

# ECHOES

December 2023/January 2024

**We Invite  
We Welcome  
We Nurture  
We Serve**



**COVENANT  
United Methodist Church**

## From the Pastor's Desk...

By Pastor Derrick Gutierrez



Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!

The Thanksgiving leftovers are dwindling, and the Christmas decorations are coming out of storage. The Advent season is upon us. It is the beginning of the Christian year. So, it is fitting to start each year focused on the promises of God, fulfilled by the birth of Jesus Christ. By meditating on the past, we understand our present journey as we plan for our future and the second Advent of Jesus.

It is in remembering the birth of Jesus, that we reaffirm our faith and recognize that each year is a new opportunity to grow closer to Him. Advent is a season to reflect and prepare for our Christmas celebration. During this season, we take time to dive deeper into expressions of hope, love, joy, and peace. During our Sunday morning services, we will be exploring these themes in our worship. This is my first Christmas season with Covenant. I look forward to learning your traditions and eventually adding some of my own.

Just as we decorate our homes, we are decorating the church in preparation for the various celebrations that we will be hosting. For most of the month, we will be inviting friends, families, and neighbors to laugh, grieve, and sing in various forms of fellowship. I encourage you to check the church calendar for events for the entire family in various stages of life. This is the perfect time of year to invite someone you know to visit Covenant.

As we stand on the threshold of a brand new calendar year, I am filled with hope for the journey ahead. As we move from 2023 to 2024, the start of a new year is like a blank canvas, awaiting the brushstrokes of our collective efforts, prayers, and faith. It's a time for reflection, renewal, and a fresh commitment to spiritual growth.

Many people take time to think about resolutions for the new year. The list usually includes exercise, more family time, or activities that enrich one's life. I would suggest you resolve to try to spend more time in prayer, reading scripture, or even fasting as a means to seek clarity and growth in your faith. The beginning of the year is a great time to start slowly with small steps that increase over the whole year.

We will celebrate 140 years of ministry in 2024. The church is planning various activities throughout the year commemorating the life and legacy of Covenant. Simultaneously, we will be in the Pathways process developing a plan for the future of Covenant. We will need your prayers as well as your participation to make a difference in 2024.

## Sidelights

### COVENANT'S VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Our Vision Statement: **Bringing Christ's Light into the Community and Beyond.**

Our Mission Statement: **We Invite, We Welcome, We Nurture, We Serve.**

Please be in prayer for Covenant Church.

### WAYS TO CONTINUE GIVING

Thank you to our faithful members who continue to support Covenant Church. Here are options for you to give your personal tithes and offerings:

- Mail checks to 110 N. Mulberry St., Lancaster, PA, 17603
- Give online. Go to our website [www.covenant-umc.com](http://www.covenant-umc.com) and click on the GIVING link and follow the directions.
- Text 717-769-1063. After the initial setup, giving is easy.

Please call the church office with questions.

## Sidelights

### PRAYER CHAIN

If you have a prayer request, please call Patti Willard at 717-872-7561. If she is unavailable, please leave a message. Also, if you are interested in being a member of the Prayer Chain, please contact her to add your name to the list .

### HOSPITAL VISITATION

Don't forget to notify the church office when you or a loved one is in the hospital. Our Care Team is available to visit and share prayer.

### UPPER ROOM

You can purchase the Upper Room daily devotional for only \$2. We have regular and large print in the office.

### LOBBY GREETERS

1st Sunday of the Month  
Bob & Cindy Hean

2nd Sunday of the Month  
Carole Horn

3rd Sunday of the Month  
Linda Henning

4th Sunday of the Month  
Lynn Arnold

5th Sunday of the Month  
Cathy Boyd  
Bobbie Schwan

## We Worship Together

### Sunday Worship

In-person worship will be held each Sunday at 10:30 am. The service will also be livestreamed on Facebook for those who wish to worship at home.

### Additional Online Opportunities During the Week

- Wednesday at 10 am join our prayer group in the church library.

### DECEMBER / JANUARY EVENTS

12/2	Covenant Family Christmas Celebration	10:00 am
12/2	Care & Share Luncheon	12:30 pm
12/3	Worship, Holy Communion	10:30 am
12/3	Blessed to Belong worship service	2:00 pm
12/9	Food Box Distribution	10:00 am
12/10	Worship	10:30 am
12/16	IMPACT! Missions Work Day	9:00 am
12/17	Worship	10:30 am
12/17	WOW Luncheon/Bible Study	12:00 pm
12/24	Potluck Breakfast	9:00-10:00 am
12/24	Worship	10:30 am
12/24	Christmas Eve Service	8:00 pm
1/6	Care & Share Luncheon	12:00 pm
1/7	Worship Service, Communion	10:30 pm
1/13	Community Closet	9:00 am
1/13	Food Box Distribution	10:00 am
1/14	Worship Service, WOW following	10:30 pm
1/20	IMPACT! Missions Work Day	9:00 am
1/21	Worship Service	10:30 am
1/23	Pathways Meeting	5:30 pm
1/28	Worship Service	10:30 am

# Here's to Good Health!

It is holiday time again, a time of joy and excitement and lots of things to get done! It all can get stressful. How will you handle it all? Let me share a few tips to help you get through and enjoy the upcoming holiday season.

First stop and remember the reason for the season! That night long ago in Bethlehem shepherds were told, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord". Now that is something to be joyful and excited about. Remember that as you go about getting ready for the Christmas celebration.

Here are some tips:

- Money can be a big stressor. Make a budget and stick to it.
- Rather than buying a gift make something, give of your time.
- Make lists and cross things off as you get them done.
- It is okay to say "no." Remember, you can't do everything.

- You don't have to make the "perfect holiday" focus on what makes the holiday special to you, your family and friends.

2023 is almost over, and we will be facing a new year. We have no idea what we will be facing in the coming months, but let me remind you we know the One who does, and Christ has promised that he would be with us.

We talk about New Year's resolutions, but how well do we really do with those? This year don't think about making grand changes but take a few steps at a time. Make some changes you would like to see in your life.

- Change your eating habits by adding a fruit or vegetable each day to your diet to help you eat healthier.
- Do some sort of exercise, walk around in the house for five minutes a day as a start.
- Take all of your medication as ordered.
- Drink more water every day.

Wellness Coach, Cindy Smith

## Adult Sunday School for Advent and the New Year

No matter how long or how often one studies the Bible, there is always more to learn. That is one reason why Covenant Church offers two adult Sunday School classes that meet from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M. on Sunday mornings before the worship service. Consider growing in your faith by attending a Sunday School class at Covenant: the Sunshine Class, which meets in Room B-1 on the lower level next to the elevator, or the Faith Walk Class, which gathers in the Chapel Library.

The Sunshine Class is studying the New Testament book of Hebrews with the assistance of Shepherd's Notes on Hebrews by Dana Gould. Ginny Brown and Patti Willard are sharing the teaching of one chapter a week into February of the new year.

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## Sidelights

### COVENANT MEMBERS IN BUSINESS

#### Aunt Sandy's Attic

Sandy Leonard—Antiques, Collectibles, Books, Art, etc.  
545 W. Market Street, Marietta, PA 17547, 717-426-5091

#### Dale Building Designs

[www.DonDaleDesigns.com](http://www.DonDaleDesigns.com)

#### Groff Family Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc.

Thomas S. Buter, 394.5300  
528 W. Orange St.

#### Miller Optical

Glenn & Maryanne Miller, 393.2020  
Glasses, Contacts, and Exams  
Lancaster & Willow Street

#### Willard Hypnosis Center

Roger J. Willard  
3304 Main Street, Conestoga PA 17516, 717.872.7561 or [willardhypnosis.com](http://willardhypnosis.com)

### CHRISTMAS FAMILY EVENT

The Nurture and Outreach teams will be having their Christmas Family event on Saturday, December 2, at 10:00am in Bethany Hall. The entertainment will be Koo Koo the Magician. It is a very entertaining and audience interactive show. There will be light refreshments and a gift for the children. If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer that day, please see Cindy Hean or Denise Troop.

## Sidelights

### THE WOW FELLOWSHIP

The women and men's group that has been meeting once a month after church for lunch and Bible study is now called The WOW Fellowship, which means **W**orship God, **O**bey His Word, and **W**itness to others. The group will be meeting the second Sunday of every month in Bethany Hall following the Worship Service. Lunch is provided.

### GROCERY CARDS

Please check the News to Go for Sundays when grocery cards will be available in the lobby.

You can also continue to support the Mission Outreach of Covenant by purchasing your grocery store gift cards through the mail. Please mail your check to Covenant UMC at 110 N Mulberry St 17603 with a note. We have \$50 Stauffer's cards; \$25 and \$50 Giant cards.

Please make your checks out to Covenant UMC. After receiving your check, we will mail your grocery store cards to your home.

### A/V HELP NEEDED

There is room for you on the sanctuary sound board. Interested? Training will be provided. Please see Darwin Tyson for more information.

## Pathways Progress



## PATHWAYS

Since the first Pathways meeting in August, Covenant's pastors and members in leadership positions have met four more times with District Superintendent Jenny Freymoyer, following the steps of the EPA Conference's Pathways process. As we focused on the Pathway of Sustainability for Growth, we carefully examined the statistics and status of Covenant Church, noting our challenges with worship attendance, with the need for more lay people in leadership, with an unbalanced budget, and with the financial demands of an older facility. We explored our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to assess where Covenant Church is right now. We also reviewed our mission statement (We Invite, We Welcome, We Nurture, We Serve), identified Scriptures that support our mission, and evaluated how we are doing in fulfilling each aspect of our mission. Under the direction of D.S. Jenny, we then delved into identifying what we would want in a church if we were new to an area. Consequently, work has already begun on updating and eventually rebuilding our website. However, that is only one step in moving forward. From all that we have explored and discussed, we are coming closer to determining the direction of the path forward for Covenant.

Our choice of a specific focus will come from consideration of the following features or markers of a vital church: inspiring worship, small-group fellowship and learning, hands-on mission, cultivation of new disciples, and generous giving. While Covenant Church has certainly been engaged in all of these aspects with varying intensity through the years, the question is which one should be our focus at this time for moving forward. Early in the new year, we will make that determination in order to diligently pursue church sustainability and growth.

In 2024 Covenant Church will celebrate our 140th anniversary, a time to thank God for the past and its legacy and a time to listen to God for direction for the years ahead for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom. As Pastor Derrick Gutierrez shared with us in his sermon on the Sunday between Thanksgiving and Advent, all of us who care about Covenant Church and its future should join in earnest prayer for God's direction. Pray for God to make clear the path for Covenant UMC Church to fulfill its mission and to be God's light for our community and beyond. Pray that He will enable each of us to give of ourselves and to support one another in walking that path together.

### Sunday School

*...Continued from previous page*

Beginning in December, the Faith Walk Class will explore An Unlikely Advent with Rachel Billups, who presents insights into various Scriptures about the first Christmas. There is always more to learn from the Christmas story, which never grows old and offers new opportunities to deepen our faith. The class will begin the new year with a study from one of their favorite authors, Max Lucado. His new book and DVD presentations, God Never Gives Up on You, focus on Jacob of the Old Testament. Teachers Carole Horn, Chris Kimmich, Lois Neidermyer, and Cindy Smith take turns leading the class discussions.



## Bible2School is Expanding

Bible2School is growing both locally and nationally. That means more and more public elementary school children are learning from the Bible during their school day through this weekly released-time program. Originally beginning in Manheim, PA, this program has expanded throughout Lancaster County and into Lebanon County as well as to the Johnstown area and soon to Philadelphia. As of the beginning of November, 1,875 children had been enrolled for this school year, a figure greater than last year. That number will certainly grow in the new year with Bible2School classes opening beyond our state borders in Idaho and Tennessee.

Covenant UM Church is also seeing an increase in the number of students from Fulton Elementary School participating in Bible2School. With the recruitment of additional adult volunteers from the area, a class for third graders has just opened at our church on Thursdays along with the established classes for fourth graders the same day and second graders on Tuesdays. The adult volunteers walk them from the school to our downstairs youth room and teach them from the Bible as they eat their lunches there. Second graders focus on the Old Testament, third graders on the New Testament, and fourth graders on discipleship. All grades are introduced to Jesus as God's Son and how He can be their Lord and Savior.

Bible2School is also piloting a new curriculum for fifth and sixth graders within our county and in western Pennsylvania with hopes of expanding the availability of the program to the next grade levels. Praise the Lord for children who are being introduced for the first time to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit through this program and for those who are growing in their understanding of the Bible.

If you want to know more about Bible2School, please talk with Cindy Hean, who volunteers at Covenant with the Fulton second graders, or to Lois Neidermyer, who also teaches second graders here and who serves on the Bible2School Curriculum Committee.

## United Women in Faith Reading Program

A young mother separated from her children for eight long years; a man facing deportation after being mistaken for a terrorist; a woman forced to endure domestic violence so she can retain her right to remain in her adopted country—these are just a few of the thousands immigration lawyer Sheela Murthy has helped in her long career as a philanthropist. From her birth in India through law school at Harvard and starting one of the world's most successful immigration law firms, Adithi Rao explores the journey of a woman driven to help others overcome injustice, dispossession, and legal tangles so they may live a life of dignity in an increasingly challenging world. *Being Sheela* is a must read book we recently added to our UWinFaith shelf in the library. Please talk to Cindy Smith or Chris Kimmich if you want to learn more about how to join the Reading Program. Even if you do not decide to join the program, please take a look in the library and enjoy the books for your reading pleasure.

## Sidelights

### 90+ BIRTHDAYS

Mary Keeler 1/30

### MEMORIALS GIVEN

In memory of **Nancy Hess** from Lois Neidermyer, Carole Horn (members), Betty Applebach, the Miller Family, Robert F. Hess, Kerry & Chris Hess, Fran Braun, William & Irene Shelton (non-members).

In memory of **Charlie Miller** from Cindy Smith and Joan Miller.

In Memory of **John Longenecker** from Sandy Leonard, Lois Neidermyer, Debra Naumann, and Gina Hamilton (non-member).

### UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH ANNUAL WOMEN'S BREAKFAST

Calling all women (and teenage girls) to our annual Women's Breakfast, Saturday, January 6, at 9:00 AM. This year our breakfast will fall on Epiphany. We will include the story of the three wise men and their gifts to the Christ child. In addition to sharing in coffee, tea and a delicious breakfast, we will exchange prayer partners and enjoy some light entertainment. **YOU ARE INVITED!!**

### RETREAT

Thursday, April 4, through Sunday, April 7, 2024, will be our annual Retreat at Ocean City, NJ. Watch for sign up in February. Please see Chris Kimmich with any questions and your interest.

## COVENANT

### United Methodist Church

110 North Mulberry Street

Lancaster, PA 17603-3507

Office Telephone: 717.393.1561

Senior Pastor's Phone: 717.682.2374

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

### Church Staff

The Reverend Derrick Gutierrez, Senior Pastor

The Reverend Sally Ott, Visitation & Witness

The Reverend Dr. Guy Carrigan, Dir. of Evangelism

Jeffrey McGary, Echoes Editor

### Email

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## WORLD THANKOFFERING

On Sunday, November 19, the entire church enjoyed a special World ThankOffering Sunday. Our guest speaker was Rev Dawn Taylor-Storm, Assistant to the Bishop from the Valley Forge area. The energetic service (which may or may not have included the Hokey Pokey) was all about "Putting Your Whole Self In".

We are very grateful to all of those attending who contributed to the special offering to help women, children and youth locally and around the world. We will be sending \$707 from this year's offering and an additional \$200 that came in late last year, to our District Treasurer. This money is then sent to the conference to support schools, hospitals, senior centers, stop human trafficking programs, and many more ministries of United Women in Faith.

If you were unable to come in person on the 19th, you can still contribute to our annual World ThankOffering. There are envelopes in the pews or you can mail in checks made payable to Covenant UMW.

We are THANKFUL for you support.

Return Service Requested

Covenant United Methodist Church  
110 N. Mulberry St.  
Lancaster, PA 17603-3507

## TUBA CHRISTMAS

Embrace the much-anticipated return of a Lancaster City favorite as Ewell Plaza once again resonates with the captivating sounds of spirited brass music. This cherished tradition brings a symphony of melodies to the heart of the city, creating an enchanting atmosphere that captivates all who gather.

Friday, December 1st from 8-9PM at the Ware Center, 42 N Prince St, Lancaster 17603.

**FREE!**



## The Story of a Christmas Tree

24 years ago, when my father-in-law passed away, the funeral home gave my mother-in-law a fir tree sapling (about 6-8 inches tall) to plant in his memory. My husband, Greg, planted it close to the house for her so she could watch it grow. And it grew- and it grew-and it grew until it was about 50 feet tall. We knew that one day it would probably have to be cut down since it was now growing against the house and had been trimmed back a few times. It was a beautiful tree and we often wondered how it would look all decorated for Christmas. Eventually, my mother-in-law also passed away and about 2 ½ years ago Greg and I made the decision to sell the house and property and move to a Retirement Community.



A few months ago, Greg saw an article in the Lancaster newspaper about the city looking for a Christmas tree in the square and he forwarded the information to the new owner. We had no idea that he had submitted the tree for consideration until he contacted us and told us that it had been accepted and would be cut down the following week. We drove over there that morning to watch the process, feeling a bit nostalgic and sad to see it go. We can't think of a more perfect use, though, for "our tree" than to see it so beautifully decorated and bringing joy to so many people over this holiday season. Merry Christmas and may your days be filled with joy, wonderful memories, and a season filled with the goodness of God's Gracious Gift to us all.

## Worship for Advent and Christmas

On Sunday, December 3rd, we will begin our Advent Celebrations during the Sunday morning worship service as we are "Celebrating the Everlasting Light of Christmas". Each week, our worship will be special as the praise team sings various Christmas selections and the chancel choir performs pieces from the Morning Star Cantata. On December 17th and 24th, the Bell Choir will join our worship as well.

Also on Sunday, December 3rd at 2 pm, we will host the Bless to Belong service in partnership with St. John's Episcopal Church and Groff's Funeral and Cremation Services. This will be a service of Hope for Times of Loss. We know the holidays can be difficult for anyone who is experiencing loss due to death, divorce, or other tragedies in life. We will create space to grieve and remember together.

On Sunday, December 10th, children from the Covenant Child Care Center will be singing in the Sunday morning service in addition to our Worship team for a special Children's Day celebration.

Finally on Sunday December 24th, we will celebrate our traditional Christmas Eve Candle-lighting service at 8 pm. Come and join us as we celebrate the birth of our Savior who brought a light into the world that could not be overcome by darkness.

"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4-5 NIV) Thank you to all the members of Covenant who are working diligently to provide these opportunities to share the Love of Christ.

Lastly, I invite you to consider a year-end gift in support of Covenant's ministries. Your generosity will allow us to continue impacting lives in the name of the Christ Child. For your convenience, I am providing a link to our online giving platform: Christmas Donation

If you prefer an envelope to send your gift to the church, please contact us at [office@covenant-umc.com](mailto:office@covenant-umc.com).