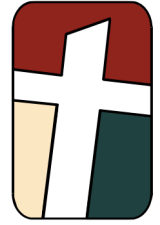


Serving the Lancaster Community Since 1884

Covenant



United Methodist Church

ECHOES Newsletter
February & March
2025



From the Pastor's Desk...

By Pastor Derrick Gutierrez

The new calendar year has begun and we are finally putting the Christmas season behind us. (I just took down my Christmas tree during the last weekend of January.) As we experience extreme winter weather, it is easy to feel like we are in a season of slowness as the joys of Christmas fade.

As we journey through this new year, let's remember that Easter, a season of hope and joy, is not too far away. It's a time to celebrate the gift of Jesus' incarnate presence on earth and the promise of resurrection and eternal glory.

The church calls this "ordinary time", but nothing is ordinary. We are in a season of preparation. During this time, we can reflect on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as he lives out his Gospel with his disciples on his journey to the cross.

And soon, we will enter Lent, a season that intentionally aligns us with Jesus. Lent is not a rush towards Easter morning, but a purposeful walk alongside Jesus in His journey of love and sacrifice. It's a season for self-reflection, renewal, and recommitment to the Gospel, a time to slow down and witness God's work.

Reflection often leads to Lament when the human condition appears in stark contrast to the Life of Jesus. The Bible is rich with expressions of grief and anguish, reminding us that God welcomes our raw emotions. From the cries of Job to the poetic laments of the Psalms, Scripture shows that faith is not the absence of struggle but the willingness to bring our struggles before God. These passages teach us that lament is a sacred act, an honest conversation with the One who knows our hearts fully. This is why the season of Lent exists; to slow down and see God working.

In *The Sickness unto Death*, Søren Kierkegaard explores the concept of despair as a sickness of the soul—a disconnect from our true selves and God. Kierkegaard argues that despair is not the end but a pathway to discovering our dependence on God. Similarly, biblical lament acknowledges this tension between human frailty and divine sufficiency. In Psalm 13, David cries, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?" This vulnerability models a healthy way to process emotions, leading to deeper trust in God's steadfast love.

Continued on page 3...

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

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
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 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.

FEBRUARY / MARCH EVENTS

Please check the enclosed church calendars for upcoming events for February and March. You can also find the calendars on the church website.

NOTE: Part 2 of Pastor Derrick's Retreat Experience will appear in the April/May issue of Covenant Echoes.

Child Care Center Update

What's been happening at Covenant Child Care...

We are back in the swing of things in the child care center after a hectic holiday season. We have received numerous thank you notes from shut-ins who received the giftbags filled with homemade cards, crafts, and goodies prepared by our staff and children. Thank you to all of the church volunteers who regularly visit with these shut-ins and graciously delivered our giftbags.

What's coming up...

Parents Night Out – The child care center will provide extended hours of care on Friday, February 7, to give parents an opportunity to celebrate Valentine's Day a little early. Staff have a Valentine's party planned for the kiddos who sign up and we are looking forward to fun snacks, crafts, and games!

2025 marks Covenant Child Care Center's 30th anniversary! We will celebrate in May, but our official 30th anniversary is Sunday, February 2nd.

We hope the entire year is full of growth and improvements for the center. We plan to update the space we already use as well as explore ways to expand the number of families we provide service to. We invite you to join us in this effort!

We are always in need of donations for snacks, cleaning and art supplies. If your company or an organization you are involved with participates in charitable giving or is able to donate items, the center is in need of refrigerators, changing tables, sleeping mats, cribs, flooring, educational materials, etc. Please contact Emily at emily@covenant-umc.com with any questions.

...continued from page 1

Like Kierkegaard's idea of embracing despair as part of spiritual growth, lament reorients us toward God. It transforms anguish into faith, affirming that our relationship with God can withstand honesty. Through lament, we discover the profound truth of God's presence and redemption in every season of life.

Bishop Moore-Koikoi has called for a season of healing for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. In her first few months with us, she traveled throughout the conference listening to stories of pain and grief from members of our churches. So, for Lent, we will explore the gift of Lament to prepare our hearts and minds to fully receive the gift of the resurrection on Easter morning. In addition to a sermon series, I invite you to go deeper with a Bible Study. (more details to come)

In His Service,
Pastor Derrick

“Lead Team” Model Comes to Covenant

In 2025, Covenant leadership will look slightly different. The Book of Discipline allows for an alternative committee structure to meet missional needs as long as the administrative functions of the church are met. (paragraph 247.2) We are adopting a new model for our leadership structure, The Lead Team. Some churches call it the “One Board” model. In Kay Kotan's *Mission: Possible*, this Simplified Accountability Structure aligns church governance with its mission by replacing multiple committees with a single leadership team focused on vision, strategy, and accountability.

This structure offers several benefits. It streamlines our decision-making so we can have robust conversations and make strategic decisions in a single meeting. It also allows fewer meetings freeing members to serve in ministries that directly engage the community. We have consolidated the administrative committees (Church Council, Finance, SPRC, and Trustees) into one committee, while the Child Care Board, Nurture, Outreach, and Worship remain the same to focus on the missional needs of the church.

Lead Team Members:

Ginny Brown
Jenny Engle
Cindy Hean
Chris Kimmich
Bonnie Miller
Lois Neidermyer, Lay Leader / Lay Member to AC
Karen Schneider
Denise Troop
Darwin Tyson

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Derrick.

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.

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

SPECIAL SPRING EVENTS

The Nurture and Outreach teams are having a Free Family Movie Night, on Friday, April 12th, at 6 pm in Bethany Hall. We will have pizza and popcorn.

ALSO, Please save the date for the Nurture and Outreach team's Spring Fest on Saturday, May 18, at 10:00 am in the parking lot. More details to follow.

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.

Financial Leadership Academy Update

Legacy giving is a powerful way to reflect a life of faith and commitment to God's work. It allows us to plant seeds for future ministry, ensuring that the church's mission continues to flourish for generations. Through legacy gifts, we express gratitude for God's blessings while investing in the spiritual growth and well-being of others. Whether through a will, trust, or endowment, these gifts extend our stewardship beyond our lifetime, impacting the ministries and people we cherish. At Covenant United Methodist Church, legacy giving aligns with our mission to Invite, Welcome, Nurture, and Serve, offering a tangible way to honor God and support the transformation of lives long into the future.

In our third session of the Financial Leadership Academy, we are exploring the tools and knowledge to update Covenant's Endowment program. Many new tax benefits can be added to our program. In the future, we will host informational events to demonstrate how you can continue to engage with our ministry for future generations. If you have questions about legacy gifts, please get in touch with the church office to schedule a time when Pastor Derrick can hear your plans for giving and help you navigate your options.

EPA Journey from Lamentation to Praise

Our newly appointed Bishop Cynthia Moore Koikoi, after listening to the needs of United Methodists in the Eastern Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey Conferences, invites us to embark on A Journey of Healing: From Lamentation to Praise. This initiative is a sacred opportunity to acknowledge the lingering wounds from the past, to seek God's healing, and to move forward in praise and unity.

The key verse for this journey comes from Jeremiah 17:14: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise." The journey will unfold over the coming months, culminating in opportunities to praise and celebrate the work of God in our lives during District Conferences and at our Annual Conference in May.

The timeline for this journey began in January and continues as follows:

February: Praying Over the Wounds (lifting up the received prayer requests by the Bishop, Cabinet, clergy and laity)

March: Cleansing the Wounds (holding Lenten gatherings with communion and healing services)

The West District will host two such sacred gatherings:

February 27, 2025, at Wesley UMC in Strasburg

March 18, 2025, at Zion of Iona UMC in Lebanon

April: Protecting the Wounds (utilizing prayer litanies and reconciliation resources)

May: Praise! (celebrating with praise at District Conferences and Annual Conference)

February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 12p Care and Share Lun
2 Holy Communion 9a Adult, Children & Youth 10:30a Worship & FaceE	3 7a MOOS 10:40a Bible2School 2n 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	4 7a MOOS 12:05p Bible2School 3n 1p Staff Meeting	5 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Chancel Choir Rehea	6 7a MOOS 7p Praise Team Rehears:	7 7a MOOS	8 10a Food Box Distributic
9 9a Adult, Children & Youth 10:30a Worship & FaceE 12p WOW Luncheon & B	10 7a MOOS 10:40a Bible2School 2n 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	11 7a MOOS 12:05p Bible2School 3n 1p Staff Meeting	12 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 6p Chancel Choir Rehea	13 7a MOOS 7p Praise Team Rehears:	14 7a MOOS	15 9a IMPACT! Missions Woi 4p Valentine Game Nigh
16 9a Adult, Children & Youth 10:30a Worship & FaceE	17 7a MOOS 8a Community Table 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	18 7a MOOS 12:05p Bible2School 3n 1p Staff Meeting	19 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Chancel Choir Rehea	20 7a MOOS 7p Praise Team Rehears:	21 7a MOOS	22
23 9a Adult, Children & Youth 10:30a Worship & FaceE	24 7a MOOS 10:40a Bible2School 2n 7p Narcotics Anonymou:	25 7a MOOS 12:05p Bible2School 3n 1p Staff Meeting	26 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Chancel Choir Rehea	27 7a MOOS 7p Praise Team Rehears:	28 7a MOOS	1 12p Care and Share Lun

March 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
23	24	25	26	27	28	1 12p Care and Share Lun
<p>Holy Communion</p> <p>9a Adult, Children & Youth</p> <p>10:30a Worship & FaceE</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>10:40a Bible2School 2n</p> <p>7p Narcotics Anonymous</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>12:05p Bible2School 3n</p> <p>1p Staff Meeting</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>10a Conference Call Pra</p> <p>10:15a Prayer Group</p> <p>7p Chancel Choir Rehea</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>7p Praise Team Rehears:</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p>	<p>9a Community Closet</p> <p>10a Food Box Distributic</p>
<p>9a Adult, Children & Youth</p> <p>10:30a Worship & FaceE</p> <p>12p WOW Luncheon & B</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>8a Community Table</p> <p>10:40a Bible2School 2n</p> <p>7p Narcotics Anonymous</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>12:05p Bible2School 3n</p> <p>1p Staff Meeting</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>10a Conference Call Pra</p> <p>10:15a Prayer Group</p> <p>7p Chancel Choir Rehea</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>7p Praise Team Rehears:</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p>	<p>9a IMPACT! Missions Woi</p>
<p>9a Adult, Children & Youth</p> <p>10:30a Worship & FaceE</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>8a Community Table</p> <p>10:40a Bible2School 2n</p> <p>7p Narcotics Anonymous</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>12:05p Bible2School 3n</p> <p>1p Staff Meeting</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>10a Conference Call Pra</p> <p>10:15a Prayer Group</p> <p>7p Chancel Choir Rehea</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>7p Praise Team Rehears:</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>6p Free Family Movie Ni</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p>
<p>9a Adult, Children & Youth</p> <p>10:30a Worship & FaceE</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>8a Community Table</p> <p>10:40a Bible2School 2n</p> <p>7p Narcotics Anonymous</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>12:05p Bible2School 3n</p> <p>1p Staff Meeting</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>10a Conference Call Pra</p> <p>10:15a Prayer Group</p> <p>7p Chancel Choir Rehea</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p> <p>7p Praise Team Rehears:</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p>	<p>7a MOOS</p>
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Calling All Covenant Leaders to Participate in the West District Tools for Ministry Workshops on Saturday, February 22, 2025, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Following registration and check-in at 8:00 a.m., West District Superintendent Jenny Freymoyer will open the Tools for Ministry gathering with a keynote speech at 8:30 a.m. at Salem UMC, 140 N. Penn Street, Manheim. A variety of workshops will be available for selection during two one and one-quarter hour session times that morning. Details on those workshops can be found online, via the QR code below. Registration is \$8 and can be made in advance with selection of specific workshops online. These sessions will provide an opportunity for addressing current needs within the church and for direction and new ideas for those in leadership positions. Save the date on your calendar now. <https://member.gnjumc.org/default.aspx?page=3352&occurrenceId=716&profileId=1523>

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

Flowers are available for this winter. The cost is \$49, which includes delivery. We encourage you to call the church office to reserve a flower date in Honor or Memory of a loved one. After the service, remember to take the flowers home with you or deliver them to a friend to brighten their day.

2024 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

Your 2024 Contribution Statements are available! Please check your mailbox in the gathering area, or keep an eye out for your statement in the mail if you do not have a mailbox.

CONTACT CARD

With the recent bad weather, it's more important than ever that we can stay in touch with you. If your primary phone number and/or email address has changed in the past few years, we ask that you complete a contact card and put it in the offering plate. Thank you!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The United Women in Faith retreat is scheduled for April 25-27, 2025.

FOOD BOX GIVEAWAY

The cost that we pay per box for the Community Food Box giveaway increased for this year. Donations to help support this impactful ministry are appreciated!

SAVE THE DATE February 15th at 4 p.m.

Join us for a game night and pot luck supper in Bethany Hall. Barbeque will be provided. Look for a sign-up sheet for the rest of the food. Please come and join us for an evening of fun and fellowship. We will be ending the evening playing Bingo with prizes.

LOCAL CONCERT: MARIMBA ENSEMBLE

Join Allegro as they present a Marimba Ensemble on February 22 at West Art Lancaster, 816 Buchanan Ave, Lancaster 17603. This special night will feature a Music in the Round experience in an intimate setting, somewhere between a concert and a cocktail party. This 60-minute performance will be preceded by a festive reception featuring desserts and beverages. Repertoire is TBD.

Doors will open at 3:30 p.m., with a reception before the concert. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased here: <https://allegroorchestralancaster.ticketspice.com/allegro-at-west-art-presents-marimba-ensemble-february-22-2025> Only 150 tickets will be available for this event.



A Year of Possibility?

By Pastor Sally Ott

"When the Disciples heard (that Jesus said) "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God," they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who, then, can be saved?" With this, Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:24-26)

I happen to do a lot of "What If ,,,?" thinking, or Possibility Thinking.

You may have heard of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. Dr. Peale was an American Protestant clergyman who lived from 1898 to 1993. He was an author best known for popularizing the concept of positive thinking, especially through his best-selling book *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

With this article, I'm inviting all who read it to join me in considering, "What if we were to focus on a theme for the New Year?" The theme I'm thinking of is, "2025: A YEAR OF POSSIBILITY."

Being a positive person requires refusing to give in to negative circumstances. We, Covenant UMC, are not the only church family to experience challenging times. When Jesus said, "Come, follow me", he never promised that it would be easy. He never promised us a life free of "bumps in the road." Instead he promised, "And surely I am with you always?, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 18:20)

I believe it's POSSIBLE for this church family to walk together toward "the light at the end of the tunnel." For example, what if ...

- ... this church were to have a reputation in our neighborhood and beyond as a church that cares deeply?
- ... this church were to grow in our respect for one another, dwelling in unity and accepting that we may see things differently at times?
- ... this church were to feel we belong to God, and that we belong to one another?
- ... this church were to double our average worship attendance by this time next year?
- ... this church were to increase the percentage of church members who actively engage in meaningful volunteer opportunities?

As we approached Christmas, I discovered a book in our church library, titled *The Glory of Christmas* written by Charles Swindoll, Max Lucado and Charles Colson. I'd like to share one of the articles, written by Charles Colson, and titled, "Persevering Through Good Times and Bad."

Take away from us our wealth and we are hindered. Take away our health and we are handicapped. Take away our purpose and we are slowed, temporarily confused. But take away our hope, and we are plunged into deep darkness ... stopped dead in our tracks, paralyzed. Wondering, "WHY?" Asking "How much longer? Will this darkness never end? Does he know where we are?"

Continued on last page...

Sidelights

90+ BIRTHDAYS

William Balabanow 2/17
Betty Farkas 2/2
Daniel McGary 2/27

CONTRIBUTORS TO 140th ANNIVERSARY FUND

Betty Jane Wolfgang
Sylvia Frey
Joel Fox
Cynthia Smith
Joan N. Miller
Jackson Sinor
Lois Neidermyer
Greg Smith
Ron & Chris Kimmich
Carole Horn
Connie Schmitt
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Maryanne & Glenn Miller
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Susan Grimm McCoy
Marianne Garrett
Ginny & Douglas Landis
Esther Mefferd
Doris Hiepler
John Lyford
Lou & Linda Henning
Eileen & Thomas Neville Monson
John & Carol Brower

It's still not too late to contribute. Just contact the church office.

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>

Then the Father says, "That's far enough, and how sweet it is!" Like blossoms in the snow, long-awaited color returns to our lives. The stream, once frozen, starts to thaw. Hope revives and washes over us.

Inevitably, spring follows winter. Every year. (Yes, including this one – and the next!) Barren days, like naked limbs, will soon be clothed with fresh life. Do you need that reminder today? Are you ready for some sunshine on your shoulders ... a few green sprouts poking up through all that white? A light at the end of the tunnel?

You may be familiar with the quote, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got." While this quote is often attributed to Henry Ford, its true origin is unknown. The earliest known citation of the quote was in 1981 by Jessie Potter, who is considered the leading candidate for authorship. I believe this is an important statement. The most difficult responses for me to hear when a change is being considered are, "We've never done it that way before" or, "We've always done it some other way." Indeed, resistance to change can be a real challenge, for individuals and organizations, including the church.

Please be open to welcoming 2025 as A YEAR OF POSSIBILITY!

Return Service Requested

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