Using the Church
The church building and schoolroom are available to church and community groups to use for worship, meetings, conferences, retreats, rest, meditation, and prayer. The property is now owned by Middle Octorara Presbyterian Church located across the road from the Covenanter Church. Trustees of the Octorara Covenanter Presbyterian Foundation maintain the church and schoolroom and Middle Octorara maintains the remainder of the property. The Octorara Covenanter Presbyterian Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 organization. Arrangements for use of the church can be made by contacting the Treasurer of the Foundation. At this writing, 2018, the Treasurer is Donna W. McCool, PO Box 187, Cochranville, PA 19330-0187, phone # 610-593-6989, email dwmccool@gmail.com
The Foundation’s website: www.oldcovchurch.com
The Foundation’s Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/CovenanterChurch/
The church has both heat and light and can be used throughout the year. The sanctuary seats 200 people and the museum room will accommodate approximately 50 people.

Directions to the Church
The historic Octorara Covenanter Presbyterian Church is located on Valley Road (Route 372), three and one half miles east of Quarryville, and one mile west of Route 896. It lies just across the road from the Middle Octorara Presbyterian Church. It is approximately 18 miles southeast of Lancaster, PA. Please see map below for additional information.
Formation of the Church
According to historians, men and women immigrating to America from Scotland and Northern Ireland were searching for new homes in the American colonies. These immigrants longed to worship God as they pleased. To fulfill their desire for freedom of worship, in 1753 a group called Covenanter or Seceder Presbyterians formed the Octorara Seceders congregation. In 1754 they were able to build their first church building. These settlers, inspired by their devotion to Jesus Christ, were building a piece of American history. Their leadership during the American Revolution is particularly noteworthy.

Their church is now known as the Octorara Covenanter Presbyterian Church, and it is located at 1188 Valley Road, Quarryville, PA 17566.

Why the names Octorara, Covenanter, and Seceders?

Octorara
The name Octorara is taken from local history and signifies both the name of a nearby stream and the name of one of the Indian tribes then living in this part of Lancaster County.

Covenanter
The Covenanter name springs from a group of Scots Presbyterians. In the early seventeenth century these Scots made a covenant with King James VI of Scotland to support the King in return for his support of the Scottish Presbyterian Church (Kirk) in its struggle against Catholic influence. If he became King of England, James promised freedom of religion to the Scots and pledged to make Presbyterianism the state religion of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

When he became James I of England in 1603, he did not keep the covenant. In fact, he tried to get the Kirk to accept Anglican bishops. It got worse when the Solemn League and Covenant was signed with King Charles I. The Covenanters promised to support him in his war against Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans. Cromwell won the war, executed Charles I and defeated the Scots at the Battle of Dunbar. The Covenanters then helped Charles II to come to the English throne and he promptly turned on them. It was called the “Killing Times” when thousands of Covenanters and other Scots were slaughtered. By the time freedom of religion was established “Killing Times” when thousands of Covenanters and other Scots were slaughtered. By the time freedom of religion was established “Killing Times” when thousands of Covenanters and other Scots were slaughtered.

Seceders
The Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Kirk) was hopelessly divided over several issues most of which related to the struggle with the British government. Those called Seceders split with the Kirk because it accepted Anglican bishops and thus did not acknowledge that Christ, not an earthly king, was king of the church. Seceders also did not agree because acceptance of Anglican bishops was not based on a “covenanted” settlement. The Seceders formed the Secession Church and Associate Presbytery. Later splits over whether Scottish civil officials should take an oath to the British crown, and over whether the Kirk could choose its own ministers led the Seceders to join the Anti-Burgher Synod of Scotland.

Early Beginnings of the Church
According to the Rev. William F. Campbell, a son of the Octorara Seceders, “it is a fact that Seceders in the vicinity of Oxford (Chester County) and of Octorora Creek (Lancaster County), PA, petitioned the Anti-Burgher Synod of Scotland again and again to send a minister to break unto them the bread of life. It is a fact that these prospective congregations were ripe and anxious for settlement and each had their log meeting house in readiness.”

In 1751 the Synod authorized the Rev. John Cuthbertson to serve, not as a settled pastor, but rather as a roving missionary, traveling extensively throughout this and neighboring colonies. He maintained his residence near Bartville and chief field of operation at Octorora. Cuthbertson was the first Covenanter minister in America. In the early summer of 1753, the Synod sent them the Rev. Alexander Gellatly accompanied by the Rev. Andrew Arnot. These men were authorized to organize congregations and a Presbytery with two or more elders. According to records, they did organize the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania on November 2, 1753 at the Associate Octorora place of worship in Lancaster County Pennsylvania and Rev. Gellatly became the first pastor.