

# THE SALTSHAKER

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

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## Dinner Invitations: Who May Eat at the Lord's Table?

By Rev. Sean McCann

Every year around Christmas my wife cooks up a pot of delicious bean soup. The recipe calls for all sorts of different beans and spices to simmer together for hours, but there is one particular ingredient that always receives comment: the bay leaf. Every year we warn our children to watch out for those bay leaves because though they may add flavor, they are painful and even dangerous if swallowed. Our message to them is clear (if not a bit dramatic): this meal is dangerous if you are not careful.

That same warning comes to us from God when we come to eat the Lord's Supper: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself." (1 Cor 11:27-29)

It is our duty as individual Christians to examine ourselves and eat with care, and it is the duty of the church to serve the meal with care. Historically the church has taken three different approaches to serving the Lord's Supper, which can be classified under the terms open, closed, and restricted communion. Open Communion consists of opening the Table to anyone who so desires with minimal or no restrictions. Closed Communion limits access to the Table to only members of that particular church, or in some cases members of the denomination. Restricted Communion – which is our practice and the practice of our denomination – involves issuing invitations to all Christians in attendance, across denominational lines, yet with some serious restrictions.

Churches who practice restricted communion vary in how they restrict. The PCA *Book of Church Order* (BCO) gives two options: the minister may either invite those who have been examined and approved by the Session (the elder leadership board) to come to the Table, or he may invite "all those who profess the true religion and are communicants in good standing in an evangelical church." (In 1990 there was an unsuccessful at-

tempt to change the language from "evangelical church" to "a church that proclaims the gospel.") The latter method of restriction, which is our practice, is known as "fencing the Table" because, by verbal explanation and warning the minister places a metaphorical fence around the Table to deter people from eating in an unworthy manner.

When we fence the Table we emphasize three circumstances that should prevent someone from eating and drinking. First and most obvious, if someone is **not a member of the Church** they may not partake. Implied in church membership is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. This individual experience of salvation is joined with adoption into God's family and inclusion in the local expression of God's family, his church. A Christian should normally be a member of a local church as a most basic expression of their union with Christ.

Second, one may not partake if they are **not a communing member of the Church**. Because of the warnings that God gives in 1 Corinthians 11, Reformed churches have historically and consistently withheld the Lord's Supper from their own baptized children. Our BCO explains this practice: "Believer's children within the Visible Church, and especially dedicated to God in Baptism, are non-communing members under the care of the Church. They are to be taught to love God, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ...and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, to confess him before men, and to seek admission to the Lord's Supper." (One of the difficulties that arises here is determining *when* a covenant child is ready to come to the Table, and I hope to give some guidance on that question in a future article.)

Third, we fence the Table against those who are **not a member of the Church in good standing**. Good standing here simply means not under formal church discipline. Church discipline is the practice of church elders exercising the authority given them by Jesus – the king of the church – to instruct and guide its mem-

### January–February

#### 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:  
January 5, 19  
February 2, 16

#### Youth Game Night:

January 17 at 6:30 p.m. the church

#### Fellowship Meal:

January 5, following morning worship.

#### Shepherding Groups:

February 2, following morning worship.

#### Veterans' Restoration Quarters Meals:

Dates: To be determined. See Jeanette Carter for details.

#### Weekly Events

##### Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am	
Morning Worship	10:45 am	
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except for 1st Sundays

##### Wednesday Evenings: Beginning January 8

Supper	5:30 pm
Bible Study/Prayer	6:15 pm

#### Bible Study

##### For Men:

Men's Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS	8:00 am	Every Thursday
<i>(Retired Old Men Eating Out)</i>		
at J&S Cafeteria, River Ridge		
Norm Bomer's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

##### For Women:

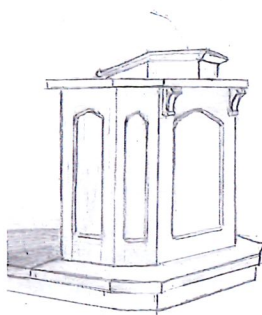
Carol Belz's Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
Fellowship Hall	10:30 am	Every Wednesday
Debbie Cate's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

Continued from Page 1

bers and to promote its purity and welfare. Unrepentant members who are guilty of particularly serious sins may – after due process – be suspended from the Lord’s Table. The Westminster Larger Catechism explains this practice: “Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord’s supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.” (Q173)

These three restrictions are by their nature objective: one either is or is not a communing member in good standing of an evangelical church, there is not much gray area. But often subjective questions arise from self-examination that are not so easily answered, and I want to close considering three of these questions. First, *should I take communion if I am a sinner?* Everyone is a sinner so this reality alone doesn’t keep us from the Table, but it does come with a condition: repentance. Any member who is living in willful and unrepentant sin will eat in an unworthy manner and should therefore refrain until they have been restored to God and sought forgiveness from those against whom they have sinned.

*Second, should I take communion if I have unreconciled conflict with another believer?* Jesus instructs us, “if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Mt 5:23-24) The Christian community is never without conflict and we are called by God to maintain the unity of the body of Christ. If you have contributed to disunity and have not been reconciled, then go back to the previous



## The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann

In January we will begin a new sermon series through the Old Testament prophetic book of Amos. One of my goals as an expository preacher – that is, one who aims to explain and apply biblical texts – is to preach the whole counsel of God. This means a commitment to preach through books of the Bible from both Testaments, and all the different genres found within. To maintain a balance I usually try to alternate between preaching from the Old and New Testaments, with the occasional topical series in between. To further maintain this balance and exposure to all of God’s word, we usually plan to preach from the opposite Testament in the evening than we are preaching from in the morning. This balance is more of an art than a science, and that is the case this year as we will turn again to

another Old Testament book before we return to the New Testament in the spring.

Though Amos is found in the same Old Testament as the Psalms of Ascents, it could not be more different. Instead of encouraging weary pilgrims as they journey through a foreign land, much of Amos confronts comfortable Israelites who live and act too much like the people of the foreign lands. Amos was a shepherd and farmer called from Judah to prophesy to her northern neighbor, the kingdom of Israel. His time period was one of unprecedented prosperity with great military success, territory expansion, and a growing wealthy class. Yet despite their prosperity, the sinful abuse of wealth and power plagued the nation, and served as the backdrop for the ominous prophecies brought by Amos. The word of God, through Amos, was intended to remind the people that God not only knows of their sin, but he cares deeply about the wrongs committed and he will bring universal judgment, not only on their neighboring nations, but on their own heads as well if they do not repent.

Join us this year as we hear the Lord “roaring from Zion and thundering from Jerusalem” (Amos 3:8).

question and seek restoration. However, there are times when our best efforts at reconciliation have failed to produce the desired effect and our conscience testifies to us that as far as it depends on us, we have lived peaceably with all (Rom 12:18). In these cases the Table is open to you and will hopefully be a means of further reconciliation between brothers and sisters.

A third and final question is found in the Larger Catechism, Question 172: “*May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord’s supper?*” In other words, what should we do in those difficult seasons of life when we doubt that we really are a Christian and are ready to eat with a clear conscience? The short answer is that it is not only *permissible* to come to the meal when we doubt; it is *recommended* for weak and doubting Christians as the very means by which we might be strengthened! If and when we have doubts, they are often an expression of the struggle to be sure of who we are in Christ, a struggle with assurance. In these times the Confession guides us to see that the worry over a lack of assurance, and a sincere desire to be found in Christ and flee from sin are, in and of themselves, sufficient reasons to come to the Table. When we find ourselves with these thoughts we should lament our unbelief and labor to have our doubts resolved, and in so doing come to the Lord’s Supper to be strengthened in the faith.

God gives this rich meal for our spiritual enrichment, but it is dangerous if we are not careful, so let us eat and drink together in a worthy manner, and so enjoy the rich blessings of God.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
Jan. 5	Amos 1:1	
Jan. 12	Amos 1:2-2:5	Installation
Jan. 19	Amos 2:6-16	1 John 3:11-18
Jan. 26	Amos 3	1 John 3:19-24
Feb. 2	Amos 4	
Feb. 9	Amos 5:1-17	1 John 4:1-6
Feb. 16	Amos 5:18-6:14	1 John 4:7-12
Feb. 23	Amos 7	1 John 4:13-21

## Jesus’ Prayer for Unity

By Rev. Chris Brown

Do you think that the Father answers Jesus’ requests? If your answer is “yes”, then I have some good news for you: the Church is and will be united. You might think this is an odd take-away, but consider how Jesus prays. In Luke 22:31, Jesus prays for Peter’s preservation. What happens? Peter is preserved. After Peter flees from the garden, after he denies the Lord three times, after he sees the tomb empty and is astonished, the Lord greets him on the shore. He restores him to his ministry, and comforts him. Not only this, but in John 17 Jesus also prays for His own glorification, “now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” After Jesus’ death, He is exalted, and raised up bodily, and gloriously rules with the Father in heaven now. Jesus also prays for our sanctification, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” And we trust that God is able to sanctify us, and will sanctify us, as Paul argues, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

But what about Jesus’ prayer for unity? He prays, “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one...now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Jesus prays, aloud, that the Father would grant us unity. He prays it aloud so that we will have joy. So, the logic is such: if Jesus’ prayers for preservation, glorification, and sanctification are answered, why would Jesus’ prayer for unity not be answered? If Jesus prays this aloud for our joy, why would we be joyless and disbelieving in the answered prayer of unity?

Perhaps we look around us, and see denominationalism, confessional differences, or doctrinal and ethical divisions, and wonder if Jesus’ prayer is answered. But His prayer is answered, dear Christian. When there is disunity and division, backbiting and jealousy, animosity and anger, we get the pastoral appeals of Paul, “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Christ Jesus, that you all agree, and that there be no divisions among you.” When false doctrine or false living creeps in, the Church has either removed those practicing these things, or else had to call herself out of it and meet elsewhere. But the True Church is always united in essential doctrine and deed because Jesus Christ has united us to Himself. In Ephesians, Paul argues that Jesus has made us all one flesh with Him—He the Head, and we the Body. He points out in Galatians that in Christ Jesus the things that once separated us from one another—our races, our genders, our jobs—are no longer separating factors. Our task then, is not to create unity, but preserve it. Paul argues, “I...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to *maintain* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” We are tasked with a maintenance job, and the means of maintenance are characteristics: humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, peace-making. Jesus prays for our unity, and gives it to us. What a wonderful gift, and what a precious task it is to maintain His peaceful union by working in love.

## Imperfect Pastor

by Rev. Chris Brown

*Im*perfect

*The Imperfect Pastor*\*

*\*Discovering joy in our limitations through a daily apprenticeship with Jesus*

by Zack Eswine

Zack Eswine’s most recent release is titled *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus*. While it is helpful for ministers, it is also helpful for members. For one, this work shows how ministers’ expectations about themselves need to be corrected. This means, inevitably, that members’ views of ministers may also need to be corrected. For another, this work aims to develop or adjust the devotional patterns of the Christian

life. When ministers live with certain desires, temptations, disordered inner lives, and questions about the nature of their work, these patterns flow out and are imitated by members. Anyone could read this book and find in it a helpful corrective in the areas of prayer and patience.

Eswine’s basic argument is that though ministers might be “above reproach” in our lives, we may be fueled by damaging desires, beset by plaguing temptations, disordered in the inner life, and confused about the nature of our work. So he approaches his work on ministry, not by listing out the ministerial qualifications (which are addressed in many other books on ministry), but by considering several angles of ministerial piety and practice: our desires, our temptations, our inner life and, last of all, our work. The idea is that our pastoring work must flow out of our pastored hearts.

Specifically, Eswine writes that often ministerial desire (and church member expectation) is for pastors to do a great, big work for God. He says, “Our desire for greatness in ministry isn’t the problem. Our problem rises from how the haste of doing large things, famously and as fast as we can, is reshaping our definition of what a great thing is.” But God has called ministers as servants, and servants are given small tasks to do all day. In Jesus’ estimation, the great things are to serve others out love. This requires things that ministers and members hate: not knowing it all, not being everywhere for all, not being able to fix it all. It means pastors must serve others and set an example by pointing them to Jesus’ complete and sufficient work. It also requires that pastors and the people be patient with the Lord’s plan and with one another. Eswine even devotes a whole chapter to the idea of quietness, which should be a regular study for all Christians. Overall, *The Imperfect Pastor* is a worthwhile read if you want to consider a useful corrective to big, bold, and unbiblical aims in the pastorate, and to maybe even implement some of his suggestions in your own devotional life.

## Church Prayer List

Prayer is a vital ministry in the life of our church and a key way that we love and support the fellow members of our community. The primary way that we do this is through our Prayer Chain Ministry, facilitated by Carol Esther Belz. Every week she collects requests and organizes them into a prayer list that is put out on Sunday. To submit prayer requests, or to receive the weekly list, please contact Carol at [ceb392@mac.com](mailto:ceb392@mac.com) or 828-231-1816.

The prayer chain usually reflects the most pressing needs of that week, so to complement that ministry we have published here in *The Saltshaker* more long-term requests amongst our membership. The items on this list are less detailed and less urgent, but still need prayer. Please set aside this single sheet to put on your fridge or in your Bible as a reminder to pray for our family. If you have an item to add to this list in the future, contact Lannae Graham at the church office: [crpchq@gmail.com](mailto:crpchq@gmail.com) or 828-253-6578.

### ILLNESS

Joel Belz  
Norm Bomer  
Wes Clapp  
Paul & Elizabeth Councilman  
Anna Dillingham  
Terry Elniff  
Linda Eubanks  
Phyllis Lemley  
Mike Littlejohn  
Nancy Markhoff  
Pat Martin  
Dave Murray  
Jack Padgett  
Mike Quinn  
Alida VanWeelden  
T. J. Wallace

### HOMEBOUND

Linda Cheek  
Ken and Tanya Jackson  
Bill Porter

### MILITARY

Ben Voigt

### LIVING QUARTERS

Elnathan Barnett

### COVENANT REFORMED MINISTRIES

We depend on the Spirit's power to gather and grow disciples by embracing the Ordinary Means of Grace in our worship, nurture, and witness.

Pray for our WORSHIP - specifically for our services to glorify the triune God with reverence and awe through heart-felt repentance and rejoicing in our great salvation.

Pray for our NURTURE - specifically for the spiritual care and oversight of every member of the church, that they would find comfort in Christ.

Pray for our WITNESS - specifically for humble boldness to step through the doors of evangelism that God has opened for us, that we would be a loving witness to our neighbors, as well as our North Asheville community and the University of North Carolina-Asheville.

### LOCAL MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Asheville Christian Academy  
Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry  
Black Mountain Home for Children  
Canterbury Classical School  
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship—Andrea Kaiser, UNC Asheville  
Life Advocates  
Mountain Area Pregnancy Center  
New City Christian School  
Reformed University Ministry:  
•Rob Herron—Appalachian State University  
•Andrew Shank—Western Carolina University  
•Kate Anderson—Intern Western Carolina University  
Reynolds Mountain Christian Academy  
Western Carolina Rescue Mission

### GLOBAL MISSIONARIES

Ellen Barnett—Mexico  
Scott Brinkerhoff—South Sudan  
Michael & Billie Coleman—Puritan Project, Brazil  
Ron Elkin—AMMI (Ministry to Jews)  
Marc Hoyle—Bible Centered Ministries  
Jake & Melissa Hunt—Czech Republic  
Heidi Meiners—Hungary  
John & Elizabeth Sexton—Medical Missions  
Roger & Dianne Smalling—Latin America  
David & Robin White—Mission to the World Administration

## Session Minute

News and notes from the last few months of Session meetings:

**Parking Lot Update** –Tom Voigt reports, “Due to the occasional rain we’ve had and a few areas of remedial work we have requested, we are behind probably a couple of weeks on our completion date. Yet we expect to have the parking lot paved and usable even if the striping isn’t done yet by the end of January, and emergency phones and lighting finished by the end of February. Landscaping should be underway in March. It’s going to be beautiful and we have much to be thankful for. Our God is so faithful!”

**New Member Interviews** – Over the past two months the Session has had the joyful necessity of calling a number of meetings to interview perspective members. In these meetings we have heard the testimonies of Clay, Carol, and Palmer Dangerfield, Mary Buys, Gordon and Kristen Eckley, and Grey and Linda Dixon. These interviews are always a joy to hear about how God has been at work in the lives of his children and the various and wonderful ways he has brought them into our community. Please make every effort to greet and welcome these new members into our family

**Playground** – In 2019 we received 17 new children into membership. This is a wonderful blessing and an answer to many years of prayer, and it is also put a level of stress on our nursery ministry and children's classes. Another area we have felt that stress is to have a place for children to go after services and at other various times throughout the week. It is the desire of the Session and Deacons to work together to plan a play area or playground that would be safe and welcoming for our children. We are in the early stages of these plans, so please reach out to an elder or deacon if you have any thoughts or would like to help with this project.

**Wednesday Evening Timing** – As we look ahead to the New Year we decided to shift our Wednesday night activities to an earlier time. Starting in January, dinner will be served at 5:30, the prayer meeting and children’s activities will begin at 6:15, and we will aim to conclude all our activities by 7:15. We hope this new schedule will be more accessible to everyone and lead to a greater participation in prayer and fellowship.

**Shepherding Groups and Fellowship Meals** - Another schedule change we have planned for the New Year is to revise the months in which we have our Shepherding Groups and Fellowship Meals. In 2020 we have scheduled our Shepherding Groups to meet quarterly, while on the first Sundays of the rest of the months we will gather together for Fellowship Meals. Our Shepherding Groups will meet in February, May, August, and November.

**Local Outreach Team** – As part of our continual prayers and efforts to grow our witness in the community, we tasked Pastor Chris Brown to assemble a team of members to help lead and serve our congregation in evangelism and outreach to our local community. Be on the look out for more information about this ministry in the coming months.

And as always, our meetings are filled with prayer for the ministries of our church and the needs of the flock. Please continue to pray for the work of your elders and the shepherding care and leadership that they seek to provide

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## Ministry Highlight

### UNCA COFFEE OUTREACH

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church has a number of ministries that may be unfamiliar to you, or perhaps have fallen off of your regular prayer list. Each of our ministries is related to our philosophy of ministry commitment to worship, nurture, and witness. For that reason, in each edition of the *Saltshaker*, we will focus on a ministry of CRPC, explain how it is related to our philosophy of ministry, and how you can get involved.

In this edition of the Saltshaker, we are focusing on the **UNCA COFFEE OUTREACH** events that we host twice a year. Part of our goal is to reach out to UNCA students and staff, with the hope and goal that they will become disciples of Jesus who join a true Church. An initial way to “reach out” to students and staff is to find ways of making meaningful connections or interactions with them. Many campus ministries have found a way of getting to know students by helping with student move-in in the Fall. UNCA teachers actually provide this assistance to students each year, and so this common opportunity to meet students is not available for us. We have tried another approach a few times now, and plan to continue it as long as the Lord blesses it: coffee outreach. There are several apartment complexes near our Church, and many students walk past our building to get to classes. When they arrive in the Fall, or when they return in the Winter, we set up tables with coffee and snacks to distribute, and greet them with a friendly face as they walk to their first classes.

The response, thus far, to the coffee outreach has been overwhelmingly positive. On occasion, students or neighbors have gawked or ignored us, but the large part of students are happily surprised to see us and to receive something. We have even had one student announce that our friendliness towards her had lifted her out of a dark, dark day. In some cases, students linger after their classes are done, and chat with us. In these times, we have opportunity to explain what we believe about Jesus Christ. If you are interested in participating in a ministry like this, please contact Pastor Chris or