



OCTOBER 2026

# COVENANT MATTERS!

The Newsletter of the Saints at  
Covenant Presbyterian Church

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## FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART:

### Generous by Design: Welcoming a Season of Grateful Generosity

Dear Friends,

Do you remember a gift that meant more to you than you could explain? Chances are it wasn't the price that made it matter. It was the love behind it.

Scripture begins with a gift like that. Before we ever do anything, God speaks a world into being and calls it good. Life, breath, family, faith, and this congregation all arrive as gifts we did not earn. And Genesis tells us something more: we were made in the image of the One who gives. Generosity is not an extra we add to the Christian life when the budget calls for it. It is part of how God designed us.

That is why this fall we are beginning *A Season of Grateful Generosity*. You may notice we are not calling it a stewardship campaign. That is on purpose. A campaign asks us to give in order to reach a goal. A season invites us to notice what we have already been given and to respond with thanks. In our Reformed tradition, the pattern is grace first and gratitude after. We do not give to earn God's favor. We give because that favor has already found us.

Our series verse comes from 2 Corinthians 9:8: "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." Notice where the sentence starts. It begins with what God provides, and only then turns to what we share.

Over five Sundays, our worship series, *Generous by Design*, will walk through that movement together:

- **Made to Give:** we begin in Genesis, where generosity begins.
- **Enough for Today:** we learn to trust God's daily provision over our fears.
- **Grateful Response:** we ask the psalmist's question, "What shall I return to the Lord?"

*Continued page 2*

## **SESSION**

### **Class of 2026**

Pat Arner  
Madeleine Doran  
Richard Shafer  
Carissa Sprung  
Rosemary Wallace

### **Class of 2027**

Beverly Grady  
Mary Lee Mann  
Anna Siemen

### **Class of 2028**

Christine Larson  
Dave Nelson  
David Viele

**Rev. Becky Schwandt**

*Moderator / Pastor*

**Deborah Maurer, Clerk**

## **DIACONATE**

### **Class of 2026**

Allan Engler  
Beth Richter  
Karen Tasman  
Connie Willhite

### **Class of 2027**

Connie Burkert, *Moderator*  
Linda Nelson  
DeAnne Sawyer  
Karen Viele

### **Class of 2028**

Angelette Arias  
Yacelis Dotres  
Sally Kaskocsak  
Juan Pablo Oliva

## **TRUSTEES**

Wilson Wheeler (2026)  
Beverly Beardsley (2027)  
Pete Burkert (2028)

## ***COVENANT MATTERS!***

Edited by Deanna Gordon  
Submissions due by  
the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month to  
dgordon@covpcfm.com

*From the Pastor's Heart continued:*

- **Woven Together:** we see how our gifts join into a shared ministry.
- **Gladly Given:** on Commitment Sunday, we offer our time, gifts, and prayers as our joyful yes.

Generosity here is about more than money. It includes our time, our attention, and our talents, and it is a practice for people in every season of life. Whatever you have to offer, it is a thread in something larger than any of us.

We begin this season on October 11th, and Consecration Sunday will be November 8th. Come ready to be reminded who you were made to be.

With gratitude for you and for the God who gives us all things,

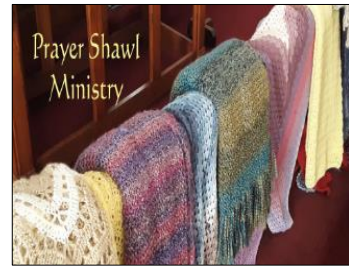
*Pastor Becky*



## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

|               |                                                                                            |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 18    | Luncheon for Mary Callaway Retirement in Heflin Hall                                       |
| October 19-21 | Staff Training ~ staff out of office                                                       |
| October 24    | Peace River Presbytery PW Gathering in Heflin Hall                                         |
| October 31    | Fall Family Fun Fest and Trunk or Treat <i>plus</i><br>JP & Friends concert near Courtyard |
| November 1    | PW Fall Gathering Luncheon-Julie Mercer, speaker –<br>Heflin Hall                          |
| November 6    | Brass Elements Concert – Sanctuary                                                         |
| November 8    | Consecration Sunday                                                                        |
| November 13   | Concert Series – Seeung Baek - Sanctuary                                                   |
| November 22   | PW Craft & Bake Sale                                                                       |
| November 26   | Thanksgiving holiday                                                                       |
| November 29   | 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent ~ Communion                                               |

Prayer Shawl Ministry meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 10:00AM in F207. New members are always welcome to join us for conversation and fellowship as we knit and crochet beautiful shawls which are donated to friends in need of a warm “hug.” Yarn, needles and crochet hooks are available. Our next get-together is Tuesday, October 26, 2026, at 10AM in room F207 to knit and crochet our prayer shawls. Join us!



## Gathering in His Name

Small group dinners are starting back up this month. Sign-up sheets are at the Welcome Center if you would like to join a group.



UPCOMING EVENTS

# FALL FAMILY FUN FEST

featuring live music by

## JUAN PABLO & FRIENDS

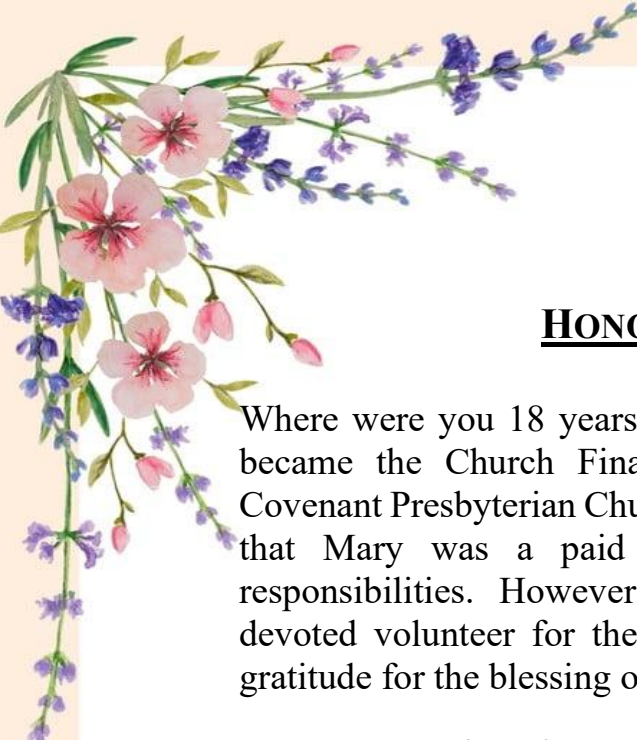
October 31, 2026, starting at 3pm

*Come one, come all!*

Fantastic live music by Juan Pablo & Friends, popcorn machine, snacks and drinks, games, Trunk or Treat, and “dunk the Pastor”

Hosted by Covenant’s Concert Series and Membership/Evangelism Committees

Questions? Contact Deborah Maurer or Bev Grady



## HONORING MARY CALLAWAY

Where were you 18 years ago?? That was 2008, the year Mary Callaway became the Church Financial Secretary and Membership custodian of Covenant Presbyterian Church. I am sure that many in our congregation think that Mary was a paid staff member because of her presence and responsibilities. However, that is not the case. Mary Callaway has been a devoted volunteer for the past 18 years. We owe Mary a great debt of gratitude for the blessing of her gifts and service to our church.

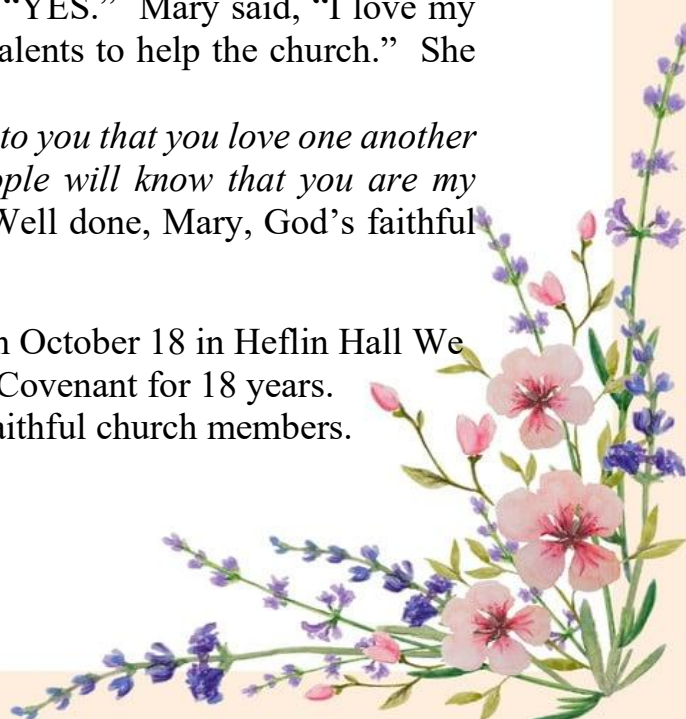
Mary grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, a true Southern Belle. She was born one of twin girls, Marion Lynn and Mary Glen. She met her husband Steve on a blind date-- and the rest is history! She worked for the Mount Bethel Methodist Church and Steve worked for Delta airlines. After their two girls, Wendy and Amy, became adults, Steve accepted a job in Ft. Myers. They have two adult grandsons.

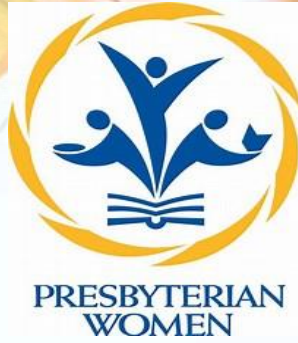
They traveled to Korea and Germany to visit daughter Wendy where her husband, a fighter pilot, was stationed. They enjoyed traveling the United States when Steve played on a traveling tennis team.

Mary is leaving her volunteer position because of health issues that we pray will be overcome very soon. When I asked her how she would spend her retirement, she responded with one word, "Steve." Mary and Steve are devoted to each other and to this church. The next time someone asks you to go on a blind date, don't be reluctant to say "YES." Mary said, "I love my God, and I am happy that he has given me talents to help the church." She also said more than once, "I love people";

John 13: 34-35 – *A new commandment I give to you that you love one another just as I have loved you.... By this all people will know that you are my disciple, if you have love for one another.* Well done, Mary, God's faithful disciple.

We will be celebrating Mary at a luncheon on October 18 in Heflin Hall. We give thanks for Mary's immeasurable gift to Covenant for 18 years. Thankfully, Mary and Steve will remain as faithful church members.





## **ALL COVENANT WOMEN ARE INVITED!!**

On Saturday, October 24, all women from Covenant Presbyterian Church are invited to join a gathering of women from the 32 churches in the Peace River Presbytery

to share ideas, stories, inspiration, and worship

right here in Covenant's Heflin Hall!

This is the annual fall gathering of the

Peace River Presbytery Presbyterian Women.

We are pleased to be co-hosting this event, called "Better Together"  
with Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church.

More information is available on the registration forms that are  
available in the office and at the Welcome Center after service.

The fee is \$25.00 and includes refreshments and a box lunch.

Registration deadline is October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Make checks payable to:

*Peace River Presbytery Presbyterian Women* and mail to:

*Judy Colvin*

*4023 Bowen Falls Pl.*

*Sarasota, Fl. 34243*

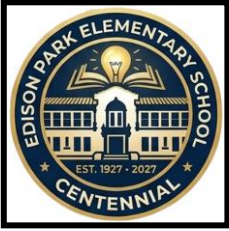
Most importantly, please join us so we can show  
our guests a big Covenant welcome!

# MISSIONS

In September, six Covenant volunteers were on hand to pack non-perishable food for distribution at Mision Peniel. We were able to pack 350 bags of beans, rice, milk, cereal and other needed items.

If you have any questions regarding OMissions at Covenant, feel free to contact Chris Larson at: [celarson582@gmail.com](mailto:celarson582@gmail.com)





## **BE A VOLUNTEER AT** **EDISON PARK CREATIVE & EXPRESSIVE** **ART SCHOOL**



**2401 Euclid Ave., Fort Myers, FL 33901**  
(our nearby elementary school)

The need for volunteers is great and the opportunities are unlimited. The Covenant Membership & Evangelism Committee (M&E) is tasked with community outreach (such as the Thursday Talks Series (formerly known as Wednesday Morning Live Series), Trunk or Treat event, revamping our Visitor packets) and now this opportunity to revive volunteering at our neighborhood elementary school is exciting. You are needed at Edison Park.

We have met with Principal Sherri Wipt who was thrilled to have the opportunity for additional volunteers at Edison Park school. First, there are so many opportunities for those who want to work with children: reading to the children or listening to the children read, tutoring, and assisting the teacher. This includes those who only have an hour a week or are seasonal. Second, for those who prefer not to work with children, there is a need for answering the phones in the office and taking messages. (You do not answer the questions but pass the message to staff to handle.)

Several of our committee members have filled out the School District Volunteer Application which is thorough and if working with children requires a background check. Click here for link:

<https://lfforms.leeschools.net/Forms/Volunteer-Application>

Save October 4<sup>th</sup> on your calendar! Immediately after the worship service, the M&E will offer assistance for those interested in learning more about volunteering to include filling out the online volunteer application and scheduling the fingerprint appointment etc.

Once the application is completed and accepted, you will work directly with the school staff as to your actual schedule and volunteer work at Edison Park.

## **Welcome New Members ~ Karin & Tim White**



## **Highlights from September 2026 Stated Session Meeting**



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

The Session received two new members to our church family. Karin and Tim White attended the Session meeting and talked about their faith journey and how they decided to make Covenant their church home. They are already active in the Chancel Choir and Jubilate Ringers. And Karin will be one of the artists on the Concert Series this year; mark your calendars for Friday, March 12, 2027. Welcome, Karin and Tim.

Realm training for five staff members is set for October 18 in Tampa. Staff members have selected different workshops in the conference training.

World Communion Sunday - October 4, will be celebrated with the Spanish Church (Ministerio Internacional Tierra De Avivamiento, /AD). Worship service will be at 10 a.m.

Stewardship Season kicks off. Chris Larson is serving as Chair of Stewardship this year. The committee will be reviewing several themes. The committee includes Chris Larson, David Viele, Elizabeth Birky and Pastor Becky.

Missions committee reported that Juan Pablo Oliva will be attending the Cuba Partnership Network of the PCUSA meeting which will be held at the seminary in Havana, Cuba during October. Juan Pablo will be representing both Covenant and Peace River Presbytery.

Finance chair Mary Lee Mann reported that Finances have improved since our August Session meeting. She asked the Session to continue to watch our spending.

Human Resources invites everyone to a Luncheon on October 18 in Heflin Hall. We will celebrate with Mary Callaway as she retires from her role as Finance Secretary. Mary will remain as a money counter and a member of the Finance committee.

Human Resources presented a draft of the Pastor Evaluation form to the Session. Congregational responses will be open until October 20. Employees have received their self-evaluation form and will be meeting with Pastor Becky and two members of the Human Resources committee in the next weeks. Madeleine Doran, Chair of HR stressed that the evaluation form is to provide a “conversation” with each employee.

The Nominating committee 2026 with Madeleine Doran as Chair has met. Other members include Rosemary Wallace, Connie Burkert, Maria Bahruth, Don Molloy and Hank Sawyer. The congregation has received a pamphlet to submit nominations to the Committee.

Steeple - Dolphin Window reported that the Professionals are scheduling a pre-application meeting with the City of Ft. Myers. The Conceptual Drawing has been framed and will be displayed near the Welcome Center for several weeks.

# Steeple – Dolphin Window

Now, 4 years since Hurricane Ian we have a stunning design created by very talented people. A very committed committee along with professionals have worked through many options for the Steeple. Work began 3 years ago and 18 months into that process, the Session added the Dolphin Window that was entrusted to us by Chapel By the Sea to the committee's work. Their work continued and eventually evolved into the Steeple – Dolphin Window Church Sign concept that is shown at the right.

Session approved the Conceptual Drawings and the Proposal of Burt Hill/Pollock Krieg Architects, Inc. at a Called Session Meeting on September 14, 2026. The committee will now move to next steps.

Stop by the Welcome Center to see the Conceptual Drawings. Thank you to the committee members for 3 years of work – Deborah Maurer, Chair, Gary Brothers, Don Cady, Marlene Dietzel, Richard Shafer, Paul Young and Pastor Becky (ex-officio). Professionals are Jim Henley, Architect of Record and Robert Murray, Senior Consultant PE, retired partner of Hole Montes.



## Lee County commissioners paused proposed changes to the [Lee Plan Comprehensive Growth Plan](#) following widespread public backlash from residents. **Key Details of the Master Plan Controversy**

- **Proposed Changes:** The county staff proposed eliminating 17 unique, community specific planning areas (such as Pine Island, Alva, Captiva, and Buckingham) and removing certain countywide public input meetings to simplify regulations.
- **Resident Concerns:** Citizens packed public hearings in late Aug. and early Sept. 2026, arguing that a "one-size-fits-all" approach strips away rural and community protections, inviting overdevelopment.
- **The Pause:** Following intense pushback and protests—including the resignation of a local oversight leader—the Board of County Commissioners voted in mid-September to halt discussions and delay upcoming hearings on the sweeping Lee Plan overhaul for additional public outreach.
- **Southeast Lee County Plans:** Meanwhile, a separate set of development guidelines specifically targeting southeastern Lee County is moving forward on a separate track, with a final public hearing tentatively set for October 21, 2026.

Source: AI summary from Google





# Cedarkirk

*A place apart to build up  
the body of Christ in love.*

## CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER



## October Birthdays



- 01 Gus Bahruth
- 02 Elaine Pierce
- 06 Sue Coffman
- 07 Carolyn Craig
- 08 Dorothy McDowell
- 09 Donald Cady
- 11 Mary Armes
- 14 Maria Bahruth
- 15 Linda Nelson
- Maurie Salvesen
- 20 Dave Nelson
- 21 Barb Shafer
- 22 Madeleine Doran
- 24 Deanna Gordon
- 25 Norm DeWolfe
- 26 Margaret Carter
- 27 Joan Morreale
- 29 Scott Maurer
- Sheryl McIntyre
- Karen Tasman



## Did you know?

### Covenant Library News October 2026

#### News from the Church Library!

Covenant's library volunteers have been weeding the shelves of duplicate books and titles that have not been borrowed. Finding room for new book donations!

Reading for 20 minutes a day helps adults lower stress, sharpen memory and protect long-term brain health.

*Verywell Mind*

If you would like to schedule a meeting or event at the church, the office requires a "Facility Use Request" form. They are located in the church office. Just fill one out and place it in the mailbox labeled "Facility Use Requests." These forms must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event. Also, speak to Deanna Gordon in the church office to check for availability and to place your meeting or event on the calendar. If it is an outside group, Session must approve the meeting/event prior to scheduling. Questions? Contact the church office at 239-334-8937.

With an annual budgeted amount of \$546,000, it takes an average weekly giving income stream of \$10,500. This time of year is our low weekly income time. This is just a reminder of our financial obligations to continue to function as our church does. Thank you for your continued giving efforts.

Wilson Wheeler, *Treasurer*



# September and October 2026

## Wish List

- Shampoo, conditioner (regular size)
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste-Toothbrushes
- Soap
- Hand towels
- Socks
- Laundry soap
- Toilet paper
- Pet Food (cat and dog only)
- Diaper # 6
- Baby Wipes
- Canned meat (please not tuna fish)
- Cooking Oil (16 oz. bottles)
- Canned Vegetables

**Your generosity is greatly appreciated.**



# Combined World Communion Service and Luncheon 2026





## Covenant Presbyterian Church Presents 2026 – 2027 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Concert Series



### Juan Pablo & Friends – Fall Family Fun Fest October 31, 2026, 3:00 pm

Covenant's Concert Series along with our Membership/Evangelism Committee invite you to an afternoon of great music, snacks, trunk or treats and fun activities. Come join us in our own backyard!



### Juan Pablo & Friends February 6, 2027, 3:00 pm

Enjoy the beautiful weather as you enjoy wonderful music with our own **Juan Pablo and Friends**. This concert will be held in Covenant's courtyard, weather permitting. Bring a chair, a beach blanket to spread out, and plan to dance and enjoy the afternoon away with music.



### Seeung Baek, Violinist November 13, 2026, 7:30 pm



Violinist Seeung Baek, a first prize winner of numerous international competitions, including the Fanny Mendelssohn International Competition, New York International Music Competition, and Caner International Music Competition Vienna, has established

herself as a compelling and expressive artist. She holds a Master of Music degree from the Julliard School and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. She has served as concertmaster of the Julliard Orchestra. Our program will include classical and romantic era repertoire, as well as a twentieth-century piece from an American composer.



### Joel Raney, Pianist February 26, 2027, 7:30 pm

Since 1999 Joel Raney has been a major figure in modern church as a conductor, concert pianist, clinician and composer with over 300 titles in print. His piano concert will display his critically acclaimed abilities in a wide variety of musical styles, including several of his own piano compositions.

### Christmas Concert December 11, 2026 7:30 pm



The annual Covenant Christmas Music Festival features our Chancel Choir and Jubilate Ringers in performances of American Christmas choral pieces and handbell selections by Howard Helvey, John Williams, Stephen Paulus, John Carter, and Joel Raney. Our choirs will be joined

by guitarist Juan Pablo Oliva and a chamber instrumental ensemble.

### Karin White, Soprano March 12, 2027, 7:30 pm

Join us for an evening of your favorite classical sacred tunes and musical theater numbers performed by local Soprano Karin White and organist/pianist Dr. Warren Apple. Guest artists will include guitarist Juan Pablo Oliva, Karen Viele on violin, David Michalewsky on trumpet and our own Covenant Choir. It's a night not to be missed so we hope to see you.



### Spring Concert – Peace to All of Good Will April 2, 2027, 7:30 pm

Our final concert of the 2026-2027 series will be Covenant's Spring Concert. The Spring Concert features our Chancel Choir and Jubilate Ringers in a program titled "Peace to All of Good Will". Musical selections by Bach, Lauridsen, Page, Faure, Joel Raney, John Rutter, and Mozart will be centered around the theme of personal and international peace. Our choirs will be joined by a chamber ensemble of guest performers.



### The King's Brass with Tim Zimmerman, Director January 22, 2027, 7:30 pm

For 53 years The King's Brass has performed over 100 concerts each season with three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, keyboards and percussion. Playing a wide variety of music from Gabrieli, to hymn classics, from Handel to jazz spirituals, from Christmas carols to patriotic marches, The King's Brass uses all corners of the concert hall to lift hearts in praise.



*It is our prayer that this music touches your soul and you feel God moving in your life. All concerts are free and we welcome you to join us throughout the 46<sup>th</sup> season for a variety of musical talent.*

*Thank you for supporting the Concert Series at Covenant Presbyterian Church. It is with your contributions, that we are able to make all of these concerts possible. There is a free-will offering at each concert, as well as "Friends of the Concert Series". Any amount of money is much appreciated and sustains the Concert Series.*

*Please join us on Sunday mornings for worship at 10 AM. We welcome you with open arms as we are re-nourished in God's word.*

### Covenant Presbyterian Church

2439 McGregor Blvd.  
Fort Myers, Florida 33901  
239-334-8937 [www.covpcfm.com](http://www.covpcfm.com)

**WE INVITE YOU TO BECOME A FRIEND OF THE CONCERT SERIES!**

Covenant's Concert Series continues the tradition of glorifying God through music. Our concerts are designed to enrich listeners and to affect a greater awareness of God's power so that He may be glorified as we creatively use the gifts He has given us. Covenant relies on the financial support it receives from the Friends of the Concert Series to present these concerts. All gifts, no matter the size, are welcome. As our way of saying thank you, all donors are recognized in the concert programs. If you wish to contribute, return the form below to:  
Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2439 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33901. **Thank you for your generosity!**

**BECOME A FRIEND OF THE CONCERT SERIES!**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print clearly the names of donors to list in the program).

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ We want to know what's happening at Covenant; please include us on your mailing list.

OPTIONAL: If you would like your donation listed in the program in honor or memory of a loved one, please specify:

NAME OF LOVED ONE (OPTIONAL): \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ In honor of ☐ In memory of

*We want to support the 2026-27 Covenant Concert Series and be recognized as a Friend of the Concert Series. Here is our tax-deductible contribution.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Archangels (\$1,000+)

\_\_\_\_\_ Angels (\$500-999)

\_\_\_\_\_ Composers (\$250-499)

\_\_\_\_\_ Conductors (\$100-249)

\_\_\_\_\_ Singers (\$50-99)

\_\_\_\_\_ Instrumentalists (up to \$49)

**Scripture for Upcoming  
Worship Services:**

**October 18 ~ Luke 12:13-34; 2 Corinthians 8:13-15**

**October 25 ~ 1 Chronicles 29:10-19; Psalm 116:12-14**

**November 1 ~ Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

**November 8 ~ Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 67;  
2 Corinthians 9:6-15**



**COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
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