



# COVENANT CONNECTION

1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2026



*Princess  
R&K*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**03** **FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**  
A special message  
from Rev. Dr. Patrick L.  
Daymond.

**04** **BWS LIFE CENTER NEWS**  
See what we've been up to  
and how you can help.

**07** **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**  
Discover what's ahead and  
how you can take part.

**08** **YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT NEWS**  
See what our youth have been  
doing and how yours can join  
in.

**09** **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**  
Look back at ADHD &  
Autism Education event  
and our community's fight  
against Alzheimer's.





# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

REV. DR. PATRICK L. DAYMOND, SENIOR PASTOR



Beloved Covenant Family,

Grace and peace to you in this season of renewal and reflection. As we look back over the first quarter of the year, my heart is filled with gratitude for the many ways God has been moving in and through the ministry of Covenant United Church of Christ.

We began this year anchored in our theme, “Walking in Creative Possibilities.” From the very start, it has been clear that God is stretching us beyond the familiar and inviting us into fresh expressions of faith, service, and witness.

Our opening sermon series, “We Outside,” laid a powerful foundation for this journey. We were challenged to step outside—outside of our comfort zones, outside of our networks, and even outside the walls of the church—to share the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone we encounter. I am encouraged to report that many of you have embraced this call with boldness. Because of your willingness, we are witnessing the expansion of God’s kingdom in tangible and transformative ways.

We ushered in the year with a week of fasting and prayer that was both powerful and palpable. There was a spiritual intensity that set the tone for what has unfolded since—reminding us that everything we do must be rooted in God’s presence and power.

Our Marriage Ministry experienced a meaningful revival through a dynamic retreat led by Dr. Geno Gibson and Lady Shakitha Gibson. Their wisdom and guidance helped us relaunch this vital ministry with renewed strength and purpose.

We also continue to invest intentionally in our youth and young adults, and it is evident that these seeds are bearing fruit. Both ministries are growing by leaps and bounds, and it is a joy to witness the next generation rising in faith, leadership, and commitment.

During Black History Month, we hosted our first Black History Expo, “Born to Be a Legend.” This powerful event celebrated the richness of our heritage and uncovered stories that both inspired and educated. It was a meaningful reminder that our history is filled with resilience, brilliance, and divine purpose.

Our Lenten journey was deeply enriching, as many gathered each morning on the prayer line, guided by our devotional. This sacred rhythm of prayer and reflection drew us closer to God and to one another. We culminated the season with our Spring Revival, which proved to be an extraordinary worship experience—uplifting, empowering, and spiritually renewing.

As we move forward, we remain expectant. We believe that God will continue to spark creativity within us so that we might effectively reach the lost, the least, the left out, and the lonely for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your flexibility, and your fervor. The best is yet to come.

Love U 2 Life,

Pastor Patrick L. Daymond

# BWS LIFE CENTER NEWS

REV. DR. TROY UNDERWOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Making A Case for Community Investment

As part of the Sustainable Solutions for Sacred Sites initiative, BWS Life Center exemplifies how faith-owned spaces can be reimaged to serve broader community needs while remaining rooted in their spiritual mission.

Featured in the Bricks & Mortals publication, the BWS Family Center has become a beacon of community investment and innovation. Its flagship STEAM Center breaks down educational barriers by providing transformative science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics programming for local youth. With significant grant support, including a major award from the Cook County Department of Public Health, the Center has launched impactful programs, such as the STEAM Summer Camp, serving over 150 students.



The BWS Life Center's story is a testament to the power of adaptive reuse and community partnership. By quantifying its impact and sharing its vision, BWS has inspired increased support and investment, demonstrating how sacred spaces can become engines of equity, education, and well-being. We celebrate BWS as a model for congregations nationwide, showing what is possible when faith communities embrace change and invest in their neighborhoods.





**An Excerpt from *Cook County Department of Public Health* | Feb 25, 2026**

**Partner in the Spotlight: The Barbara W. Smith Life Center Builds Youth Through STEAM**

The Barbara W. Smith Life Center (BWS), a nonprofit affiliate of Covenant United Church of Christ in South Holland, Ill., is a trusted community partner serving families across the Southland.

Named in memory of the wife of Covenant's pastor emeritus, the Rev. Ozzie E. Smith, Jr., the Barbara W. Smith Life Center, is grounded in five core pillars: food access, environmental advocacy, health and wellness, housing stability, and social justice.

At the heart of the center's work is a deep commitment to STEAM, or science, technology, engineering, arts, and math, as a driver of growth, creativity and long-term resilience. Supported in part by funding from Cook County Department of Public Health, the center's STEAM program has provided nearly 300 young people with hands-on learning experiences that build confidence, critical thinking, and real-world skills.

What started as a summer program in 2023 quickly grew into something bigger. Youth explored gardening, sustainability, robotics and creative problem-solving while also receiving meals and mentorship in a safe, welcoming space.

"It became this big vortex of community issues spinning together," said Rev. Troy Underwood, the center's executive director. "Environmental awareness, food access, teamwork, learning—it all connected."

Today, STEAM touches nearly every part of the Life Center's work. Youth learn through hands-on activities that include art, theater, LEGO-based collaboration, and even a return to "analog" learning using physical books, handwriting, and group projects that encourage focus, communication, and conflict resolution.

"Creative play is a big part of how we do this," said Underwood. "It helps kids build confidence, work together, and find their voice."

This spring, BWS Life Center is expanding its STEAM vision even further with the launch of a new videography and media production program for high school students from four south suburban high schools. Designed to meet teens where they are, the program builds on their interest in platforms like TikTok and Snapchat while teaching real-world media skills, portfolio development and career pathways. Students who complete the program will be eligible for stipends.

"We've focused a lot on third through eighth grade," Underwood explained. "This program lets us reach high school students and give them tools they can actually use to step into a future career."

Partnerships with public health and community organizations have been essential in making this work possible—allowing BWS Life Center to support not just individual youth, but entire families.

"We try to connect with the whole family," Underwood said. "These partnerships help us keep momentum going, even when resources are tight." As BWS Life Center enters its seventh year, its STEAM programs reflect a simple but powerful belief: When young people are given space to create, learn, and lead, entire communities grow stronger.

## LIGHTS. CAMERA. ACTION.

Fifteen high school students stepped behind the camera this month as part of our new 6-week Videography & Content Creator Program. From storyboarding to shooting to editing, these young creators are learning to shape their own narratives and amplify their voices. Their creativity is already shining, and we can't wait to share their final projects with the community.



*On a live set helping a student at Chicago State University with their final project toward a Master of Fine Arts degree.*

## THE FOOD PANTRY SERVING UP HEALTHY FOODS RIGHT FROM THE PANTRY SHELVES

Thanks to a generous grant from Grubhub, our food pantry is doing more than distributing groceries — we're empowering our neighbors with the skills to turn pantry staples into delicious meals and treats. Once a month, Thee Chef Maria hosts live cooking demonstrations that show just how far a can of beans, or a few simple ingredients from our shelves, can go.

These sessions are hands-on, joyful, and rooted in dignity. Neighbors learn how to stretch their budgets, reduce food waste, and discover new recipes they can recreate at home. From hearty soups to creative snacks to sweet baked goods, the kitchen has become a place of learning, laughter, and community connection.

The Grubhub grant is helping us nourish more than bodies — it's helping us nourish confidence, creativity, and community, and providing a table of welcome for all we serve.





# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

REV. DR. CARMIN FREDERICK-JAMES

Our 2026 Lenten season was a powerful time of collective transformation. We successfully navigated a shift away from the complexity of cluttered lives toward a life focused on God's presence. Through our 7:14 AM prayer calls—which averaged 125 participants daily—and our new Co-Creation spaces, we saw burdens like busyness and isolation rolled away. Participants shared that they left this season feeling equipped, energized, and changed. This journey proved that when we simplify our focus, we become more effective at reflecting God's light to those around us.



Are you a **new member**? Did you join in the last year? You're invited to join us for our **Settling In Session on May 2nd**. You'll be contacted directly by our membership team with more details. We look forward to helping you move from "new member" to a "stakeholder" in the vineyard we call Covenant United Church of Christ.

## IS GOD CALLING YOU TO LEAD?

To continue this momentum and build a sustainable rhythm for our community, we are seeking to build a "deep bench" of equipped leaders. We invite you to join our upcoming Host and Teacher Training to help us build even more pathways for people to encounter Christ.

- **Who:** Both new and current teachers and hosts.
- **What:** Explore the difference between teaching and hosting while sharpening your skills to support our mission: "connecting the disconnected to Christ and equipping the connected to be more like Christ".
- **Requirement:** There will be four sessions; you are asked to attend at least two.

Save the Dates:

- **June 20:** 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Sanctuary – In-person only)
- **June 27:** 10:00 – 11:30 AM (12F – In-person only)
- **July 11:** 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM (12F) – Preferred hybrid; Zoom only if necessary.
- **September 12:** 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM (12F) – In-person only)

Whether you have a gift for instruction or a heart for facilitating safe spaces where others can process their journey, your contribution is vital. Join us as we move forward together, firmly established in the peace of God's grace.

# COVENANT YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT NEWS

REV. KEVON CARTER

We are incredibly proud of our Total Praise Dance Ministry and SYNC Steppers for the outstanding job they did ministering during Youth Church. Their dedication, discipline, and heart for worship were evident in every movement and step. They didn't just perform, they truly ministered, creating an atmosphere that inspired and uplifted everyone in attendance.

We invite all youth who are interested in dance, stepping, and expressing their faith through movement to join us. Whether you're experienced or just getting started, there is a place for you to grow, serve, and be part of something meaningful. Come be a part of what God is doing through these dynamic ministries!

## FROM OUR YOUNG ADULTS

Kendall Dickerson

I'm extremely grateful that Covenant launched a Young Adult Bible Study. A few months ago, I called the church to see if they had one—and at the time, they didn't. About a month later, Rev. Kevon reached out and shared that they were launching it.

Since then, I've been able to learn and truly dissect God's Word like never before. I believe it's essential for young adults to study and adhere to the Word as much as possible because we're next up. It truly is the foundation of life.

I've also been blessed to be surrounded by a strong community of people who are on the same mission, along with solid instruction that challenges and sharpens us spiritually.

If you're a young adult looking to grow in your faith, deepen your understanding of scripture, and walk alongside like-minded believers, I highly encourage you to get connected. This space has been a blessing to me, and I believe it can be one to you as well.





# COVENANT HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEWS

REV. ETHEL SOUTHERN

The Health & Wellness Ministry at Covenant United Church of Christ remains committed to nurturing the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of our congregation and the surrounding community. Grounded in faith, compassion, and education, the ministry serves as a vital bridge between health awareness and practical action. During the first quarter of the year, the Health & Wellness Ministry provided meaningful opportunities for education, movement, dialogue, and access to critical health resources. Each initiative was intentionally designed to meet members and community participants where they are and to connect them with resources customized to their individual and family needs.

To support healthy lifestyle goals and New Year's resolutions, the ministry continued its weekly yoga and chair exercise classes. These sessions consistently welcomed 50+ participants, offering not only physical movement but also a supportive environment for fellowship, encouragement, and positive social interaction. These gatherings have become safe and affirming spaces where individuals engage in conversation, build relationships, and support one another's wellness journeys.



## ADHD & AUTISM: EQUITY IN DIAGNOSIS AND CARE

This quarter, the ministry addressed critical disparities affecting Black children with ADHD and autism, who often experience delayed diagnoses, misdiagnosis, and reduced access to culturally responsive care. Recognizing the impact of systemic bias, stigma, and lack of resources, the Health & Wellness Ministry presented timely, factual, and empowering information to families, caregivers, and educators.

Two dedicated professionals shared expertise and practical tools:

- **Dr. Mason Newell, Ph.D., Special Education Expert**

Dr. Newell provided essential information on IEP and 504 classroom strategies, emphasizing the importance of educating parents about their rights and responsibilities when advocating for children with diverse learning needs. Families received guidance on navigating school systems and securing appropriate academic support.

- **Jasmin Ford, PMHNP-BC**

Ms. Ford presented on early signs and pathways to diagnosis for ADHD and autism, including how to recognize symptoms and understand available medical and therapeutic treatment options. Parents gained clarity on next steps and were empowered to pursue timely evaluations and interventions.

The session welcomed parents from the church and community, as well as administrators from partnering schools. Attendees engaged in meaningful dialogue and had one-on-one conversations with presenters, ensuring their questions and personal concerns were addressed.



### **FAITH & MEMORY: PROTECTING OUR BRAIN TOGETHER**

Alzheimer's & Mental Health Awareness

Consistent with our holistic, wraparound approach, the Health & Wellness Ministry hosted "Faith & Memory: Protecting Our Brain Together," an important community conversation focused on the rising impact of Alzheimer's disease and mental health challenges in our community.

The ministry partnered with leading health organizations, including:

- Alzheimer's Association
- Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center
- University of Chicago Health – Aging & Alzheimer's Medicine
- Northwestern Medicine Mesulam Institute for Cognitive Neurology & Alzheimer's Disease



These partnerships allowed participants to receive:

- Accurate and up-to-date information
- Direct access to experts
- Resource referrals for caregivers and loved ones
- On-site cognitive screenings, with more than 30 individuals screened

Community members attended seeking guidance, education, and reassurance, and many were connected to follow-up care and support services tailored to their specific circumstances.

### IMPACT & LOOKING AHEAD

Throughout the first quarter, the Health & Wellness Ministry remained intentional about addressing prevalent and emerging health concerns through education, faith-based engagement, and direct access to trusted resources. By fostering collaboration with healthcare professionals and community partners, the ministry successfully connected individuals and families to services aligned with their unique needs.

As we look forward to the remaining quarters of the year, the Health & Wellness Ministry is committed to continuing this vital work—connecting the disconnected, empowering informed decision-making, and ensuring our faith community remains supported in mind, body, and spirit.



# PHOTOS OF THE QUARTER





# PHOTOS OF THE QUARTER





# CURRENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS



**MOTHER'S DAY BREAKFAST REGISTRATION**  
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN - BREAKFAST IS SATURDAY, MAY 9

Scan to Register Covenant Members Only

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**MOTHER'S DAY**  
SATURDAY, MAY 9TH  
DOORS OPEN AT 10:15 AM



**M.G.M. MOTION, GARDENING & MUSIC FOR SENIORS**  
RESUMES APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup> | TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS AT 9:30 - 11:30 A.M.

- Gardening with individual containers
- Music of yesteryear & some of the greatest big bands and jazz musicians of the past and present!

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**MGM**  
TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS  
9:30 - 11:30 AM

HEALTH AND FITNESS MINISTRY PRESENTS

**CHAIR EXERCISE & LINE DANCE**

Wednesdays on the following dates:  
March 11, 18, 25  
April 8, 15, 22  
May 13, 20, 27  
June 10, 17, 24  
July 8, 15, 22  
No August Dates  
September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30  
October 7, 14, 21, 28

Chair Exercise 5 P.M. - 6 P.M.  
Line Dance 6 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

BWS FAMILY LIFE CENTER

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**CHAIR & LINE DANCING**  
WEDNESDAYS ON THE DATES LISTED ABOVE

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**YOGA CLASSES**

SATURDAYS  
9:30 - 10:30 AM

UPCOMING DATES:  
APRIL: 11, 18, 25  
MAY: 9, 16, 30  
JUNE: 6, 20, 27

Come and explore the many benefits of Yoga

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**YOGA CLASSES**  
SATURDAYS \*DATES LISTED ABOVE  
9:30 - 10:30 AM

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**THE BRIDGE**  
YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Every First and Third Wednesday  
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Looking for a place to connect, grow, and talk about real life and real faith?  
Come as you are. Leave encouraged.

Come enjoy food, fellowship, and faith-filled conversation.  
Where faith meets life!

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**THE BRIDGE**  
EVERY FIRST AND THIRD WEDNESDAY  
6:30 - 8:00 PM

**NOON BIBLE STUDY**

EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 12:00 PM

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**NOON BIBLE STUDY**  
EVERY WEDNESDAY AT NOON

**IF MY PEOPLE PRAYER CALL**

WITH PASTOR PATRICK L. DAYMOND

EVERY WEDNESDAY @ 7:14AM

Dial: (760) 548-9759

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**IF MY PEOPLE PRAYER CALL**  
EVERY WEDNESDAY @ 7:14 A.M.  
With Rev. Dr. Patrick L. Daymond  
Dial: 760-548-9759

**WORD THERAPY** with Patrick L. Daymond

SEASON 5

MORE WORD. MORE THERAPY. MORE INSIGHT.

Find us on YouTube  
Word Therapy

New Season starts October 7<sup>th</sup>

**WORD THERAPY**  
RESUMES MAY 5TH  
EVERY TUESDAY AT 7:00 P.M.  
EXCLUSIVELY ON YOUTUBE

# JOIN US VIRTUALLY AND IN PERSON

## WEEKLY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

### SUNDAY WORSHIP

Sunday Worship 7:30 A.M. and 11 A.M.  
Sunday School 9:30 A.M.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

FB, Instagram & TikTok: @covucc

### EMAIL

[Info@covucc.org](mailto:Info@covucc.org)

### WORD THERAPY

Tuesday at 7 p.m.  
Exclusively on YouTube

### BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday at 12 P.M.

### RADIO BROADCAST

Friday at 12:30 P.M. – WYCA 102.3

### SUBSCRIBE TO OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL

[https://bit.ly/  
CUCCSouthHollandYouTube](https://bit.ly/CUCCSouthHollandYouTube)

### CHECK US OUT ON TIKTOK

<https://www.tiktok.com/@covucc>

### FACEBOOK LIVE

Covenant United  
Church of Christ

### WEBSITE

[covucc.org](http://covucc.org)

### CONTACT US

1130 East 154th Street  
South Holland IL 60473  
Phone: (708) 333-5955  
Fax: (708) 333-4220

## CHURCH LEADERSHIP & STAFF RESOURCES

### REV. DR. PATRICK L. DAYMOND

Senior Pastor

### REV. DR. OZZIE E. SMITH, JR.

Pastor Emeritus

### REV. DR. CARMIN FREDERICK JAMES

Christian Education, Online  
Engagement & Outreach  
[revcfjames@covucc.org](mailto:revcfjames@covucc.org)

### REV. ETHEL SOUTHERN

Pastoral Care & Wellness  
[revsouthern@covucc.org](mailto:revsouthern@covucc.org)

### REV. DR. RAMAH E. WRIGHT

Director of Ministry Programs  
and Events  
[revwright@covucc.org](mailto:revwright@covucc.org)

### REV. KIM GRICE

Associate Minister  
[revkgrice@covucc.org](mailto:revkgrice@covucc.org)

### REV. KEVON CARTER

Associate Pastor to Youth &  
Young Adults  
[kcarter@covucc.org](mailto:kcarter@covucc.org)

### BRIAN W. SMITH

Minister of Music  
[bsmith@covucc.org](mailto:bsmith@covucc.org)

### CATHE EVANS-WILLIAMS

Church Business Administrator  
[cevanswilliams@covucc.org](mailto:cevanswilliams@covucc.org)

### ISAAC GREENE

Director of Finance  
[igreene@covucc.org](mailto:igreene@covucc.org)

### MARK HALL

Director of Technology  
[mhall@covucc.org](mailto:mhall@covucc.org)

### SEENA BRODNAX-BROWN

Executive Assistant  
[sbbrown@covucc.org](mailto:sbbrown@covucc.org)

### OIDA (WEEDA) JONES

Church Operations Assistant  
[ojones@covucc.org](mailto:ojones@covucc.org)

## BOARD / COMMITTEE / COUNCIL CHAIRS

### LELA BRIDGES WEBB

Pastoral Relations Committee

### SHIRLEY HALL

Pastoral Relations Committee

### NIASA HOLLINS-WATSON

Deacon Board

### CONNIE LINDSEY

Financial Oversight Committee

### IMANI MCROYAL

Youth Representative

### SHANNON STATON

Trustee Board

### EDGAR WRIGHT

Financial Oversight Committee

### KAY GILES-SLAUGHTER

Member at Large

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OUR WEBSITE

