was in seminary, I received an internship at Huntersville ARP Church, where Madeleine's family has been members since the 1870's when the church was established.

*What experiences has God used to form you as a pastor?*

I like to point to three stages of my life thus far in answering this question: (1) My non-Christian upbringing, (2) My conversion and initial discipleship, and (3) My marriage.

I have always been somewhat jealous of folks who grew up in Christian homes and have always known the Gospel, but I think that God chose a different life for me specifically to impact my future ministry in profound ways. My father died before I went to elementary school, so understanding the Gospel's promise of God

as my father is incredibly compelling to me.

This is what made a big difference in my conversion, which led me to a community of faithful people and a family. This was influential to me in showing me the importance of the Church as a family that lives their lives together, supports one another, and loves each other according to their own new lives in Christ.

This took on a totally new meaning when I got married, especially in both having a new family together, but also in gaining a family with my in-laws, who have witnessed to me in how to raise children and how to love one another well—among many other things!

These three areas in particular have formed my own view of how the Christian faith should and does impact not just someone individually but corporately.

*Why did you enter the ARP after seminary? Why did you move to the PCA?*

As I mentioned earlier, I originally was PCA. I have often wondered what my life would have been like had that church survived. Would I have ended up going to Covenant College? Would I have gone to RTS, or would I have even gone into ministry? As fun as those questions are to ask, none of it happened!

The Lord profoundly impacted me by moving me to an ARP church in high school, and then afterwards sending me to Erskine College. I have a deep love for the ARP Church, and my time there was shorter than I planned. When I left Huntersville ARP Church, through much prayer and counsel offered by friends and mentors, I was encouraged to look into the PCA, which turned out to be some of the best advice I'd been given!

*What was it like to serve as foster parents?*

Madeleine and I have only had one placement, Liam, and he was with us for 15 months. Our decision to apply to be foster parents came in a pretty dark season of our lives: our first child died in the womb, and this after

### March—April

#### Upcoming Events

For more information about any of these events, refer to our website ([www.covenantreformed.net](http://www.covenantreformed.net)), or the church office (828-253-6578; [crpchq@gmail.com](mailto:crpchq@gmail.com)).

#### The Lord's Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

During Morning Worship:  
 March 6, 20  
 April 3

#### Good Friday Service:

April 15, 6:00 pm

#### Fellowship Lunch:

March 6 and April 3, following morning worship.

#### Weekly Events

##### Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am
Morning Worship	10:45 am
Evening Worship	6:00 pm

Except for 1st Sundays and Easter Sunday

##### Bible Study

##### For Men:

Men's Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS	8:00 am	Every Thursday

(Retired Old Men Eating Out)

at Cornerstone Restaurant, Tunnel Road	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays
Norm Bomer's Home		

##### For Women:

Gail Albee's Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
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several years of struggling with fertility. Madeleine’s sister’s family fosters (and they just adopted our nephew, Kin’Zyiah, in January!) and they have been both an inspiration and an incredible support system for us in that journey.

And in a phrase: it’s amazing. I’ve never experienced anything like it, and our hearts are set on doing it for the long-term. We have gotten to see and meet people with deep scars and wounds that only Christ can fully address, and we have sensed not just a calling to love and protect the children, but to bring the Gospel of Christ into the lives of the entire family as we have opportunity to meet and minister to them. I am elated to say that, as I am writing this in early February, Liam and his mother have committed to joining us at church in Pittsburg for the next few weeks! As foster parents, we have experienced some of the hardest things the world has to offer, as well as some of the most beautiful, and it’s an incredible thing to witness broken families becoming whole again.

*What do you and your family like to do?*

We love to cook together and have friends over. We also, believe it or not, love to go to Asheville! Madeleine’s family lives just north of Charlotte, and since we’ve been married we’ve almost exclusively chosen Asheville for our time away together. We enjoy walks around town and reading good books.

*Why are you and Madeleine excited to move to Asheville and*

*minister at Covenant Reformed?*

For so many reasons! I don’t think we could fit them all into the newsletter, so I’ll just mention three—I’m a preacher after all! In no particular order:

First, we want the Gospel of Jesus Christ to go forth in power and display his love and care for the nations. We have a particular love for Asheville, as I said before, and to be a part of ministry there is really a dream come true for us. God has been moving in our hearts for the people of Asheville while we didn’t even know it, and looking back it’s all too obvious now.

Second, I have always felt a particular call to college students, and the proximity Covenant Reformed has to UNCA has us both very excited. Add to that the fact that we’ve found a home so close to both the church and the University, we’re simply in awe of God’s providential care for us in being gracious not merely to give us opportunity to minister near a university, but to live so close to one. We’re hopeful and optimistic about the potential for college ministry.

Third, and I hope this is okay to say, I have known Sean for a number of years from a distance, and I have many close friends who were mentored by him during his time in Charlotte. I have always had a respect for him, and I am very excited to join him in Gospel ministry at Covenant Reformed!

## The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann



Starting in March we will begin a new sermon series during our evening worship services through the book of 2 Samuel. In the fall of 2019, we concluded an evening sermon series through 1 Samuel, and I have been waiting for a time to get back to part two of that story. Since then we have been in the New Testament books of 1-3 John and 1 Corinthians in the evening, and now with an ongoing sermon series in the morning in the New Testament, it is time to return to the Old Testament and pick up where we left off in the life of David. (If you are keeping track, this means we may return to the church in Corinth sometime in 2023!) 2 Samuel picks up the story just after the death of King Saul and follows David on the road to his throne. As we look at the themes of God’s kingdom, God’s covenant with David,

and God’s messianic promises, we will be sure to pause along the way to compare notes with the New Testament and discover the many ways that King David points us forward to the arrival and kingdom of King Jesus.

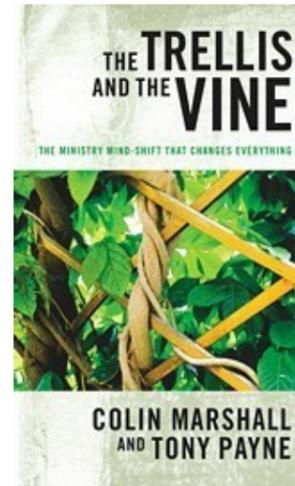
I also want to take this moment to remind you of the great value we place on evening worship and invite you to join us for this new series. Our second service is born out of some of our most precious commitments as a church. Central to our ministry is a dependence on God to work through his means of grace—primarily prayer and the word—to convert sinners and build us up in the faith. There are many other fine things that we could emphasize in the church calendar, but we believe that what happens in worship is so vital to a healthy Christian life that it must be forefront among our ministries. In addition to this, it is our desire to be faithful to the fourth commandment to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. The Lord’s Day is a day set apart for worship and rest, and the two worship services serve as bookends to the Lord’s Day: they provide form and structure. With these two services in place the rest of the day is easily filled with preparation, fellowship, private worship, and rest.

If it is not your habit to return for evening worship, I hope you’ll give it a try this month as we start this new series. It may be a struggle at first to adjust to a different Sunday schedule, but I am confident that if you stick it out for a few weeks it will become a joy. Many of our regular evening attenders testify that this service has a sweet intimacy to it and has become their favorite service of the day. As your shepherd, I encourage you to come to the rivers of life and place yourself in the streams of God’s grace to experience the renewal of your soul at the closing of the Lord’s Day.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
March 6	Matt. 5:31-37	
March 13	Matt. 5:38-48	2 Samuel 1
March 20	Matt. 6:1-18	2 Samuel 2
March 27	Matt. 6:9-13	Installation Service
April 3	Matt. 6:19-24	
April 10	Matt. 6:25-34	2 Samuel 3
April 15		John 19:28
April 17	Psalms 16	
April 24	Matt. 7:1-6	2 Samuel 4-5

## What Is a Pastor?

By Rev. Sean McCann



A few years ago I met a new pastor in town. After chatting for a bit I found out he was at a large church with a lot of pastors on staff, so I asked him what his role was in particular. Much to my surprise, he replied that he was the pastor of small groups for the middle school youth. This job description was (and is) the narrowest I have ever heard of for a pastor! While I am sure my colleague was excited for this call, I walked away grateful for my call at the time as a pastor tasked with the full range of duties involved in the pastoral ministry.

As we welcome a new pastor with a new job description, I think it is helpful to examine our expectations so that we can fully welcome him and encourage him in his work. In Scripture we do not find heavily regulated roles for different types of pastors. Rather we see that the pastor is simply a man who exemplifies the requirements for an elder in Christ’s church (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), and is called to “labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17). One of the clearest of these descriptions is found in Paul’s charge to young Timothy:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching...As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim 4:1-3, 5)

Another formative passage is directed to all elders in their ministry to the flock of God:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3)

These charges are to all elders, regardless of age. Jim Curtis comes to us as a young man with a few years of experience, and they apply to him as well. A pastor’s age doesn’t change his work, as Paul makes clear:

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see

your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:11-16)

With all this in mind, the Session has called Jim as a pastor and fellow shepherd. He is your pastor and will be regularly praying for you, feeding you the word, and leading you to follow the Good Shepherd. I will continue to be the primary preacher and teacher, but Pastor Jim will regularly fill the pulpit and share some of those duties. He will also be involved regularly in leading worship, administering the sacraments, and visiting the flock. In addition to these general duties, Pastor Jim will focus some of his time and energies in areas of outreach and evangelism. Don’t expect Jim to start any programs any time soon, but he will be tasked with thinking and praying about how we can reach out to the North Asheville community, the UNC Asheville campus, and the city of Asheville. He will also focus on discipling our younger members and oversee the discipleship and education ministry of the church.

As I think about my own expectations for Jim, I come back again and again to a helpful analogy found in Colin Marshall and Tony Payne’s book, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything*. In his excellent book review, Pastor Tim Challies explains the meaning of this metaphor for ministry: “A trellis, of course, is a structure that is used to support, to hold up, a vine. In this metaphor the trellis refers to the administrative work within a church, those tasks that, though important, are not actually directly related to discipling people. Vine work, on the other hand, is those tasks of working with the vine, drawing people into the kingdom through evangelism and then training them to grow in their knowledge of God and their obedience to him.

As the authors say, “The basic work of any Christian ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God’s Spirit, and to see people converted, changed and grow to maturity in that gospel.” The problem, though, is that trellis work tends to take over from vine work. Perhaps it’s because trellis work is easier and less threatening; perhaps the trellis work looks more impressive. But for one reason or another, many Christians, and pastors in particular, soon find themselves consumed with trellis work, leaving them little time and attention for the vine. “Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that in many churches, maintaining and improving the trellis constantly takes over from tending the vine.”

There are always more programs to be planned, e-mails to be sent, and systems to be fine-tuned, but this is all “trellis work” that can distract pastors from their primary calling of ministering the word of God to the people of God. I welcome our new pastor with open arms and I hope you will join me in receiving the word of truth from his mouth, encouraging him in his labors, and assisting his ministry for your good and growth in grace.