

# *Covenant News*



## **May 2026**

A Pastoral Letter: Gospel Witness in Public Life

Beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus.

In this season of our life together, I find myself reflecting on the ways Christian language, symbols, and scripture are increasingly visible in our public life. As people shaped by the Gospel, this invites both gratitude and discernment. We give thanks whenever the name of Christ is spoken, and we also hold a deep responsibility to be clear about what that name means for us as ELCA Lutherans and for the world.

As Lutheran disciples of the ELCA variety, we are guided by our social teaching, including the recent Faith and Civic Life Social Statement. This statement reminds us that our engagement in civic life flows from our identity in Christ, not from any desire to claim cultural dominance or political power. Our calling is not to elevate Christianity as a favored religion within society, but to witness to God's grace in ways that uphold the dignity, freedom, and flourishing of all people.

Scripture itself calls us into this posture. Jesus teaches that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39). The apostle Paul reminds us that in Christ “there is no longer Jew or Greek... for all of you are one” (Galatians 3:28). And the prophet Micah calls us “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). These texts do not point us toward privilege or exclusion, but toward humility, service, and expansive love.

In light of this, we affirm that our faith does not seek to diminish or vilify other religions or worldviews. Rather, we are called to live faithfully alongside neighbors of many beliefs, trusting that God's love is not limited by human boundaries. We also recognize that within Christianity itself there is a rich diversity of expression, and we resist any narrowing of the faith that would exclude or silence the breadth of Christ's body.

In recent days, we have been reminded of the fragility of our common life through acts of political violence. Such moments call us again to our deepest commitments. Violence, in any form, is contrary to the way of Christ. We are called instead to be people of peace, praying for all who serve in public life, for the world, and in our actions toward others. As followers of Jesus, we work toward a society shaped not by fear or harm, but by justice, mercy, and humility.

We are called to a public witness that reflects the heart of the Gospel: a witness marked by humility rather than boastfulness, by compassion rather than fear, and by love that reaches outward rather than drawing lines of division. We seek to be people who engage civic life thoughtfully and faithfully, advocating for justice, protecting religious freedom for all, and honoring the image of God in every person.

In Christ,  
Rev. Dr. Laura L. H. Barbins,  
Bishop Northeastern Ohio Synod, ELCA



### *C LW Annual Plant Sale*

Pick-up scheduled Saturday, May 24, 9am-1pm

Drive thru pick-up same as last year, at the ramp door. Please call when you are on the way to pick-up and Arlene will have your order outside to be put into your vehicle.

# *.HAPPY. Birthday!*

*5/2 Christopher Dickey  
5/14 Lynn Fridley  
5/19 Steven Kobella  
5/19 Arlene Lasher  
5/21 Joan Garvin  
5/25 Ron Schirmer  
5/30 Jayden Kyle  
5/31 Barbara Gerstenberger  
5/31 Matthew Kobella*



**5/4 Michelle & Doug Pekar  
Happy 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary!**

**5/22 Jennifer & Larry Garberich  
Happy 27<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

**5/7 Charlotte & Robert Zaranka  
Happy 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

**5/22 Nanette & Ron Schirmer  
Happy 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

**5/11 Karen & Raymond Zack  
Happy 58<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

**5/25 Daralynn & Bruce Constant  
Happy 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

# FREE *Community* DINNER

In working with other surrounding congregations, we continue to offer a FREE meal for anyone and everyone in the community and beyond on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month. If you are interested in helping, please contact Mary Kaye Bernardo. Otherwise, come on for FREE dinner Thursday, May 28 (5:00-6pm), or help spread the word to others!

We are tentatively planning to start worshipping Sundays outside from our back parking lot in June. Feel free to bring your own chair or stay in your vehicle, as we praise God amidst the wonderful Creation!



Lutheran Church of the Covenant  
Council Meeting Minutes for Feb 17, 2026  
Meeting called to order at 7:15pm by Pastor Andrea

**Present:** MaryKaye Bernardo, Vince Besednjak, Mike Davis, Jennifer Lasher-Dobush, Pastor Andrea, Charlotte Zaranka

**Absent:** Chuck Dickey, Ted Lockmiller, Gwen Susanek

**Devotions and Prayer:** Jen – New Perspective

**Council Business:**

Minutes were approved/amended for meeting Tues, Jan 6, 2026.  
Motion made by Jen and seconded by Vince.

**Pastor's Report:** Written report – Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. The theme will be “In the Bleak” this year. Cooking class had 9 attending. A possible council retreat in March. See the office for more details.

**Treasurer's Report** – Mike – Written report – Still operating at a deficit \$(1,528.00) end of January 2026. We need another “Build Back” program or one similar for 2026. See the report in the office for more details.

**BOARDS:**

**Finance** – Gwen – absent. Two people have trained with Mike on posting the envelopes. So far Gwen has done the envelopes herself twice and is doing fine. She also printed the statements. Now copying incoming checks before going to U.S. Bank. Need quarterly statements to go out so people can see where they stand.

**Social Ministry:** - MaryKaye - No report - Met with Superintendent of schools about after school program. Also, if students need community service credit.

**Education:** Chuck – Absent

**Worship and Music:** Jen – Report - Jen got together with Pastor and Master regarding Ash Wednesday service, 5 soup suppers, and Maudy Thursday and Good Friday services. Info will be printed in the bulletins. See report in office for details.

**Manager's Report:** Vince – No report – Checked roof for leaks in Sacristy office. Drips and ceiling sagging. Will call the roofers who reroofed not long ago. Vince retired as custodian and daughter Vanessa took over that job. He will still be Manager and do maintenance.

**Old Business:** St Pauly shed program finished 2025 as follows. 21,652 lbs of clothing were collected, enough to clothe 3,988 people around the world. Thank you to all who donated and/or helped with the shed project.

**New Business:** Need to find someone from church to take items collected at back of the church to the hunger center. Pastor Andrea met with Pastor Harper about increasing their donation for using the church. He may give a one-time bigger check and then weekly amounts. They will meet once a month. May use the Scout Troop from Master for volunteer work toward their badges. Church Trac – new computer program - half the names have been transferred so far. See office for more detail.

**Next council meeting** is Thurs, March 19, 2026 at 7:15pm.

**Devotions and Prayer:** Mike

Meeting adjourned at 8:42pm with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlotte Zaranka  
Council Secretary

**Comment:** Still plugging along

# *The Lutheran Church of the Covenant*

## **May 2026**

Server Schedule	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AG: Sheila Werner, Annie Copeland, Paula Hohenstein, Charlotte Zaranka						16:30-8:30 pm GOD AA Meeting in Parish Hall	2 Art/Soul 9-12 Hall 3pm AA Meeting Parlor 6-8pm CA in Hall
AG: Sheila Werner, Annie Copeland, Paula Hohenstein, Charlotte Zaranka	3 Fifth Sunday of Easter 9:00 am Eucharist 10:30 Adult Bible Study/S.School	4 6-8 pm AA hall	5 6:30 Women's AA Meeting Hall	6 6-8pm AA Meeting in Hall	7 6-8 NAMI in Hall	8 6:30-8:30 pm GOD AA Meeting in Parish Hall	9 Art/Soul 9-12 Hall 3pm AA Meeting Parlor 6-8pm CA in Hall
AG: Joan Garvin, Marie Zahn, Jen Garberich	10 Sixth Sunday of Easter 9:00 am Eucharist 10:30 Adult Bible Study/S.School	11 6-8 pm AA hall	12 6:30 Women's AA Meeting Hall	13 6-8pm AA Meeting in Hall	14	15 6:30-8:30 pm GOD AA Meeting in parlor	16 3 pm AA Meeting Parlor 6-8pm CA in Hall
AG: Joan Garvin, Marie Zahn, Jen Garberich	17 Seventh Sunday of Easter 9:00 am Eucharist 10:30 Adult Bible Study/S.School	18 6-8 pm AA hall	19 6:30 Women's AA Meeting Hall	20 6-8pm AA Meeting in Hall	21 6-8 NAMI in Hall	22 9-1 Flower delivery set up Hall 6:30-8:30 pm GOD AA Meeting in Parish Hall	23 9-1 Flower delivery Hall 3 pm AA meeting in Parlor 6-8pm CA in Hall
AG: Claudia Senderak,, Gwen Susanek,	24 Joint Pentecost 10 am Eucharist Meal after in Hall	25 6-8 pm AA hall Memorial Day Office Closed	26 6:30 Women's AA Meeting Hall	27 6-8pm AA Meeting in Hall	28 Community Meal 5:00-6:00 pm in Hall	29 6:30-8:30 pm GOD AA Meeting in Parish Hall	30 3:00 pm Women's AA meeting in Parlor -8pm CA in Hall
	31 Holy Trinity 9:00am Eucharist						

# *Covenant News*

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant  
19000 Libby Road, Maple Heights, Ohio 44137



## *Bringer of Peace*

JESUS. AS WE REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM, WE ARE AT A LOSS. WE ASK YOU TO MEDIATE BETWEEN NATIONS AND SETTLE INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES. WE PRAY THEY WILL HAMMER THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING HOOKS SO COUNTRIES WILL NO LONGER FIGHT NOR TRAIN FOR WAR ANYMORE.