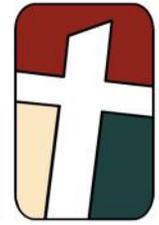


Serving the Lancaster Community Since 1884

Covenant



ECHOES Newsletter

United Methodist Church

February / March 2026



From the Pastor's Desk...

By Pastor Derrick Gutierrez

The new year began with a baptism by ice. In mid-January, Lancaster endured the first significant storm in years, followed by Arctic temperatures that pushed wind chills below zero. Many of us found ourselves trapped indoors, reminded of how little control we truly have over the rhythms of creation. There is a fitting symbolism in this harsh winter arriving just before Lent. The cold has compelled us to pause. The weather has made room for what we typically resist: slowing down, turning inward, and confronting what we prefer to avoid.

On February 18th, Ash Wednesday, we will enter the Lenten season—forty days of intentional preparation for Easter. Like the winter storm that descended upon us, Lent is not meant to be comfortable. It is a season that invites us to confront our mortality with those ancient words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The forty days of Lent mirror Jesus' forty days in the wilderness—a time of testing, temptation, and ultimately, transformation. The wilderness was not punishment; it was preparation. Jesus walked into the wilderness as the newly baptized Son of God, and he emerged ready to begin his public ministry.

We need our wilderness moments, too. We need seasons when the abundance is stripped away, and we discover whether our faith can survive on bread alone. Or, if we truly believe that one can live "by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

The biblical tradition offers us a gift for this work: the practice of lament. Lament is not despair; it is faithful protest. It is bringing our raw, unfiltered grief before God and trusting that God is strong enough to handle our anger, our questions, our tears. The Psalms are filled with lament—David crying "How long, O Lord?" Job demanding answers from the whirlwind. Jesus himself cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

I invite you to approach this Lenten season not as a burden but as a gift. Consider what spiritual practices might create space for God to work in your life: fasting from food, from social media, from the constant noise that drowns out the still, small voice. Consider what you might add: daily prayer, Scripture reading, acts of service, deliberate times of silence.

Continued on 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.

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As we journey through these forty days together, may we trust that the God who created seasons knows exactly what we need. May we have the courage to face our wilderness moments, knowing that Jesus has gone before us. And may we emerge on Easter morning not unchanged but transformed—ready to proclaim with authentic joy that death has lost its sting and spring has conquered winter once again.

In His service,
Pastor Derrick

Lancaster Mission Link Unites City UM Churches

Pastors and laity leaders from Lancaster City United Methodist Churches along with the director of LUMINA have begun to meet together in order to build support among our churches and to reach out with a united effort to our community. At the invitation of Sue Grim Mattox, West District Lay Leader, representatives from these churches had their first meeting as Lancaster Mission Link in October of 2025. The group plans to meet on a monthly or bimonthly basis, rotating meeting locations among the churches. Covenant UM Church hosted the third meeting on the morning of January 20, 2026.

The first major event planned by this group is a Good Friday Walk at Reservoir Park from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M. with the goal of reaching that part of the city with the message of Jesus and his death on the cross as Savior. On that Friday, April 3, stations revealing that message will be spaced around the perimeter of the park with the invitation for community residents and United Methodist city church members to walk from station to station. A service will follow at the end in the park's pavilion, which will also host non-walkers during the afternoon. More details about this event will be forth coming, especially ways Covenant members can be involved.

Pastor Derrick Gutierrez, Pastor Sally Ott, Chris Kimmich, and Lois Neidermyer represent Covenant UM Church with Lancaster Mission Link.

Here's to Good Health!

Need more energy to get through your day? Here are a few tips to help keep your energy flowing all day long.

Metabolism just slows down as we age. This results in increased body weight and decreased energy. No matter how old you are, what you eat and drink can influence weight, emotions, physical well-being, and mental clarity.

Making smart food choices that support mental and physical energy levels can increase your energy while other foods can drain your energy, leading to fatigue, sleepiness, and brain fog. Salty and high fatty foods can drag you down. Salt can cause you to retain water and feel bloated. Fat can slow down your digestion and make you feel full even hours later.

The right foods can give you greater energy to do the things you need and want to do. After sleeping, your body needs to be refueled. Don't skip breakfast. Remember the saying "breakfast is the best meal of the day! You don't have to eat right away, but don't wait until you feel really hungry. That waiting can lead to over-eating and eating the wrong foods.

Eat clean foods- that means foods with less processing. Watch out for food with high sodium counts. Good foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, and salads.

Steamed chicken with bell peppers, onions, and carrots served over brown rice and a salad can make for a healthy, yummy meal.

Watch your carbs. Carbs do come from foods like whole grains, fruit, veggies, and dairy. But also come from refined products like white bread, white rice, and sugary desserts, so watch out for those. The whole food carbs help with a steady blood sugar and give a steady supply of energy. Good carbs come from eating a white potato or sweet potato with the skin on, but watch out for all the butter and salt and stay away from frying.

Plant and animal sources of protein supply energy. You get B vitamins, and E vitamins that carry iron and zinc for your immune system. Magnesium helps build strong bones and release energy to the muscles.

Remember: stick to lean meats, white chicken, turkey, lean cuts of pork, eggs, fish, quinoa, beans, peas, and legumes.

Watch out for the high energy drinks. They are high in sugar and caffeine. A better choice would be green tea, coffee, or smoothies. Remember to drink water.

Have a great day with lots of energy!

Cindy Smith,
Wellness Coach



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

MEMORIALS GIVEN

- Gift in Memory of Harold and Olive Quickel given by Tom and Eileen Neville
- Gift in Memory of BJ Wolfgang given by Major J.E. Moore to Dolly Kepner Music Fund
- Gift in Memory of BJ Wolfgang given by The Gilmore Crosby Class to the Organ Fund
- Gift in Memory of Dan Lefever given by Ron and Chris Kimmich
- Gift in Memory of Randy Dippary given by Sandy Leonard Dippary to the Building Fund
- Gift in Memory of Vickie Leman from Carole Horn

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

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.



**Legacy
Giving**

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." 1 Timothy 6:18-19 (NIV)

Legacy giving is among the most meaningful ways a congregation can ensure its mission and ministry beyond the present generation. While weekly offerings sustain the church's day-to-day work, legacy gifts provide long-term stability and open new possibilities for ministry that might otherwise remain out of reach. Through legacy giving, faithful stewardship becomes an expression of hope—hope that the gospel will continue to be proclaimed, lives will be nurtured in faith, and the church will remain a vital witness in the community for years to come.

Including the church in one's will is often the simplest and most accessible form of legacy giving. It allows individuals and families to care for loved ones first while also making a thoughtful, lasting investment in the ministry that has shaped their faith journey. A bequest can be designated for general ministry or for a specific purpose that reflects a giver's passions and values.

This article is the first in a series exploring several legacy-giving options available to you. Our hope is to provide clear, practical information that helps you prayerfully consider how your faith, values, and generosity might continue to bear fruit long after you are gone. If you have questions about legacy giving to Covenant, please contact Pastor Derrick.

Thank You to Tiffany Iraheta

At Covenant Chorus's rehearsal on January 28, Tiffany Iraheta was honored and thanked for her service as Covenant's interim pianist/keyboardist/accompanist. She was presented with a gift certificate to Menchey Music and a collection of thank-you cards from Covenant members. This recognition was to have occurred in the worship service on Sunday, January 18, her official last day in this role; but snow canceled our service that morning.

Tiffany has served with skill and dedication since the beginning of last summer accompanying the Covenant Chorus, playing keyboard with the Praise Team, and offering piano music for Sunday morning services. Originally she was to be in this position until September, when it was hoped that by then a long-term accompanist would be hired. However, with that not being the case, she most graciously continued in the accompanist role much longer than anticipated. With this being her first year as an educator of young children, Tiffany acknowledges that this demanding role takes priority of her time and energy. She has expressed her enjoyment of being in music ministry at Covenant Church and welcomes the opportunity to return on occasion to provide special music with her voice and her keyboard/piano skills. Tiffany has been a blessing to us with her musical talents, and we wish God's blessings for her.

Covenant Church is still seeking a part-time pianist/accompanist and would welcome any leads from church members.

February 2026

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

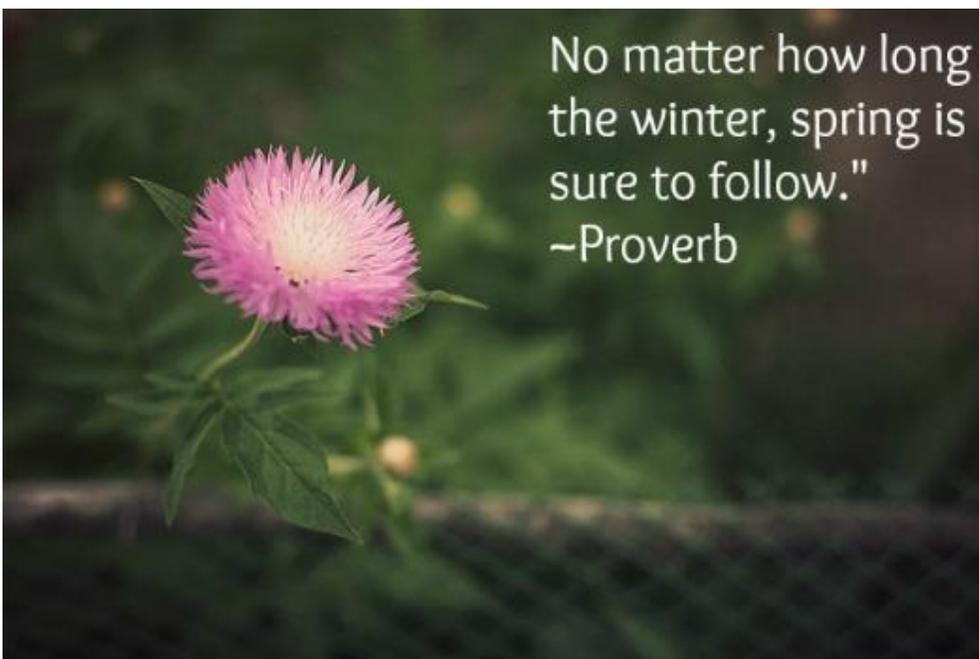
March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Holy Communion 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	2 7a MOOS 8a Community Table 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	3 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3r 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	4 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 5:30p Handbells Rehear 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	5 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	6 7a MOOS	7 12p Care and Share Lun
8 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 12p Nurture & WOW Lur 3p All Saint's City Church	9 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	10 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3r 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	11 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	12 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	13 7a MOOS	14 9:30a Food Box Distribu
15 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 12p WOW luncheon and 3p All Saint's City Church	16 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	17 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3r 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	18 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 5:30p Handbells Rehear 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	19 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	20 7a MOOS	21 9a IMPACT! Missions Woi
22 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	23 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	24 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3r 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	25 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	26 7a MOOS 9a All Saint's City Church	27 7a MOOS	28 10a Easter Event
29 8a Bilingual Worship Ser 9a Adult, Children & You 10a Worship & FaceBook 3p All Saint's City Church	30 7a MOOS 9a Words of Wisdom Bib 9:20a Bible2School 2nd 7p Narcotics Anonymous	31 7a MOOS 10:05a Bible2School 3r 12:20p Bible2School 4t 1p Staff Meeting 6:30p Bible Study	1 7a MOOS 10a Conference Call Pra 10:15a Prayer Group 5:30p Handbells Rehear 7p Covenant Chorus Ref	2	3	4

Update from the Lead Team

In 2026, Covenant continues to utilize a new leadership model, the Lead Team. This model consists of church members who represent various ministries and committees. The Lead Team itself serves as the Trustees, Finance Committee, and SPRC Committee. We combined all the administrative committees into a single committee to minimize meetings and support our ministry focus. The committee meets every two months, beginning in January on the 3rd Tuesday at 6 pm. Here is an update from the January 2026 meeting:

- The Lancaster City Mission Link is reconnecting. The Mission Link is a network of the United Methodist churches in the city of Lancaster. There will be joint events and ministry opportunities. Be on the lookout for information regarding a Good Friday event.
- The church is partnering with the shelter at Tenfold to offer bus passes, grocery gift cards, and snacks for individuals in need of transitional housing.
- The church will be hosting an Easter event at the end of March for the community.
- The District is hosting a Tools for Ministry training event on February 28th at Salem UMC in Manheim. More information to follow.
- The elevator was repaired by Schindler and passed its annual inspection required by the state of Pennsylvania.
- There is leak in the Southwest corner of the church roof. A contractor has been contacted. We are waiting for the weather to cooperate.



No matter how long
the winter, spring is
sure to follow."
-Proverb

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Care & Share Luncheons, 2/7, 3/7

Food Box Distribution, 2/14, 3/14

WOW Fellowship Luncheon and
Bible Study, 2/15, 3/15

IMPACT! Missions, 2/21, 3/21

Community Table, 2/2, 3/2, 8-9
a.m.

Free Family Movie Night, 2/20

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

COVENANT

United Methodist Church

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Senior Pastor's Phone: 717.682.2374

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