

Serving the Lancaster Community Since 1884

Covenant



ECHOES Newsletter

United Methodist Church

December 2025/January 2026



From the Pastor's Desk...

By Pastor Derrick Gutierrez

As we begin the season of Advent, we prepare our hearts once again for the coming of Christ by remembering his birth in Bethlehem and watching eagerly for his return in glory. This year, our Advent worship will focus on how God reveals himself through signs that guide us toward hope, peace, joy, and love.

The theme of our Advent Sundays is "Signs"—those moments when God breaks into our normal world and invites us to see with fresh eyes. From ancient prophecies to angelic announcements, from John the Baptist's wilderness preaching to a young carpenter's obedient faith, God has consistently used signs lead and reveal his purposes.

Our journey begins on November 30 with "Signs and Time," as we explore Jesus' words about watchfulness and hope. We live in the times between Christ's first coming and his promised return, and God gives us signs of his faithfulness to sustain us in the waiting.

On December 7, we'll gather at the communion table to hear "Signs and Stories." John the Baptist's call to repentance reminds us that God is in the business of rewriting our stories, transforming our conflicts into his peace.

December 14 guides us to "Signs and Truth," where we learn with John the Baptist that even in our questions and doubts, we can rejoice in Christ's mission in the world. Joy doesn't need perfect certainty because it grows from recognizing what God is doing.

As Christmas approaches, December 21 highlights "Signs and Faithfulness." Through Joseph's story, we'll see how God's love calls us to remain faithful even when circumstances are challenging, and the road ahead is uncertain.

Our celebration continues on Christmas Eve with "Signs and Glory," as we marvel at how God's greatest glory arrived in the most unexpected way—a baby in a manger, angels singing to shepherds, the infinite entering the finite. The sign that changed everything came wrapped in swaddling clothes.

On December 28, we will conclude our Advent season with a special Music Sunday, lifting our voices in Christmas carols that have shared the good news across generations.

Continued next page...

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.**

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 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

Covenant is a praying church. There are times when an urgent or emergency concern may arise in your life. Covenant has a Prayer Chain ready to jump into immediate action to notify our Prayer Warriors to lift that concern up to God.

This phone call system is managed by Patti Willard, 717-872-7561, who will reach out to our "callers" who will then call our Prayer Warriors to stop and pray. If you are available to pray for these urgent concerns & would like to be added to our prayer chain, please contact Patti. If you need to activate our Prayer Chain, please contact Patti or the church office. Indicate the urgent/emergency need when calling.

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
Bonnie & Barry Miller

5th Sunday of the Month
Janice McElroy

We Worship Together

Sunday Worship

In-person worship will be held each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. 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 a.m. join our prayer group in the church library.

Continued from front page...

Advent invites us to slow down during a season that often speeds up. It invites us to seek signs of God's presence not only in ancient scriptures but also in our daily lives and communities today. Where do you see hope emerging? Where is peace being built? What brings unexpected joy? How is love calling for your faithfulness?

Join us each Sunday as we watch and wait together, making room in our hearts for the One who comes to renew all things. All are welcome. Come as you are. Invite friends and family.

Child Care Center Update

- The Fall Fundraiser was a success. Thank you to everyone who helped support the center by purchasing apple dumplings!
- Thank you to congregation members who attended our Halloween parade. The children love getting dressed up and showing off their costumes!
- The week before Thanksgiving our classes participate in *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*. We watch the classic movie on the big screen in Bethany Hall and eat the same meal Snoopy prepares for his friends.
- Our Preschool and Pre-K classes will be singing at the church service on Sunday, December 14th. They kids are excited and we're hoping to fill the sanctuary with friends and family!
- Our classrooms always celebrate the holiday season by taking some time to think of others. We collect food for our Feed the Turkey food drive, Pre-K makes Christmas ornaments and cards and delivers them to Lancaster General hospital along with teddy bears for children spending the holiday in the hospital, and all classes decorate cards to fill goodie bags to be delivered to the church shut ins.
- The center is always in need of and appreciative of donations. If you are interested, we are continually in need of the following items: Lysol or Clorox wipes, Lysol aerosol disinfecting spray, art supplies such as crayons, colored pencils, markers, coloring books, construction paper, dry erase markers etc. Thank you for your continued support!

Here's to Good Health!

When I sit down to write these articles about good health, I find myself repeating tips to share to keep you healthy. Even as a nurse I need to be reminded about what I need to do to stay strong and healthy. So, here is the broken record !

Holiday time can be joyful, offering a chance to connect with family and friends. But it can be stressful. You might have worries about money, what gifts to buy, who to invite into your home, how will you get it all done. Let me share a few ideas.

- Know your spending limit. Set a budget and don't spend more than you planned. Don't buy gifts you will spend the rest of the year trying to pay off.
- Give something of yourself. Homemade gifts can be so meaningful. Use your words instead of expensive gifts. Let those you love and care for know how important they are to you. Make phone calls, share your feelings.
- Get organized. Make lists to keep track of tasks and events. Check things off as they are taken care of.
- Share the tasks. You don't have to do everything yourself. . Share tasks with family and friends like decorating, wrapping gifts, or baking cookies.
- Learn to say no. That's a hard one, but when you say no it will give you more time to say yes to what you really want to do.

- Be realistic. It doesn't have to be perfect. Focus on traditions that make the holidays special for you.
- Remember the "Reason for the Season". Hear once again the good news the angels brought to the shepherds that night long ago. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord".

Can you believe that it will soon be 2026? My words for this new year have been said before but here comes the broken record again!

To stay healthy, think about eating well-balanced meals. Get some exercise even if you do some chair exercises. Think about losing some weight. Get enough sleep, I know that can be a hard one. Maybe try a different bedtime routine. Be sure to take medications as ordered. Drink plenty of water. Of course, my most-said tip is wash your hands!

Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year!

Cindy Smith
Wellness Coach.

Save the Date!



United Women in Faith will celebrate our Epiphany Breakfast on Saturday, January 3rd, at 9:30 am. A time of fellowship, good food, and prayer partner exchange will be included.

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

Groff Family Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc.

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

Willard Hypnosis Center

Roger J. Willard
3304 Main Street, Conestoga PA 17516, 717.872.7561 or willardhypnosis.com



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 **O** 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

Giant (\$25 and \$50) and Stauffer (\$50) grocery cards are available for purchase. Five percent of the proceeds goes to support the Mission Outreach of Covenant Church.

Please make out checks to Covenant UMC, and put "grocery cards" on the memo line. You can also see Carole Horn on Sunday mornings, or contact the church office (717-393-1561) Monday-Friday mornings if you want to make a purchase.

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.

Advent Events

Get your calendars out! Here's what's happening at Covenant during Advent.



- On **Friday, December 5th, at 6 pm**, come and sing Christmas carols during our final First Friday Chocolate Chip Cookie Concert for the year. Darla Blair from Music For Everyone will lead us in our celebration.
- On **Saturday, December 6th, at 10 am**, we will join Fulton Elementary for their annual Holiday Celebration and Gingerbread house competition. We will provide a craft table as we partner with the school to serve our neighbors.
- On **Sunday, December 7th, at 4 pm**, Groff Family's Funeral and Cremation Services will host our joint service, "Remembering Your Loved Ones", along with Covenant and St. John's Episcopal Church. This service is designed to create a warm and welcoming space for those experiencing loss.
- On **Sunday, December 14th, at 10:30 am**, we invited the children of the Covenant Child Care Center Pre-K class and their families to join us for the Sunday morning service. The children will be singing Christmas carols.
- Join us on **Sunday, December 21st, at 9 am** for a cheerful potluck Christmas breakfast organized by WOW! We'd love to have you be part of the celebration. Just give the office a call to sign up, or sign up using the sheet in the Gathering area.
- Finally, on **Wednesday, December 24th, at 8 pm**, we will celebrate Christmas Eve with our traditional candle lighting service. Please invite friends and family to join us as we worship the One who brings life and light to all people.

Covenant's Casavant Organ Turns 100



The Casavant pipe organ at Covenant United Methodist Church in Lancaster will be 100 years old in 2026. You are invited to be a part of the 100th anniversary celebration, which will culminate with an organ recital and hymn sing, featuring acclaimed concert organist, Gordon Turk, on October 25, 2026.

This instrument was built in 1926 by the Casavant Freres pipe organ company of St. Hyacinth, Quebec, Canada. The Covenant organ of 1926 exemplifies many of the tonal and mechanical characteristics of the French Romantic style of organ building and is the only instrument of this style and historical significance still operating in Pennsylvania. However, repairs are necessary to prepare for our 100th anniversary celebration concert.

We are initiating a capital campaign now to raise \$100,000 for work on this historic organ over the next year. This is a significant beginning, with more funds to be raised in the following years for further restoration. You have an opportunity to be a part of this project by contributing to the Covenant Casavant Organ Fund. Check your mail for a letter that details how you can contribute.

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	1 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 10:30a Planos Tuning (S 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	2 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rr 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	3 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 5:30p Covenant Ringers 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	4 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	5 7a MOOS 6p Chocolate Chip Cooki	6 12p Care and Share Lun
7 Holy Communion 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 12p WOW luncheon and 3p All Saint's City Church 4p Blue Christmas at Gr	8 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	9 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rr 12p Organ Tuning 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	10 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	11 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	12 7a MOOS	13 9:30a Food Box Distribu
14 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 10:30a Child Care Childi 3p All Saint's City Church	15 7a MOOS 8a Community Table 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	16 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rr 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	17 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group	18 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church 5:30p Covenant Ringers 7p Chancel Choir Reheal	19 7a MOOS	20 9a IMPACT! Missions Woi
21 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 8a WOW Christmas Brea 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	22 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	23 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rr 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	24 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	25 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church 4p Sandy Leonard - Beth.	26	27
28 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	29 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	30 10:05a Bible2School 3rr 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	31 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	1 9a All Saint's City Church	2	3

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1 9a All Saint's City Church	2 7a MOOS	3 12p Care and Share Lun
4 Holy Communion 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	5 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	6 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rd 12:20p Bible2School 4th 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	7 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	8 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	9 7a MOOS	10 9a Community Closet 9:30a Food Box Distribu 12p WOW luncheon and
11 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 12p WOW luncheon and 3p All Saint's City Church	12 7a MOOS 8a Community Table 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	13 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rd 12:20p Bible2School 4th 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	14 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	15 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	16 7a MOOS	17 9a IMPACT! Missions Wei
18 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 12p Nurture Team Meeti 3p All Saint's City Church	19 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	20 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rd 12:20p Bible2School 4th 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	21 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	22 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	23 7a MOOS	24
25 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	26 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	27 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3rd 12:20p Bible2School 4th 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	28 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	29 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	30 7a MOOS	31



Bible2School Expanding

In September of this year Kori Pennypacker, the CEO of Bible2School, was interviewed by Jim Daly on the radio broadcast of Focus on the Family. With this broadcast heard throughout the nation, the response has been very encouraging with 28 new inquiries about the program across 15 different states. At present time Bible2School is mostly at work within Pennsylvania, although three other states are also currently involved. Curriculum is available for second, third, and fourth grades along with the new fifth grade curriculum being used this year. A curriculum for sixth grade is in the works and should be published in time for the next school year.

Kori explains simply why children should be taught the Bible: (1) so children can know the truth from God's Word and recognize counterfeits, (2) so children can live their lives in a relationship with Jesus, and (3) so children can know how to have eternal life. Covenant Church is actively involved in doing so with second, third, and fourth graders from Fulton Elementary School. Please pray for these young children and those who teach them.

Sunday School Class Offerings

Do you want to learn more about and from the Bible? Would you like help with how to live your life as a Christian in today's world? Then come to a Sunday School class from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. after the 8:00 a.m. bilingual worship service or before the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

The Sonshine Class meets downstairs in Room B1 right off the elevator. They are exploring the Bible a book at a time. As 2025 is coming to a close, they are studying Daniel, Jonah, and Malachi from the Old Testament. Then as the new year comes, their studies will turn to the New Testament, starting with John, Luke, and Matthew.

The Faith Walk Class meets in the Chapel Library and uses DVD studies along with Scripture references and class discussion. As Advent begins, so does their study of The Marvel and Miracle of Advent as presented by Christine Caine and Lisa Harper. These same two DVD teachers were well received at the last United Women in Faith retreat with their study on Easter. No matter how familiar you are with the Christmas story, there is always more to learn about what led up to the birth of Christ and what impact His birth had then and has now. With the start of the new year the class will engage in one of Max Lucado's recent DVD studies: You Are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God's Presence and Power.

Come, learn along with others!

Sidelights

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bilingual Worship Service
Every Sunday, 8-9 a.m.

Care & Share Luncheons, 12/6,
1/3

Blue Christmas at Groff's Funeral
Home, 12/7, 3-4 p.m.

Food Box Distribution, 12/13, 1/10

WOW Fellowship Luncheon and
Bible Study, 1/10, 12-1 p.m.

IMPACT! Missions, 12/20, 1/17

Community Table, 12/15, 1/12, 8-
9 a.m.

UWF Epiphany Breakfast, 1/3,
9:30 a.m.

Words of Wisdom Bible Study
Every Monday, 9:00 a.m.

Congratulations, Kevin!

Kevin Fritz was honored at a luncheon in Bethany Hall on Tuesday, October 14, for 25 years of faithful service as Custodian for Covenant Church. Staff and children from the Child Care Center and members of the church staff and Lead Team gathered to thank Kevin for his dedication and accomplishments on the job.

Expressions of thanks began with songs and colorful handmade cards from the Child Care children. They sang their gratitude to Mr. Kevin with lyrics written by teacher Kelly Stauffer to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Their little voices and big hearts sang out:

"Mr. Kevin, we love you, for all you've done and all you do.

You help us in so many ways; you're like the sun's bright yellow rays.

Mr. Kevin, we love you, for all you've done and all you do.

Mr. Kevin, you're so nice, anyway you try to slice.

We love your whistle, and you know our names; to us you are so full of fame.

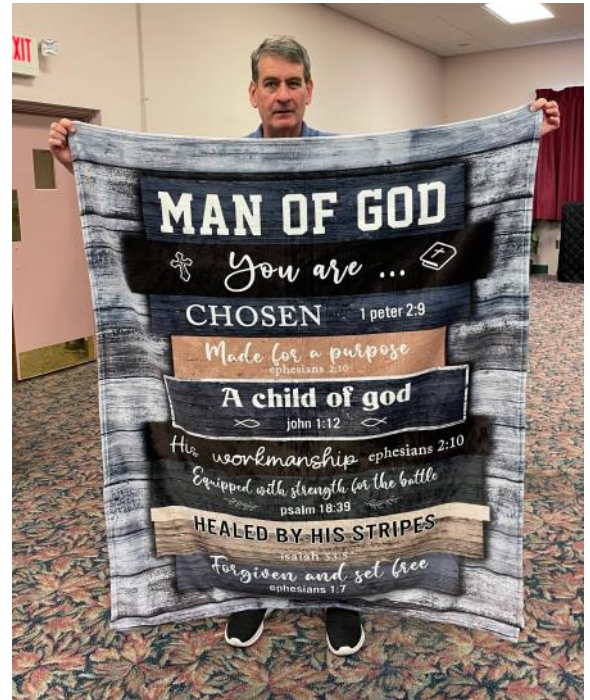
Mr. Kevin, we love you, for all you've done and all you do."

After a lunch provided by Lead Team members, Kevin was presented with a "Man of God" blanket throw and a framed certificate recognizing his 25 years as Custodian.

Pastor Derrick's prayer at this celebration summed up so well what Kevin means to us and what we wish for him.

"Gracious and faithful God,

We gather today with grateful hearts to celebrate Kevin and 25 years of devoted service to Covenant Church and our Child Care Center. We thank You for Kevin, for the gifts You have placed within him, for his willing spirit, and for the countless ways he has served this community of faith over these many years. Through seasons of joy and challenge, growth and change, Kevin has remained steadfast. We are grateful. We ask Your continued blessing upon Kevin. Renew his strength, refresh his spirit, and may he know deeply how valued and appreciated he is. Let him see the fruit of his labor: the lives touched, the burdens lightened, the Kingdom advanced through his faithful hands and heart. As we celebrate this milestone, remind us all that every act of service, no matter how small it may seem, matters to You. May Kevin's example inspire us to serve with the same dedication and perseverance. in Jesus's name. Amen."



Sidelights

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.

MARIETTA'S CANDLELIGHT TOUR

Covenant's Sandy Leonard invites you to visit her shop, Aunt Sandy's Attic, at 545 W. Market St. on Friday, December 5, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

MOOS HOLIDAY GIFTING

With the holiday season approaching, we are excited to initiate our MOOS student Christmas gift ministry! Every year, we try to gift MOOS students a few items off of their Christmas wish list to santa. Students are asked to keep their wish lists under \$50. If this is something you're interested in, please contact the MOOS program director at: themoosdirector@gmail.com. Thank you!



Update from the Lead Team

Under our 2025 leadership model, the Lead Team includes church members from various ministries and committees. It also functions as the Trustees, Finance Committee, and SPRC Committee. We combined all the administrative committees into one group to reduce meetings and focus more on ministry.

The committee meets every two months, starting in January on the 3rd Tuesday at 7pm. Here is an update from the November meeting:

- On November 18th, the church had its official Charge Conference. The Charge conference is the official business meeting of the church. We discussed the lead team for 2026, the pastor provided a report for the work completed in 2025, and the various reports were submitted to the Annual Conference and approved. Rev. Jeff Kapp presided over our charge conference.
- Covenant is part of the Lancaster City Mission Link. The mission link is a collaboration among the UM churches. We are planning a joint service for Good Friday, April 3, 2026.
- The Child Care center recently held a parent appreciation event, offering coffee, donuts, and assorted baked goods as parents dropped off their children in the morning. We thank the families who choose Covenant Child Care to nurture their children.
- The church has a new phone system installed by Comcast.
- The Nurture team will be joining Fulton Elementary School PTO for their annual Christmas Gingerbread house event on Saturday, December 6th.
- A committee has been established to organize the celebration for the 100th anniversary of the Casavant Organ in 2026. The church is initiating a capital campaign to raise \$100,000 to begin the organ restoration in time for the celebration.
- The 2026 Budget is completed and approved.
- Community Fellowship church has completed the renovations of the Chestnut Hill building at the corner of N Charlotte and W Chestnut streets. On Sunday mornings, Community Fellowship will be using some of the parking spots in our lot.



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

Jeffrey McGary, Echoes Editor

Email

Senior Pastor...pastorderrick@covenant-umc.com

Admin. Asst....nicole@covenant-umc.com

Echoes Editor...jcmcgary@comcast.net

Web Page...<http://www.covenant-umc.com>

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE CONCERT SERIES

FIRST FRIDAYS AT 6:00 p.m.

110 North Mulberry Street

**Free Church Parking Lot Entrance on 300 block of
West Orange St.**

Our next Chocolate Chip Cookie Concert will be on Friday, 12/5, at 6:00 p.m. Join us for a Christmas Sing-Along with the Music For Everyone Community Chorus! Art displayed will be from Sandy Leonard & Joanne McIlvaine

**NOTE: This will be the last Chocolate Chip Cookie Concert until we resume
in May, 2026.**

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