Covenant News



November 2025

The Reformation Isn't Finished

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther was a thirty-three-year-old Catholic monk and university professor in Wittenberg, Germany. He loved the church, but he was troubled by some of its practices, particularly the sale and preaching of indulgences. Luther believed that the way these were being promoted made God's grace seem like something people could purchase. So he wrote ninety-five propositions for theological debate. He wasn't announcing the creation of a new church or organizing a revolution. He wanted to challenge practices he believed were obscuring the gospel.

And then things got a little out of hand.

His arguments spread across Germany, church authorities demanded explanations, and before long, the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor were involved. Luther had hoped for a theological debate. Instead, he helped launch a movement that would change Western Christianity forever. By 1521, Luther had been excommunicated, declared an outlaw, and forced into hiding. At Wartburg Castle, disguised as a knight named Junker Jörg, he translated the New Testament into German, helping make Scripture accessible to ordinary people. He also wrote hymns that encouraged congregations to sing and proclaim the gospel themselves.

The Reformation changed how people encountered Scripture, participated in worship, and understood their relationship with God. But it also raised a question that remains important for us today: What actually makes the church the church?

In 1530, Lutheran leaders presented the Augsburg Confession, one of the foundational statements of our faith. Article VII describes the church as the assembly where the gospel is rightly proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered. Notice what isn't required: a particular building, one form of church government, or a fixed collection of customs and traditions. Of course, those things matter to us. Our buildings hold generations of memories—baptisms and confirmations, weddings and funerals, Christmas mornings and Easter celebrations. They represent the love and labor of people who gave their time, talents, resources, and faith to make ministry possible.

Those gifts deserve to be honored. But there is a difference between the gifts we've inherited and the gospel those gifts were meant to serve. At the heart of the Reformation was Luthe's rediscovery of God's freely given grace. God's love was not something Christians could earn through religious accomplishments or extraordinary effort. Grace was a gift, and that gift freed people to love and serve their neighbors. Thatfreedom has something important to say to us today.

Our congregations are experiencing tremendous change. Our communities are different from what they were when these churches were established. The ways people participate in religious life have changed, and the ways we have organized and supported our ministries for generations are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. We see it in our attendance, our finances, and the growing responsibilities carried by fewer people. For years, faithful people have worked hard to keep things going, and that effort has come from a place of love and deep commitment.

We have extraordinary gifts to work with: buildings and property, resources and relationships, decades of experience, and people who know what it means to care for one another. Those are not simply things to maintain until we can no longer maintain them. They are gifts for serving the gospel. The time has come to think beyond keeping our doors open and begin thinking about what we want those open doors to mean for our neighbors. We can decide what we want to carry forward, what we are willing to change, and what new forms our ministry might take. We won't agree about every decision or have every answer before we begin. Some things we try may not succeed. But the future of our congregations should not be something that simply happens to us. We have an opportunity to shape it together. Our hope does not rest on getting every decision right. Our hope rests in the grace of God.

God's love does not depend on the size of our congregations, the balance in our bank accounts, or our ability to preserve an institution indefinitely.

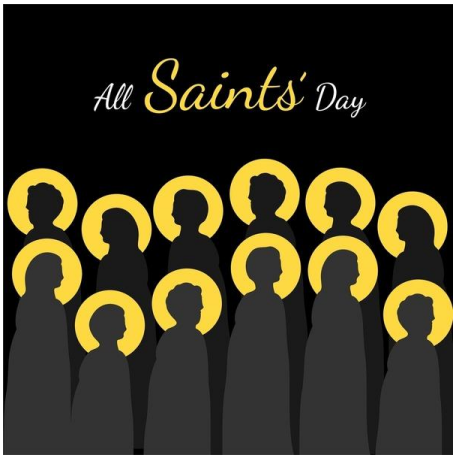
God’s grace is not a reward for successful churches. It is the gift that calls the church into being in the first place.

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther could not have imagined all that would follow from the questions he raised. And we cannot know exactly what our future will hold. But we don’t have to know where the road leads before we begin walking. We have a history worth celebrating, gifts worth sharing, and neighbors worth loving. The gospel that called the church into being centuries ago is still calling us today. Like Luther, let us trust the gospel enough to follow wherever it may lead. The Reformation isn’t finished and neither are we.

Pastor Andrea



Remember to set your clocks back one hour on Saturday evening, October 31



On Sunday, November 1, we give thanks for the lives of saints who have gone before us, who continue to shape us to this day. We also hear God’s precious reminder that we too are saints, called out from baptismal waters to serve as the living disciples of our Risen Lord!



11/2 Matt Marik

11/3 Donna Franz

11/3 Steve Senderak

11/7 Donna Kobella

11/12 Dave Gaglione

11/13 Lois Williams

11/26 Vince Besednjak

11/29 Emily Garberich

11/30 Dylan King



11/17 Elaine & Keary Knerem
Happy 53rd Anniversary



SAVE THE DATE!

Covenant will again be providing the Thanksgiving meal for the community this year on November 19th. All are invited to come share dinner. Volunteers are needed to help serve the meal-- let the church office or Pastor Andrea know if you are able to help.

Repeat the Sounding Joy: *An Advent and Christmas Worship Series*

This Advent, we'll explore the stories and messages behind some of our favorite Christmas Carols, discovering how they connect with scripture and speak to our lives today. Come sing, listen, and discover the good news for all people!



CALLED TO BE SAINTS

Olive Evanofski December 24, 1923-Novermber 4, 2025



Born **December 24, 1923**, in England. Olive was a beloved member of her community in Twinsburg, formerly of Maple Heights She was the wife of the late Edmund Eric Evanofski, mother of Sherry Evanofski and the late Dan Evanofski, and mother of Christine Housiaux. She was also the grandmother of Aaron Housiaux, "Gramdma to the Housiaux Stewards," and the sister of Audrey

Friends and neighbors remembered her as bright, cheerful, and easy to communicate with, a "legend on Thomas Street" who lived a long and fulfilling life She was cherished by family, friends, and the community for her warmth and kindness.

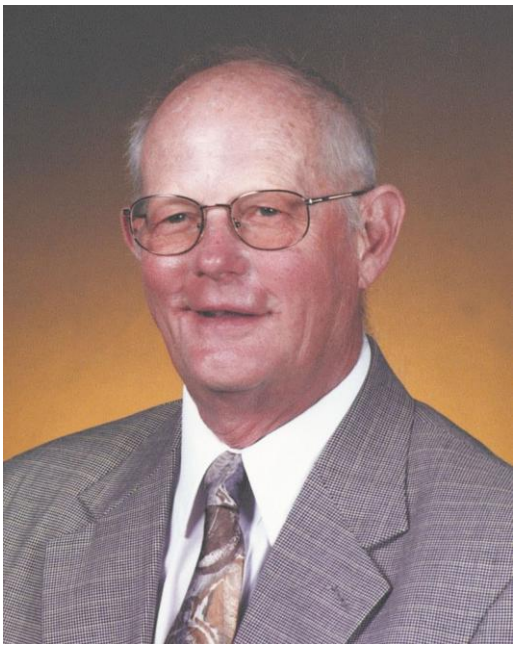
Frank Reuter September 6, 1942- October 6th 2026

Tom Story February 26, 1939- February 26, 2026



February 26, 1939 in Cleveland, OH. Dearest son of the late George and Elva Story (nee Reinker); Thomas attended John Adams High School, Case Institute of Technology, and finally Tri-State University, where he earned his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. He participated in baseball and wrestling in his youth. He participated in fishing, and hunting with his sons, and enjoyed the many adventures they had, particularly their annual fishing trip to Canada with his best friend Al Herrmann. He also enjoyed attending many sporting events in the Houston area with his daughter, particularly the Houston Astros. He was very active at this church, Memorial Lutheran in Katy, Texas for many years. There he was an usher, building/maintenance trustee, and active in the Bell Choir. He also loved gardening and working in his yard. He was a Mechanical Engineer who started his career at General Motors (Euclid and Terex Divisions), AEC (Alpine Equipment Corp, Chief Engineer), and Steward & Stevenson (Chief Engineer). His work related to designing heavy excavating equipment, underground mining equipment, tunneling, oil platforms, railcar movers and other specialized equipment, and finally, military vehicles. Thomas was loved by all who knew him, especially his family. He was a kind hearted person who treated everyone with respect and represented the best in mankind who was steadfast in his love of family, friends, and above all, God.

James Gradert April 4, 1932- September 28, 2026



For someone who could talk a lot, he sure did a lot of listening. My Grandpap, knew every friend and could distinguish between the three best friends of mine named Ashley. He remembered every long day I had at work. I told him about every new milestone with the kids. He always asked how Pat was doing. He listened and listened and listened. He loved the simple things in life: a sunny day, hanging out with family, and free food on Veterans Day. He had a way of making everyone he interacted with feel special. The kind of person who never met a stranger.. He was humble and happy. For several years after college, I called him every Monday, we talked about everything and nothing at the same time. We also discovered that Jeopardy! and Wheel of Fortune aired at opposite times in Ohio and North Carolina. So every Monday at 7:30 we would trade answers to Final Jeopardy! and the final puzzle on Wheel of Fortune. He was loyal and loving, and I can only dream and pray that I'll have the opportunity to spend 70 years married to my best friend and husband, Pat, like he did to my Grandma. I always loved my grandparents, but after having children, I realized just how special they are. It's like ice cream for dinner—all love, no rules, because they know just how fleeting childhood is as a parent. I'm so grateful my Grandpap got to see me become a parent. I'm sad I didn't get to see Grandpap more recently, but I feel grateful that my last memories of him are of his lively spirit and of him and Grandma FaceTiming my kids, with their foreheads filling the screen, for Blakely's birthday. Grandpap, thank you for the humble man you were, the charismatic crooked smile you always wore, and for raising the son who became the best dad on the planet. Thank you for the love you

always shared with me. I can still feel your big hugs. I'm glad I had you in my life for as long as I did, but I'll be honest: I really thought you'd make it to 100. I love you and miss you.

Katie Wurtz

Susan Besednjak June 5, 1956 - April 26, 2026



Susan lived a life that was characterized by love, generosity, and a magnetic spirit that drew people to her. A force to reckon with, she touched the lives of many with her authenticity, nurturing nature, intelligence, and compassionate personality.

Susan's legacy of kindness and generosity will forever be remembered and echoes the lessons she selflessly shared: to help others. As a devoted Girl Scout Leader, Boy Scout Leader, and Sunday School Teacher, Susan was a beacon of guidance and a confidant for many young minds. Her genuine caring nature and outgoing personality made her a pillar of the communities she was part of.

Lutheran Church of the Covenant
Council Meeting Minutes for Tues, Sept 21, 2026
Meeting called to order at 7:15pm by President Ted Lockmiller.

Present: Vince Besednjak, Mike Davis, Jennifer Lasher-Dobush, Ted Lockmiller, Pastor Andrea, Charlotte Zaranka

Absent: Gwen Susanek

Devotions and Prayer: Pastor Andrea "Wisdom Church" book. How can we fix this?

Council Business:
Minutes were approved/amended for meeting Aug 18, 2026. Motion made by Jen and seconded by Vince.

Pastor's Report: Written report – Joint worship at Master Aug 30 had good reviews. All 3 churches will worship again together Jan 31, 2027 at Covenant 10:00am. Bishop Barbins will attend. Cornerstone will host the food after. Advent season will be based around Christmas carols this year. Worship and food at Case Western on Oct 4 – whoever can make it from both churches will attend.
Pastor attended an interfaith leader's breakfast at CCC. Sept 8th and 9th she was at a preaching conference. Oct 5-8th she was in Chicago for Mission's Development Training at the Churchwide office.

Treasurers' Report: Mile Davis -Written report –Currently in arrears $28,324. Need serious influx of money soon. We also need a stewardship program in the Fall. Budget - we need a benefit plan for Pastor for 2027/going up 15%. Possibly 1- 1 1/2 years left in Thrivent savings.
<u>BOARDS:</u>
Finance – Gwen- absent. For 2027 envelopes we left in "cost of envelopes," and took out ones that go to other places.

Social Ministry: Case Western meal coming up. Community meal will be prepared by Pastor and Chuck. Dinner Church cooking class was $300 for supplies. This amount did not come out of church funds.

Education: Vacant for now.

Worship and Music – Jen – No written report.

Managers – Vince: Vince – Written report. Aug 20 repaired Nave lights, Aug 29 water leak in Parlor. Lots of clean up. I Man roofing came to fix the roof. Mid Sept - Jen and Ted scrubbed the parlor carpet. Had to clean twice to remove heavy stains. Ted and Jen painted the walls also. Jen washed drapes. Sept 19 Vince repaired the ramp door. Would not close.

Old Business - August shed amount was 118.82. Rummage sale brought in $1500.00 in Sept. We will start placing rummage items from the shed in the praying Hands" room for now. Leave the counseling room open in case it can be rented. Barb will call the Vietnam Vets to pick up leftover items on the stage.

New Business: CNS snowplow company quoted $4375 to plow and shovel door entrances. Thinking of selling off some parcels of land we don't use. Also parcel by Libby and MH Blvd to save money on taxes and insurance. New trash dumpster company quoted $75 month, same as Kimbel. Will pick up 2nd week of month on Wed. Problem with side door mailbox. Need a more secure box.
Will talk to Pastor Harper. We need to consolidate with Master. Sun, Oct 11 issues will be brought to the congregation at Master. Oct 25 we will talk to Covenant about consolidating after Sunday service. Our congregation will vote on Sun, Nov 15 after service.
We asked for a 3-month extension of Pastor's "Call". She asked till end of May 2027.
Any Given Table is an outreach program our church is interested in. You can see the info sheet in the office.
We have a Christmas tree now to decorate the parlor.

Next Council Meeting is Oct 20, 2026 at 7:15pm – Devotions: Vince
Meeting adjourned at 9:50pm with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Zaranka
Council Secretary.

Covenant News

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