

First Covenant

Church & Community Profile



DEAR LEAD PASTOR CANDIDATE,

Thank you for your interest in the Lead Pastor position at First Covenant Church in Jamestown, New York. The Pastoral Search Committee is seeking an individual who will guide us in the next chapter of our 144 year history as we continue on our mission "To Know Christ and Make Him Known".

First Covenant Church has had three downtown locations since it was organized in 1879 by a group of Swedish immigrants. While we treasure this heritage, our emphasis is on belonging to Jesus Christ rather than to any nationality, race, or class, and we welcome all to participate in the life of our church. We are situated between a downtown that is being renewed to the south and a neighborhood that is declining to the north. This surrounding community is ripe for outreach, and our new Lead Pastor will find many opportunities to grow God's kingdom while serving alongside the people of First Covenant.

We recognize that this a crucial moment in the life of our church and have sought guidance through prayer, through our Leadership Team, and from congregational input gathered at recent town meetings as we search for our next Lead Pastor. We are looking for someone who will faithfully preach the Word of God, work alongside our Pastor of Youth and Adult Ministries to lead worship services, ensure that prayer is the foundation of our ministry, and be a visionary leader as we at First Covenant earnestly desire to expand our existing ministries and create new ones, all for the glory of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. (A detailed job description can be found in the CovConnect profile).

We offer thanks to God for those who led us to this point in our church mission and pray for those He is calling to join us. If, after prayerful consideration, this position sounds like a good fit for you, please send us your resume. Our Search Committee members are eager to discern with you whether God is calling us to ministry together.

In Christ's Service,

Norman Lydell, Chair of Search Committee

Margie Coulter, Church Chair

Amy Cross, Cody Gustafson, Cathy Hagadorn, Rob Meger, Clark Stein, Barry Strausser

OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

First Covenant Church is located in the city of Jamestown in the southwest corner of New York State, 90 miles south of Buffalo, and nestled in the beauty of Chautauqua County near the shores of Chautauqua Lake. The city is the birthplace of several famous individuals including legendary comedienne, Lucille Ball, Roger Tory Peterson (naturalist and author-illustrator of the Peterson Field Guides on Birds), NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell, and singer-songwriter, Natalie Merchant. Jamestown is also the home of Robert H. Jackson (US Supreme Court Justice, 1941-1954, and Chief US Prosecutor of the Nuremberg Trials) and the alternative rock band, 10,000 Maniacs.

Nearby is Chautauqua Institution, a popular center for arts, education, religion, and recreation. The Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History and the Robert H. Jackson Center are both in Jamestown, as well as the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum, and the National Comedy Center, a world-renowned cultural institution dedicated to presenting the story of comedy and preserving its heritage.



Recreational pursuits in our area include golf and lake sports in the summer months; and in the winter, sledding, snowmobiling, downhill and cross country skiing are popular pastimes since we are in the snow belt. Click on [Find Yourself](#) to view more information about our area.

Mission Meadows, our denominational camp and retreat center, is less than twenty miles away on beautiful Chautauqua Lake. Campers of all ages encounter God and Jesus and broaden their faith in new ways at summer camp and at retreats. First Covenant gives strong support to this wonderful place which provides ministry opportunities all year round.



NATIONAL
COMEDY
CENTER

OUR STAFF & LEADERSHIP



Julie Anderson- Challingsworth

Pastor of Youth & Adult
Ministries & Director of Worship



Sarah Oehlbeck

Office/Business Manager



Margie Coulter

Church Chair



Debbie Drake

Vice Chair



Brenda Chandler

Co-Secretary



Matt Kindberg

Co-Secretary



Cody Gustafson

Treasurer



Kaye Young

Financial Secretary



Mat Hagberg

Properties Chair



● MISSION & VISION

MISSION

"To know Christ and make Him known"

VISION

At First Covenant Church, we believe the most important goal of any church is to focus on knowing Jesus and making his work, our work.

Through Sunday Worship Services, Sunday School, Discipleship Groups, Family Events, and our 520 Youth Initiatives, we strive to live the full and abundant life only attainable through living as God would have us live.

OUR AFFILIATION

We belong to The Evangelical Covenant Church, a growing, multi-ethnic, inter-generational mosaic of churches with ministry partnerships in nearly 40 countries. We take our theology and our history seriously, and we value the early creeds. Our common Christian affirmations are that we are an apostolic, catholic, Reformation, and evangelical church.

OUR HISTORY

In the mid-19th century, conditions in Sweden led thousands of mostly young Swedes to emigrate to America. Many settled in the mid-west but many also settled in Jamestown where they readily found work in the thriving furniture industry here. Several of these immigrants had come to new life in Christ during the revivals in Sweden, and they brought their faith as well as their skilled craftsmanship to America with them. In the late 1870's a group of Swedish immigrants living in Jamestown gathered together in homes for Bible study and prayer. On November 27, 1879, 33 charter members formally established the Swedish Christian Mission Church of Jamestown, NY.

Their homes soon became too small for the rapidly expanding congregation, and a small, wooden church was built in 1881. This was replaced by a much larger brick church in 1897 which served the congregation until it was destroyed by fire in October 1949. Through sacrificial giving and much volunteer labor a new building was dedicated in November 1952 which continues to serve as our sanctuary. Our Christian Education building was added in 1960.

Despite being almost 144 years old, throughout the years, our congregation has been willing to try new things. In the early 1900's, Pastor A. T. Frykman rode a motorcycle to minister to his congregation, something that was very unusual for an immigrant pastor in that era. In the early 1920's, when radio was still in its infancy, our church began broadcasting our services over the small local radio station- one of the first churches in all of western NY to do something like this. In 1972 we began, for a short while, airing our morning services on a local TV channel, again, a first for this area. In 2020 when churches were forced to close as part of the COVID quarantine, we gathered together in the church parking lot and sat in our cars listening to our service broadcast over a local low frequency FM radio station. We followed the quarantine rules but still gathered together as God's people to worship.



Our second church was built with gingerbread architecture and wooden sidewalks.



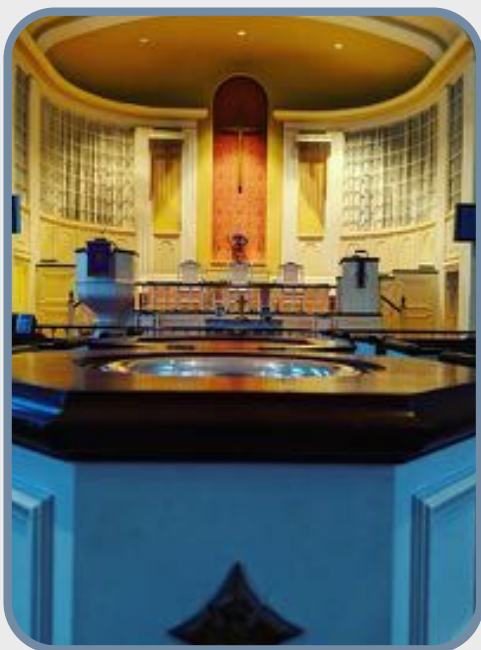
Chandler Street Church



First Covenant Today

OUR HISTORY

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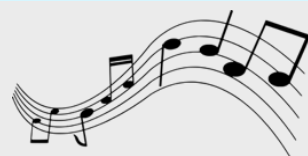


Music has always been a part of worship for the church, and music has always had a central place in the life of our congregation. A string band was organized in 1909 and a pipe organ installed in the church in 1916. In 1976 our church choir traveled to Sweden and gave concerts in Covenant churches there as well as a special performance for the king and queen at their palace. In 1985 the Living Christmas Tree began and for more than 30 years, this event at our church began the Christmas season for about 1500 people from our community each year.

The word 'mission' was a part of our original name, and throughout our history missions, both to the world and to our local community, have been a central part of our church life. During the early 1900's our congregation took on the responsibility of providing full support for a missionary in China, and we have continued to support Covenant World Missions all over the world. During the 1990's our church sent two mission trip groups to Oaxaca, Mexico to help there. Christian Radio for Russia was founded by a member of our congregation.

In the late 1960's First Covenant established a very successful preschool which operated for more than 50 years as a ministry to families in our community. A Boy Scout troop serving the community was established in 1957. The 1970's saw the creation of "The Bridge", a Christian coffee house, and the formation of a Youth Chorale. Also in the 1970's our church helped to start Harbor House which served as temporary housing and counseling for troubled youth. In 1996 our congregation started a seeker-friendly contemporary service as a means to reach another segment of our community. In 2007 our church helped to organize Nueva Vida, a Hispanic Covenant Church, and they shared our facilities for many years. A food pantry, which each month provides food, clothing, encouragement, and hope to the neighborhood around our church has been a vital part of our outreach for the last 15 years. Recently, our church started a tutoring ministry at a near-by school.

Our current mission statement is "To Know Christ and to make Him known." In reality, that sums up our history for the last 144 years. Thanks be to God!





OUR CONGREGATION

Age Range	Percentage of Congregation
90 years & Older	5.6%
70-89 years old	27.4%
50-69 years old	26.3%
30-49 years old	10%
19-29 years old	15.1%
18 years & Younger	15.6%



LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

In a recent discussion among leadership, it is clear that First Covenant Church is in a time of revision and renewal. Due to the COVID pandemic and because of long-time ministries that have run their course, First Covenant has been through a pruning period over the last five years. Ministries such as The Living Christmas Tree, First Covenant Preschool, and Nueva Vida Covenant Church had been an important part of First Covenant's life for decades. Over the last few years, each of these came to an end and First Covenant is now looking for new opportunities and ministries in which to invest.

Because of this, a concerted effort to renew congregational prayer life has become foundational. In a recent survey of the leadership team, Godly leadership and prayer ranked as the highest strengths at First Covenant. The desire to follow wherever God's spirit moves is alive among many in the congregation. Alongside of this, a patience to hear from God has been instilled.

A pruning and revisioning period does not come without its challenges. Finances have lagged along with a desire to participate in the ministries of the church. With new staff, fresh vision and prayerful discernment, the leadership team of First Covenant is confident that God has plans to use this downtown church in fresh and creative ways.

The broad mission of knowing Christ and making Him known is a true priority as First Covenant is situated in between a downtown that is being renewed to the south and a neighborhood that is declining to the north. The need to actively participate in city renewal while providing for those who are left out of city revitalization is a very real concern for First Covenant. Based on location, the church sits on the border of a distressed area of the city. The primary way that First Covenant ministers to the needs of our neighborhood is our monthly food pantry which provides food, household items, and prayer support.

Coming out of the pandemic and pruning years, morale is hopeful, yet somewhat tired. In preparation for a new lead pastor and new vision, First Covenant has a full-time Youth & Adult Ministries Pastor and Office Manager, along with a part-time choir director and accompanist. Recently, by-law changes followed a desire to move from the council system to a Leadership Team form of governance. This has made leadership more efficient and streamlined decision making.

First Covenant knows that as we continue to run the race set out before us, we will keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. We trust that God has put us here in this unique position for God's glory and our neighbor's good.



● WORSHIP & ACTIVITIES

- Sunday Worship is a combined contemporary/traditional service at 10:00 AM on Sunday mornings. We meet together each week in the sanctuary while the service can be viewed on Facebook Live or listened to in the nearby surrounding area on FM radio 90.7.
- Adult Sunday School follows the worship service. A confirmation Sunday School Class will begin in the fall. At this time, we don't have a Director of Children's Ministries, but have a sincere desire to re-establish children's Sunday School and other activities for our youngest in our congregation. Cov Kids is a children's worship group that meets on Sunday mornings following the Children's Moment during the worship service.

- 520 Youth Group is our shared youth ministry with Zion Covenant and meets on Sunday nights along with small groups on Wednesday evenings and sponsors special events throughout the year, including participation in the Covenant denomination's CHIC/Unite. 520Youth is where young people, grades 7-12, develop strong, healthy relationships with God, their family and friends, and the world around them through Bible Study, fun activities, and service projects.
- The First and Zion Covenant Choir sings at both churches (First Cov. service at 10 AM and Zion Cov. at 11:15 AM) two times each month, September - May. We have rehearsals on two Thursday evenings per month at First Covenant, a time in which we rehearse our music, have fun fellowship together, and sometimes enjoy treats!



WORSHIP & ACTIVITIES *continued...*

- Our church library has a large, up-to-date collection of both children and adult books covering a wide variety of genres, as well as a nice selection of DVDs and CDs. People are welcome to sign out books on Sunday mornings and during the week.
- God's Pantry opens its doors to the community on the second Friday of each month. It is run by church volunteers and provides food, clothing, toys, and household necessities to our neighbors.



- Fika, a Swedish custom of getting together with friends to share coffee or tea and something to eat, meets weekly for a morning snack and once a month for lunch.
- In addition to a prayer time at 9 AM via Zoom Monday - Friday, we have a midweek time of prayer that meets at the church on Wednesdays at 11:00 AM for a time to seek God's will together.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Volunteers from our congregation have ministered at the neighborhood school, Love Elementary, through tutoring, reading with students, and helping with the school's Impact group.
- A monthly Book Club, led by Pastor Julie Anderson-Challingsworth, meets on the first Monday of each month to discuss a pre-selected book and have a snack together.
- New Life Circle is a women's group that meets monthly for food and fellowship.
- A men's breakfast group meets monthly at a local restaurant.
- Special Annual Events held at First Covenant include a neighborhood block party where we share God's love with food, fun, games, give-aways, and fellowship; and a summer celebration to honor the birthdays and anniversaries of the senior members of our church family.



COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AT FIRST COVENANT



- The Jamestown Area Community Orchestra (JACO) rehearses and presents their semi-annual concerts in our sanctuary.
- The Chautauqua Region Community Foundation (CRCF) holds their annual scholarship auditions in our sanctuary and fellowship hall.
- A local Girl Scout Troop meets in our church.
- Chautauqua Big Band Swing rehearses in our sanctuary.
- A series of monthly jazz concerts is held in our sanctuary, raising money for our organ restoration project and music ministry fund.

CHAUTAUQUA REGION
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



FIRST COVENANT MISSIONS

First Covenant Church has always had a heart for missions, both near and far.

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL WE SUPPORT:

- UCAN City Mission
- Love, INC.
- Community Helping Hands
- Impact
- St. Susan's Center
- Options Care Center
- Gideons International



GLOBALLY, WE SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING COVENANT MISSIONARIES:

- Barb & Steve Swanson (Serve Globally - Malmo, Sweden)
- John & Letha Kerl (Serve Globally - Europe)
- James Tang & wife, Nyaluak Gai (South Sudan)
- Johnna & Fabio Muniz (Cultural Fusion with Serve Globally - Lyon, France)





FIRST COVENANT CHURCH

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