THE ARK

July 2026 NEWSLETTER

COVENANT United Methodist Church
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From Pastor's Desk:

Four Years of Gratitude

This coming July 1 marks an important milestone for me. On that day, I will complete my fourth year as pastor of Covenant United Methodist Church and begin my fifth year of ministry among you. Of my eleven years of pastoral ministry in Wisconsin, this has become my longest appointment, and I am deeply grateful for that blessing.

As I reflect on these past four years, my heart is filled with gratitude. From the very beginning, my family and I have experienced your extraordinary hospitality. Despite our cultural and racial differences, you welcomed us with open arms and embraced us as your own family. Your kindness not only helped me become your pastor but also helped our entire family love being part of this church and the Fond du Lac community.

I am especially thankful for the remarkable dedication of our church leaders. Building a healthy church required many new meetings, often lasting more than an hour—and one even lasted six hours! Throughout these past four years, our leaders faithfully attended these meetings without complaint. More importantly, they continually encouraged me to move forward, supported new ideas, and willingly embraced change. Even today, I see many of our leaders serving at the church two or three times each week. Their commitment has been an incredible blessing.

Because of this faithful leadership and our culture of radical hospitality, God has blessed Covenant in many wonderful ways. During the past three years, we have welcomed more than thirty new members, and our average worship attendance has steadily increased. Our Sunday School and youth ministries have grown stronger. Our women's and men's groups have become more active while welcoming many new participants. We have launched successful new small groups, such as Food & Fellowship and Trillium. Long-standing mission ministries have remained strong while new outreach opportunities—including the Loom Mission, Ice Cream Social, Little Food Pantry, Community Worship at Assisted Living, and Game Day—have become part of our ministry together. In addition, we have completed numerous building improvement projects, leaving only a few smaller projects remaining.

Looking back, there is so much to celebrate and so much to thank God for. Every blessing we have

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experienced has come through God's grace and through the faithful commitment of each member of this congregation. I give thanks to God above all, and I sincerely thank each of you. It is truly an honor and a joy to be part of Covenant United Methodist Church.

A New Vision & A New Beginning

As grateful as I am for what God has done, I believe our story is only beginning.

Over the past four years, we have grown both spiritually and numerically. Yet I do not believe we have fully become the church God is calling us to be. Rather, I believe God has been preparing us for the next stage of our journey together.

My prayer is that Covenant will become a truly Spirit-filled and Spirit-led church.

When we read the Book of Acts, we see a church where the Holy Spirit is actively at work. People not only hear about God—they experience the living Christ. Their faith is more than intellectual understanding or moral living; it is a living relationship with God that transforms their hearts. As they encounter God's presence, they long to know Him more deeply. That desire is expressed through prayer, worship, Scripture, generous service, and joyful mission.

The early church also experienced remarkable unity. People became one body in Christ despite their differences. They shared their lives with one another, encouraged one another toward holiness, and even confessed their sins openly because they longed to grow closer to God. This is the kind of church I believe God desires us to become.

I believe we already see glimpses of this kind of church at Covenant. God has been at work among us in many beautiful ways. Yet I also believe He is inviting us to go even deeper. As I begin my fifth year of ministry here, I find myself dreaming once again of what God can do through a congregation that is fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit.

I do not pretend to know every step that will lead us there. But I do know this: when God's people devote themselves to Scripture, prayer, and faithful obedience, the Holy Spirit transforms both individuals and churches.

Interestingly, this July and August will be somewhat quieter than our usual busy summers. Perhaps God is giving us this season as an opportunity to slow down, listen, and seek His direction for our future. During these months, I plan to spend time studying and preaching through the Book of Acts, asking what it means for Covenant to become a Spirit-filled church.

I invite you to join me. Read through the Book of Acts this summer. Pray for our church. Ask the Holy Spirit to shape both your heart and our congregation. As we seek God together, I believe He will faithfully show us the way forward.

May this new season become not simply another year in the life of Covenant United Methodist Church, but the beginning of an even greater work that God desires to accomplish among us.

July Worship and Sermon

DATE	CALENDAR	SERMON	WORSHIP
7/05	6th Sunday after Pentecost	• **Sermon:** Spirit-Filled Church 2	- Communion - Offering: Back to School
7/12	7th Sunday after Pentecost	• **Sermon:** Spirit-Filled Church 3	- Special Music - Offering: Back to School
7/19	8th Sunday after Pentecost	• **Sermon:** Spirit-Filled Church 4	- Special Music - Offering: Loaves and Fishes
7/26	9th Sunday after Pentecost	• **Sermon:** Spirit-Filled Church 5	- Special Music - Offering: Loaves and Fishes

Wisconsin Annual Conference Report

Your WI Conference was held June 4-7, 2026 at Middleton, WI, with Bishop Daniel Schwerin presiding. This year's theme was, PRACTICING HOPE, Roman 5:3-5. Pastor Ho Lee, Diane Weider, Bill Averbeck and myself were attendees this year.

The business sessions consisted of approving the annual 2027 budget, additions and revisions of Resolutions, and sadly, the approval of the discontinuance of 3 Methodist Churches. 60% of WI Methodist Churches have fewer than 35 members. There was a revision to the compilation of apportionments which will not go into effect until 2028. Midwest Mission collected 2,452 personal dignity kits, 238 home care buckets, and $11,000.

Bible Study theme on Friday was making room for young faith and Saturday's theme was letting go of things that distract us from God. Bishop Schwerin's message throughout the Conference was based on the challenges we face in this lifetime, such as, anxiety, immigration, and divisions we need HOPE, and that God's love is poured into every moment of our lives. I am thankful for the opportunity to have attended this year's Conference.

Blessings, Submitted by **Mona Averbeck**

A word of Thanks from Dea Hebel

I want to express my sincere thanks for all the prayers as I had surgery and for my recovery. I still have a ways to go, but am so very thankful to God and for all the ways my

The Covenant family supported me. The cards, calls, and visits were all so appreciated. Several friends gave me rides to PT, and some brought food after I was home. Each of you is so special, and I'm truly blessed to be part of this church. God bless you all!

Submitted by **Dea Hebel**

Small Group Ministry Update:

Trillium Small Group

At it's June gathering Trillium members viewed remarkable Wisconsin wildlife images captured via statewide trail cameras. This included a striking photo of a bobcat near Oakfield by church member Rich Roessler.

Speaking of wild animals, here's a challenging trivia question from the meeting: Lions are mentioned over 100 times in the Bible. Were lions present in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus? Answer: Yes! Although lions were less common than in the past, they were still found in the Jordan Valley and wilderness at the time of Jesus.

The Trillium outside gathering for June is a visit to **a namesake dairy farm**, **Trillium Hills Farm**, near Berlin, WI, noted for its methane recovery system. The next Trillium small group indoor meeting is **Wednesday, July 8, at 1 p.m**. in the Fellowship Hall.

Submitted by **Jeff Strong**

Food and Fellowship

I look forward to our dinners each month. This group has shown me how wonderful spending time with friends can be. When Pastor Ho Lee asked me to join a group to brainstorm ways to grow our small groups, Food and Fellowship was just an idea. So, my challenge to you is to think about what you like to do.

* If you read – start a book group
* If you like to craft (knit, paint, or sculpt) – start a crafting group
* If you like to play cards (come to game night) – start a card group
* If you like to cook or bake, develop a cookbook to share old family recipes.

Be brave, take a chance, invite some friends, and see what happens. FYI, it always helps if you involve food. But most of all, remember to invite God.

Submitted by **Shelli Dekker**

A word of Thanks from Nancy Johnston

Thank you for all the hugs, warm thoughts, kind words, cards, and prayers as I grieved the Peaceful Passing of my beloved Miniature Poodle, Red Rudi Raye. Your thoughtfulness helped to heal my heart.

Submitted by **Nancy Johnston**

Sunday School News

A big shout out and thank you for all who helped with the wonderful Graduation Sunday Church Service held on May 31. Our Sunday school children were amazing playing two musical pieces for the bells under the direction of Nancy Johnston! The kids also performed several dances with songs they had learned throughout the year and did a great job reading their speaking parts during the service.

On June 14, we had an organizational meeting regarding our **Vacation Bible School (VBS)** plan which will be held on **Saturday, August 1 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.** We have decided to keep the VBS smaller this year. Hopefully all 12 of our Sunday School children ages 4 – 11 will attend VBS. We encourage each to bring a friend or cousin to have our numbers closer to 20 kids participating in VBS. The theme will be **"Galaxy: Launching kids on a Mission of God's Love"!** Look for postcard sized invites to share with others in mid-July!

The next VBS planning meeting will be June 28 following the worship service.

Just an FYI, Pastor Ho Lee and Julie will be meeting to put together **parent contact information** for all children attending VBS, Sunday school and Fun Sunday activities. If plans are made for activities outside of the church, a waiver must be signed for insurance coverage, even if parents attend with their child. Thank you for your understanding as we get things updated!

Reminder, there is no Sunday school during June, July or August but we always encourage families to have their children attend the regular worship. We do have activity bags hanging on a small coat rack located in the narthex. Please let **Kelly** or **Julie** know if any need replacement materials! Thank you.

Submitted by **Julie Tennie**

Youth Group News

The youth are on hiatus for the summer. However, I want to give a shout out to **Henry** and **Kyle Allickson**, **Sloan** and **Brayden Averbeck**, and **Jin Lee** (our newest youth group member) for helping with the Ice Cream Social. They manned the serving line and poured lemonade throughout the event. Their service was greatly needed and appreciated.

Submitted by **Diane Weider**

A Confirmand's Reflection

Hello, my name is **Brayden Averbeck**, and I am a sophomore at Oshkosh West High School. I like to hunt, hang out with friends, and help my dad around the farm.

I can honestly say I would not have passed this class without my mentor, Shelli. She was always keeping up with the assignments that I easily forgot about, always someone I could go to and talk with, and someone who was willing to help with anything I needed. Those are just some of the many reasons why I think she deserved the 2026 Woman of the Year Award. I joined the Confirmation program partly because my parents wanted me to, but I also wanted to learn more about Jesus, His ministry, and how to follow God's will.

When we started having class, I thought we would just be going through the Bible and breaking it down—not taking a 50-question test on the Gospel of John and, supposedly, one of the hardest tests Pastor has ever put together on the Gospel of Luke!

Even though the class wasn't exactly what I expected, I learned how to become a better person. It challenged me to think about questions that I don't even know how Pastor comes up with, much less how to answer them. It also taught me to take a deeper look into the Bible because, apparently, we can't just say what we mean in biblical books!

As I move on through life, I plan to continue coming to church, helping with Loaves & Fishes and the many meals we serve here, and supporting the Men's Group through its activities and fundraisers.

Thank you so much for your time, patience, and support throughout my Confirmation journey

Submitted by **Brayden Averbeck**

Missions

It's **Back to School Time**! As a teacher I hated those words. Now, I just love to help those in need with back to school supplies. We will be collecting supplies all four Sundays in July. I will have a list of supplies in the Narthex but I think you know what the needs are. This year their plan is to serve 2,400 children in the Fond du Lac School District. Due to the construction at the Boys and Girls Club, this year's distribution will be at Chegwin. In addition to collecting supplies, our loose offering on **July 5th** and **12th** will go to **Back to School.** Please help us support the children who cannot afford supplies start the school year with all that they need.

Loose offering for **July 19th** and **26th** will go to **Loaves and Fishes**. We are serving five Wednesdays this year (instead of four) so we need more money than usual. We are looking to serve scalloped potatoes and ham as a more cost efficient option but are not sure that it will be less expensive. Mona is on top of this always looking to serve.

Submitted by **Diane Weider**

Missionary Visit

On the evening of May 21st, several members of the church council and Pastor Ho Lee had the pleasure of meeting **missionary Rev. Sarah Mae Gabuyo** and her husband Janos at TJ's for an informal gathering. Pastor Sarah Mae was a native of the Philippines and a missionary serving in Rome, Italy. Sarah Mae's husband is a pastor from Hungary.

Rev. Sarah Mae and her husband began their visit to the United States through the General Board of Global Ministries. Their first visits were in Ohio, followed by the gathering of the United Women of Faith in Indiana. They arrived in Wisconsin on May 19th and visited eleven scheduled locations before attending the Wisconsin Annual Conference. Their departure for Rome was on Sunday, June 7th.

Rev. Gabuyo serves Ponte Sant'Angelo Methodist Church, an English-speaking multicultural congregation located near the Vatican. Her ministry centers on welcoming pilgrims, international students, and expatriates from around the world—creating spaces of hospitality, worship, and cross-cultural connections. She is also active in young adult ministry and community outreach, using music and cultural engagement to build relationships with the wider community.

Submitted by **Mary Balson**

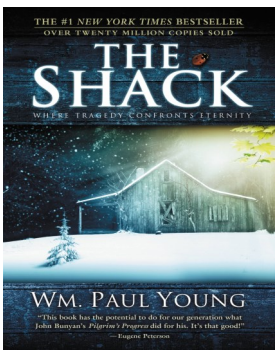
Loaves and Fishes

Our next serving date will be **Wed. July 8th, 4:30-6:00 pm at Church of Peace**, Military Rd. This meal will be a hot dish of scalloped potatoes and ham. A large ham that had been generously donated by church members will be used for this meal. Sign up sheet will be in the Narthex. Anyone is welcome to sign up to serve, bake cookies, or donate boxes of scalloped potatoes. All of your help and donations are greatly appreciated.

Submitted by **Mona Averbeck and Nancy Johnston**

Bible Study

This summer we are doing a book study on **The Shack** and welcome all to join us. The book is about a man struggling with his faith due to some terrible life experiences. And then he spends a weekend in "the shack" with God. We meet on **Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** In addition to discussing the book, we will also watch the movie as we go. Please come and join us.



Submitted by **Diane Weider**

Church Council

Staying Connected to Your Church in the Summer

Summer has a way of pulling us into a different rhythm. School lets out, vacations begin, weekends fill with family gatherings, and the warm weather invites us outdoors. Rest, renewal, and time with loved ones matter deeply. Yet amid this seasonal shift, it becomes surprisingly easy to drift from the life of the church. But the church doesn't take a vacation. Ministry continues. Worship continues. Care for our neighbors continues. And your presence, your prayers, your service, your generosity—continues to matter.

Staying connected during the summer is important because:

- **Your church family still needs you.** People face illness, loneliness, and hardship year-round. Your encouragement, your smile, your steady presence can be a lifeline.
- **Your spiritual life needs nourishment.** Just as our bodies need food even when routines change, our spirits need worship, Scripture, and community to stay grounded.
- **Your giving sustains ministry.** Summer often brings a dip in financial support, even though the church's commitments remain the same. Consistent giving—whether in person or online—keeps missions, outreach, and daily operations strong.
- **Your involvement strengthens the whole body.** When you show up, serve, and stay engaged, you help the church remain vibrant, welcoming, and ready to meet the needs of the community.

This summer, enjoy the sunshine, the rest, and the adventures—but also make space for worship, prayer, and connection. Your church is here for you, and your presence is a blessing to others. Together, we can make this a season of growth, gratitude, and grace. Best regards, and God Bless

Submitted by **Thomas Retzleff, Church Council Chair**

United Methodist Men (UMM)

The Men's group met on Saturday, June 13th, at Rolling Meadows Restaurant at 8 am. Our **candy bar sale** continues to go well, and we hope the congregation and others will continue to support this project. We want to **thank** several **men** for their help with the Church garden and mowing the lawn, which is important to God's work at Covenant. **The Banana Project** continues, and a couple of other projects were discussed and will be announced soon. If there are any suggestions, please let one of the men know.

Any men who are not currently involved in our group, please come and join us on **the 2nd Saturday of the month at Rolling Meadows Restaurant at 8 am.** Please feel welcome to come and attend at any time.

Have a great summer, and Blessed be to God.

Submitted by **Bill Averbeck**, President

Trustees Report

The Trustees and Pastor Ho Lee are working on **the computer upgrade** for the church with Windows 11 to improve our Worship and office operations. **Signage for the parking lot** on Marr St. entrance, along with 2 new signs on Division St entrance, has been completed. Our **property insurance** provider has changed, and our policy is now handled by Sovereign Insurance as of March 1st. The Linus Group, occupying a room on the 1st floor, has moved to a different location. **Pacto de Gracia** is now in the process of moving from the 3rd floor to this 1st floor room. Any comments or suggestions for the Trustees are always welcome.

Submitted by **Bill Averbeck**

UWF: United Women in Faith

June meeting was a potluck "picnic" to end our year. We dispersed some funds from the banquet, sending them to Harbor House, the Bolivia project, Beacon House, and the Arc. Our fall district meeting is at Markesan UM Church on Sept. 12. On Sept. 20th, we will celebrate UWF Sunday with a speaker. Final plans were made for the ice cream social.

The ice cream social was a success with many people assisting us and each individual was so appreciated! Many hands make much lighter work for all. We truly appreciated the youth who came to help serve. The bake sale had a good selection and was also well-received.

There was a good representation of community members and friends who came to our events and appreciated the opportunity for food and fellowship. The profit was **$1,173.77**, and that will go towards little food pantry and our many mission projects we support each year.

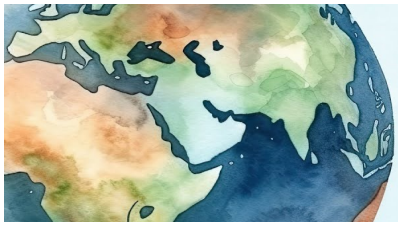
Our next meeting will be **Sept. 2nd.**

Submitted by **Dea Hebel**

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Two words that just aren't enough to express how I feel. **The crew of people** who made the Ice Cream Social Tuesday night on June 16 a great success. Although we did make money, that is not the only thing that made it a success. Fellowship Hall was busy from 4:30 until after 6:00, watching everyone having what looked like a fun family dinner. But even better was the fabulous group of people who showed up to help. I wish I could list everyone by name, but I'm afraid I would leave someone out. I do want to spotlight just a few; the food line was served by two confirmands, a high school graduate and a college scholarship recipient. Not to mention, they are all related to Bill and Mona Averbeck. Jin also joined the team serving beverages. Our UMM became a white knight, helping wherever needed. Last but not least, our fantastic bakers and cooks. Thank you very much to everyone who helped.

Submitted by **Dea Hebel**



7/5	BACK TO SCHOOL
7/12	
7/19	Loaves & Fishes
7/26	

July Birthdays

7-8 Dan Klaske

7-9 Janet Lewis

7-9 Jeff Strong

7-11 Bill Averbeck

7-12 Annarose Austin

7-13 William Candlish

7-13 Suzie Rimel

7-14 Sharon Wolf

7-14 Penny Barnette

7-19 Ryan Engel

7-20 Sara Krueger–Zuengler

7-23 Donald Krueger

7-13 Donna & Ken Depies

2026 July Worship Volunteers

2026	Liturgist	Children's Time	Acolyte	Live-Streaming	PPT/Sound	Ushers
7/5	Diane W.	Diane W.	Memphis A.	Penny W.	Tom R.	Jeff S. (Head) Jan A. / Sandy T.
7/12	Patti S.	Diane W.	Tay L.	Ava A.	Tom R.	Jeff S. (Head) Dennis G. / Sandy T.
7/19	Gary M.	Denise S.	Abigail G.	Mona A.	Diane W.	Jeff S. (Head) Jan A. / Sandy T.
7/26	Julie T.	Shelli D.	Tay L.	AJ A.	Diane W.	Jeff S. (Head) Jan A. / Sandy T.

JULY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Pastor's Vacation **9:30am** Bible Study	**2** Pastor's Vacation	**3** Pastor's Vacation	**4** Pastor's Vacation Independence Day
5 **9am** Worship Service Communion Sunday	**6** **10am** Care cmte. Mtg. **11:45am** Staff Mtg.	**7** **10am** Trustee Mtg. **7:45pm** SPRC Mtg.	**8** **9:30am** Bible Study **1 pm—2 pm** Trillium indoor Mtg. **4–6pm** Loaves&Fishes	**9** Pastoral Visitations	**10** Pastor Sabbath	**11** Pastor's Day Off **8am** Men's Breakfast **9:00 am - 3:00 pm** Rummage Sale Pacto de Gracia
12 **9am** Worship Service **10:30am** Youth Group Gathering	**13** **10am** Community Worship Service at Lake House **11:45am** Staff Mtg.	**14**	**15** **9:30am** Bible Study **10:30am** Worship Mtg **5:30-8pm** Champions Bingo	**16** Pastoral Visitations	**17** Pastor Sabbath	**18** Pastor's Day Off
19 **9am** Worship Service	**20** **11:45am** Staff Mtg.	**21** **4:45 pm** Finance mtg	**22** **8am** Women's Breakfast **9:30am** Bible Study	**23** Pastoral Visitations	**24** Pastor Sabbath	**25** Pastor's Day Off
26 **9am** Worship Service	**27** **11:45am** Staff Mtg. **6:30-7:30 pm** Church Council Mtg.	**28**	**29** **9:30am** Bible Study	**30** Pastoral Visitations	**31** Pastor Sabbath	**8/1** **One-day VBS**

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Main Office Hours
Mon-Thurs
9:00AM-1:00PM

Pastor Office Hours:
Mon– Thurs
9:00am-3:00pm

The submission deadline is the 15th of each month at noon.
Please get your content to the office by this date for the next month's issue.