



# Pilgrim's Progress

## February 2026



### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Mission Director, p. 3
- Missions for February
- Intergenerational Event: Trivia & Lunch, Feb 15
- New Group: Zentangle, p. 6
- Inclusion: Random Acts of Kindness, p. 9
- WISE Special Article, p. 12



*Grace and peace to all of you,*

"A watched pot never boils." I heard that phrase often in my childhood. It was spoken by my grandma, who often watched me watch pots of water and waited for them to boil. After she passed away, I snatched a small sign that hung in the kitchen that said, "A Mother's Prayer: Grant me patience, Lord, but hurry." Now that sign hangs in my kitchen. And I still hear her voice when I stand and watch pots of water and wait for them to boil.

I know I am not the only person that struggles with impatience. I also know this impatience spreads far beyond boiling water. Impatience also spills into our spiritual life. This is a harder impatience to recognize and wrestle with because it is attached to our sense of justice and values. I have recognized that often my frustration and anger are symptoms of my spiritual impatience. We want the world to be more loving, now. We want God to come and straighten out humankind, now. And everything feels urgent and heavy.

Sometimes I remember that God works most frequently through a process of evolution. Change happens gradually. Change happens when we lean into its invitation. Change happens during disorder, when what was evolves into something new. Change happens in order to move us towards a more loving and Christ-like world.

I have been trying to hold to this truth—**God is always moving us towards a more loving world. Always.**

Sometimes I am too captivated by impatience to see that. One of my favorite poems of recent is by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit, who embraced an evolutionary spirituality.

I wanted to share this poem with you:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate states.  
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something now.  
And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—and that it may take a very long time.  
And so I think it is with you;  
Your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time  
(That is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)  
Will make you tomorrow.  
Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you,  
And accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

I hope you find as much solace and hope in these words as I do. May we trust that God is always moving us towards a more loving world.

**Much love to all of you, my fellow restless and impatient friends.**

*Pastor Ashley*

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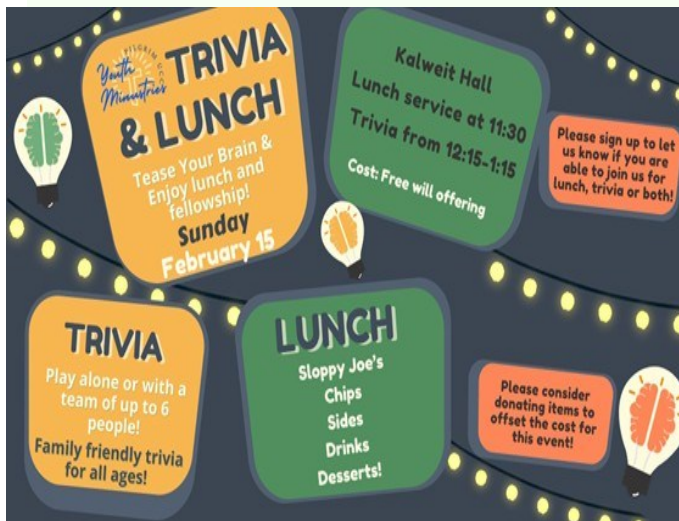
### ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:

**SUNDAY, February 1, 2026**

The meeting will be provided both in-person and virtual, beginning 9:15 am  
**Watch for a link to come!**

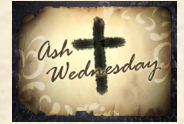
**SAVE THE DATE: February 15**

**Intergenerational Event: Trivia & Lunch!**



### ASH WEDNESDAY and THE SEASON OF LENT

**Join us on the Lenten Journey,  
beginning with Ash Wednesday,  
February 18:**



- ◇ Potluck Gathering, beginning at 5:45 pm. *Thank you to the Worship Team for facilitating this meal.* Please sign up to let us know you are coming, and if you can bring a dish to pass.
- ◇ Service at 7:00 pm, with Imposition of Ashes.

**February 25**—Mission / Inclusion

**March 4**—Children & Youth Ministries  
Property & Grounds

**March 11**—FAC / Care Team

**March 18**—Music Ministry

**March 25**—Council



### NEW SOCIAL GROUP:

**Zentangle!**

*Visit page 6 to learn more!*

### OPEN POSITION

*\* Missions Director*

Please send letter of interest and resume to  
Dave Braby at  
[brabydave@icloud.com](mailto:brabydave@icloud.com)

Please contact  
Pastor Ashley  
with questions.

### VOLUNTEER FACTS

- ◇ **2022-2024:** 28.3% of all 16+ adults engaged in formal volunteering during this time period.
- ◇ **Top motivations:** 66% of volunteers give time to improve their community, while 83% do so to support a cause they care about.

*"Volunteering improves health by strengthening the body, improving mood, and lessening stress in the participants."*

*"96% of volunteers reported the action enriched their sense of purpose in life."*

*-Volunteer Hub*

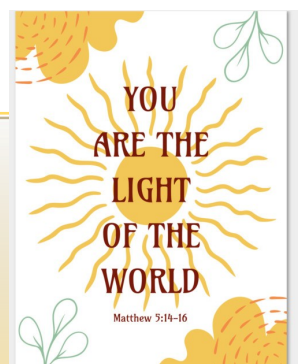
**Visit page 8  
to help us fill  
February!**

Pilgrim's online giving link:

[Online Giving](#)

### **FEBRUARY Scripture Readings**—Common English Bible

- 1 The Vision Beautiful** Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12
- 8 Restoring Beauty** Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 112:1-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Matthew 5:13-20;
- 15 Dazzling Reign** Exodus 24:12-18; Psalms 2 & 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
- 22 Abundant Grace** Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11





## WINTER FOOD DRIVE for FAMILY SHARING

Thank you to everyone who participated in our annual non-perishable Winter Food Drive during the month of January. The bin in the carport entrance is currently overflowing! The volunteers will be thrilled when they stop by for pick up. Your donations were so appreciated to help stock their food pantry shelves after the holidays.



## THE CHRISTMAS FUND

The total collected for this special UCC Christmas Offering was **\$1,285.00**. Thank you! Your donations will help provide direct financial assistance to retired and active UCC ministers, lay employees, and their spouses.



## FAMILY PROMISE BEDDING DRIVE:

During the month of December, **\$639.00** was collected for the Family Promise Portlight Shelter.

Thanks to your generosity, new mattress pads & comforters will be purchased for their guests.



## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS) 2026

### OUR LOVE OFFERING TO THE WORLD

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you are light for people in need. You offer light when disasters strike, and when chronic conditions threaten families and communities. You are light not just in the immediate future, but also for the long haul. When you give, you restore not only structures but also transform lives. *Your gift ensures that no matter how difficult the situation is, light shines.*

**We will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 18, and collect through March 29, Palm Sunday.**

Please use a special OGHS envelope found in the pews or use the Online Giving link.

*Be the light. Please give to One Great Hour of Sharing.*

## NIGHT OF WARMTH

### A special Pilgrim Offering for St. Ben's Warming Room

For most of us, Winter means holiday gatherings, snuggling under an extra blanket and perhaps turning up the heat a notch or two. But for people experiencing homelessness, Winter is a brutal challenge. Cold weather makes life on the street even more dangerous than usual.

The Mission Team would like to ask for donations to help with extra costs when St. Ben's opens their doors as an emergency warming room due to freezing temperatures. We can't do much about how long the cold will last, but through your generosity, we can provide some extra funds to help defray some of the extra costs. Anything you can give will be appreciated.

If you would like to donate, please do so by using one of the envelopes found in the pews or use our online giving link. Please note that your donation is for **Night of Warmth**.



## ST BEN'S COOKIE DONATION

On the first Friday of the month, we are asked to bring 4 dozen cookies/bars for drop off at St. Joe's Church before 9 am.

No nuts, please, and use a disposable container for the cart outside their office.

Thank you to those who have signed up for cookies/bars this year! Check the Missions Board to sign up for upcoming months.



*Pilgrim members and friends are always welcome to join the Mission Team.* If you would like to join this team, or have an interest in particular mission opportunities, contact Pastor Ashley or any Mission Team member.

**Missions Director:** Please send a letter of interest and resume to Dave Braby; job description are posted in the hall areas.

## Pilgrim Children's Hour

**Children's Hour takes place every Sunday morning during the 10:30 am worship service**

*\*Kids start the service in the pews with their families, and they head downstairs after the Children's Time during the service*

*Registration is FREE and open to ALL children / 3K through 6th Grade.*



Pilgrim Children's Hour  
United Church of Christ

Use this link to register your child(ren):

[Registration for the 2025/2026 Children's Hour](#)

**Join us for our next Intergenerational Event at Pilgrim**  
**Sunday, February 15**

**Pilgrim's Nursery** is open during the 10:30 am worship services. Bring your babies through 3-year-olds to the nursery and we will have two youth workers there to watch over our little friends during the entire worship service.



**TRIVIA & LUNCH**  
Tease Your Brain & Enjoy lunch & fellowship!  
**Sunday February 15**

**TRIVIA**  
Play alone or with a team of up to 6 people!  
Family friendly trivia for all ages!

**LUNCH**  
Sloppy Joe's  
Chips  
Sides  
Drinks  
Desserts!

**Kalweit Hall**  
Lunch service at 11:30  
Trivia from 12:15-1:15  
Cost: Free will offering

Please sign up to let us know if you are able to join us for lunch, trivia or both!

Please consider donating items to offset the cost for this event!

Visit the Youth Mission Board to sign up!



**Contact the Children's Ministry Team:**

[childrensministry@pilgrimuccgrifton.org](mailto:childrensministry@pilgrimuccgrifton.org)

**Devon Polzar**

**Elementary/Middle School  
Education Coordinator**

**Emma Lucht &  
Tracey Van Ryzin**

**Children's Ministry Education  
Coordinators**



## Confirmation Classes

Our Confirmation Classes are held on Wednesday nights through May 6. ***Classes are open to ALL 7th and 8th graders, regardless of where they are at on their spiritual journey.*** If you would like more information on our Confirmation classes, please reach out to the Youth Ministry Team.



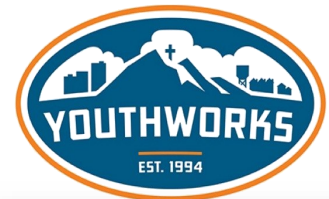
\*\*\*Last month, we took the youths down to Milwaukee to serve at St. Ben's, and this month we have a guest presenter from Plopper Funeral Home to talk with our youth!\*\*\*

### **Youth Mission Trip: July 12- 18, 2026**

#### **Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina**

We will have a **Mission Trip Meeting** on  
**February 8 @ 11:45 am**

**First payment of \$100 is due on February 18**



### **Intergenerational Event:**

**Sunday, February 15**



### **Contact the Youth Ministries Team**

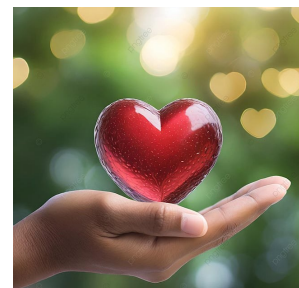
[youthministry@pilgrimuccgrifton.org](mailto:youthministry@pilgrimuccgrifton.org)

**Meg Claeys**

Middle/High School Coordinator

**Devon Polzar**

Elementary/Middle School Coordinator



**WOMEN's JOURNEY:** Tuesday, February 10, 12:30 pm, Kalweit Hall—please bring your lunch

**COFFEE CHAT:** Thursday, February 19, 10:00 am in the Conference Room

**FUNSETTERS:** Monday, February 23, 11:30 am—please meet at Flipside Cafe

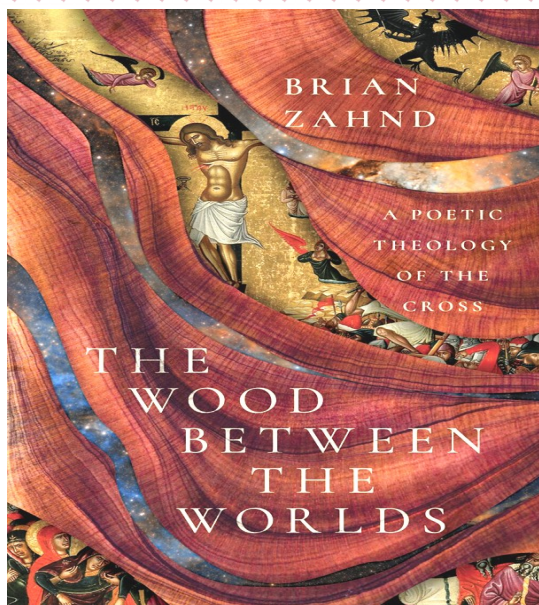
*Enjoy these "game days" - all beginning at 1:00 pm in the Conference Room:*

**SCOPA:** Monday, February 2

**DOMINOES:** Thursday, February 19  
(switched to Thursday because of Lent)

**CRIBBAGE:** Monday, February 9

**SHEEPSHEAD:** Fridays, February 13 & 27



**Sunday, MARCH 22, 5:00 pm**

Everything about the Gospel message leads to the cross and proceeds from the cross. In fact, within the narrative of Scripture, the crucifixion of Jesus is literally the crux of the story—the axis upon which the biblical story turns. But, it would be a mistake to think we could sum up the significance of the crucifixion in a tidy sentence or two.

Brian Zahnd reminds us that the meaning of the cross is multifaceted and should touch every aspect of our lives. There are infinite ways to behold the cross of Christ as the beautiful form that saves the world. *The Wood Between the Worlds* is an invitation to encounter the cross of Christ anew.

**Please purchase the book on your own,  
and we'll see you next month!**

### ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

w/Pastor Ashley:

- *Scripture & Sermon*—Mondays, 10:30 am (**Feb 2 and 23**)
- *Vespers*—Wednesdays via Zoom at 6:15 pm (**Feb 4 & 11**)
- *Bible Study*—Wednesdays, 7:00 pm (**Feb 4 & 11**)

The **Adult Study group** meets between services on Sunday mornings and has begun a new series of short films that explore our world, with discussion of everything we do and how it affects the people around us.

You are invited to join the sessions between 9:15—10:00 am in the downstairs conference room.

### ZENTANGLE

**'Anything is possible,  
one stroke at a time.'**

**Zentangle is an art form that combines meditation, creativity and fun. It can be done anywhere and no 'artistic' talent is needed.**

**If you'd like to learn more about this meditative artform, please sign up on the bulletin board in the Narthex. We'll meet on March 12th at 1 in the Conference Room.**

**If there is enough interest, we will discuss meeting once a month to 'tangle' together.**



## Our Thanks to....

**Worship Team**—Thank you again for the beautiful Christmas Deco...and the time you spent taking it down.

**Youth Ministry**—To Devon, Meg, students, and volunteers for serving at St. Ben's Meal program in January.

**Family Sharing Donations**—In appreciation for the outstanding response to the Winter Drive for food and personal items.



## For Healing and Strength

\*For Jan Svoboda, who was recently hospitalized with pneumonia and has also developed AFib h remains at home. Prayers for Melora and Neal, her daughter and son-in-law, who are Jan's caregivers.

\*For Joyce Etzel, who is hospitalized at St. Luke's.

\*For Lys Buck, who finished chemo and is now receiving immunotherapy. Please continue prayers for Lys' mom, who is receiving chemo for abdominal cancer.



## Ongoing

\*For Adam Lusty, who is deployed in the Middle East.

\*For the safety of all our military personnel.

\*For all those struggling with economic insecurity.

\*For all those who struggle with mental illness.

\*For all who are caregivers for family & friends.

\*For all who are homebound in senior living and assisted living facilities.

\*For our brothers & sisters at Mount Horeb Baptist Church.

## With Sympathy

\*For Lila Landmann and the family of Jack Landmann, who passed away on January 5.

## OUR MEMBERS IN CARE FACILITIES OR HOMEBOUND

Carolyn Fuhr, Village Pointe Commons

Pam Paul, Home

Shelly Papenfus, Home



*To My Pilgrim Family:*

Thank you very much for all the prayers, cards, & well-wishes I've received during the recovery following my foot surgery.

They brought warm light & joy to my days.

May God bless all of you!

*Fondly, Vicki Schanen*

## OUR MEMBERS IN THE SERVICE

Adam Lusty – US Army, Staff Sergeant

Mark Aaron Schubert—US Air Force, Airman

Garrett Rescorla—US Marine Corps, LCpl, flight schooling toward aircrew certification

Josh Meier—Army National Guard, Spc.

Luke Johnson — US Navy-BUILDER Chief Petty Officer





**Ways to Participate**—Please use these SignUpGenius Links to offer your gifts here at Pilgrim. As always, the Narthex board is ready, and you may always call or email church to assist.

**A note on signups:** Occasionally, we have a conflict when the SignUpGenius option is used over the weekend, as another person may sign up for the same date on Sunday morning. **It is best to use the online option Monday through Friday noon to avoid any conflict.** If you want to sign up over the weekend, send us an email and we'll take it from there!

**Scripture Readers:** [Sign Up to Read Scripture](#)

**Ushers:** [Sign Up to Usher](#)

**Flowers:** [Flowers](#)

**Bulletins:** [Bulletins](#)

**Greeters:** [Sunday Greeters](#)

### USHERS

8:00 am

10:30 am

1	Chris Leidel Mary Johnson	1	Caryn Boegel Cherie Burton
8	Chris Leidel OPEN	8	OPEN OPEN
15	LaVerne Johnson Mary Johnson	15	Caryn Boegel OPEN
22	Chris Leidel OPEN	22	Robyn Wiegand Robert Olmr

Check the board for Lenten Usher Needs—thanks!

### SCRIPTURE READERS

8:00 am

10:30 am

1	Steve Schafer	1	Joel Schowalter
8	Deb Lushine	8	OPEN
15	Cathy Wille	15	OPEN
22	OPEN	22	OPEN

### FLOWERS

1	Pfeiffer Family
8	OPEN
15	OPEN
22	OPEN

### BULLETINS

1	Mary Johnson
8	OPEN
15	OPEN
22	Beuscher/Sween

### TREATS

1	Janet Van Zile
8	OPEN
15	OPEN
22	Mary Beuscher



*Did you know:*

Look out for a few arrivals this month,  
spring is near....

- 2 Migrant American Robins begin to arrive
- 5 Spring sparrows and Migrant Eastern Bluebirds begin to arrive
- 9 Sandhill cranes begin to arrive
- 15 Bald eagles begin laying eggs
- 16 Red-wing blackbirds and wood ducks begin to arrive
- 28 Hooded Mergansers and American Woodcocks begin to arrive

\*Average temp for Grafton: Hi 33 degrees /  
low 17 degrees

\*Precipitation is less than 2 inches in liquid form



### Friendly reminders:

Food should not be brought into the sanctuary, and coffee may only be brought in if the coffee container has a cover. *Thanks!*

**Please visit the kitchenette counter to offer treats for Sundays**



*Feeling like you don't recognize the world anymore?  
Wishing people were kinder and gentler?  
Us, too!*

**That is why the Inclusion Team wants to invite the congregation to participate in Random Acts of Kindness during the month of February.**

Every intentional act of kindness makes an incredible difference in our lives and in our brains. Just one act of kindness creates positive change. [www.Kindness.org](http://www.Kindness.org) offers these statistics:

- ◆ **Kindness boosts emotional and mental well-being.** (*kindness.org, 2017*)
- ◆ **Kindness can help prevent disease.** (*Nelson-Coffey et al., 2017*)
- ◆ **Kindness is contagious & compounding.** (*Rowland & Curry, 2018; Fowler & Christakis, 2010; Schnall et al., 2010*)

One of the best ways we can make a difference in this world is doing one thing at a time, for one person, one day at a time. We are inviting the congregation to a month of Intentional Random Acts of kindness. We will offer printed activities and cards to write people letters for the congregation to use. We have Kindness Challenge booklets for kids and adults printed for people to use during the month. Also, we will set up a display in the narthex where you can write and record random acts of kindness you offered and received during the month. Talking about and sharing our random acts of kindness is so beneficial to our brains! Publicly writing and sharing these actions will increase our awareness and participation in these acts!

***Kindness IS contagious, after all!***

More information can be found on [www.kindness.org](http://www.kindness.org) and [www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org) including games for families and individuals. And here are some random acts of kindness YOU can do:

*Send a card to a friend.*

*Text or call a neighbor just to say "Hi."*

*Pick up a few extra perishable food items and drop them off in the OZ Food Alliance bins at the Grocery store.*

*Buy coffee for the person behind you at Starbucks.*

*Hold the door for someone.*

*Express gratitude to the cashier and bagger at the grocery store.*

*Smile at someone just because.*

*Volunteer at Family Sharing or St. Ben's Community meal.*

*Make cookies and share them with co-workers.*

**The best person to make this world a better place is - YOU!**



Click here for  
Pilgrim's

[Online Giving Link](#)



Please note that neither the income received nor the expenses paid occur on a regular quarterly basis.

Therefore, items showing large increases or decreases from Budget may not show much difference from Budget at year-end.

**Pilgrim Family Directory paper copies are available upon request.**

Please contact the office if you would like one emailed to you or left at church for you to pick up when you visit.

**EXAMPLE OF RECENT SCAM EMAIL:** The office received another example of a Scam Email. As you can see below, the sender specifically mentions individuals who are affiliated with Pilgrim, which can easily lead the receiver to assume this is a legitimate email. Please be careful when you receive emails such as this and to check the sender's email address—the first place to look for fraudulent emails. Thank you.



**Scam Email addressed used:** Ashley Nolte <claudiorslopes@uol.com.br>

Hello Lisa,

I believe you have Zelle, Could you assist us in making a payment to a vendor using Zelle, PayPal, or Venmo? We're encountering some issues with those platforms. Carrie will reimburse you with a check once the fee is processed.

Regards, Ashley Nolte

## OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Ashley – available in the office Monday through Thursday, and may also be reached by calling 920-762-0192.

Lisa Quick or Sue Willman – available weekdays 8:30 am -1:00 pm

Office Phone: 262-377-2640

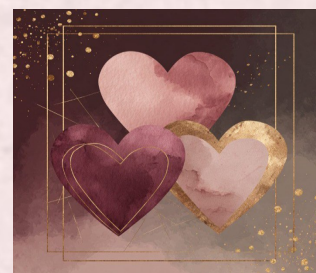
Email: [officemgr@pilgrimuccgrafton.org](mailto:officemgr@pilgrimuccgrafton.org)

Website: <https://pilgrimuccgrafton.org>

Facebook: @PilgrimUCCGrafton

Instagram: @PilgrimUCCGraftonWI

**PP Deadline:**  
**20th of each month**



What the world needs now is love, sweet love...



## Pilgrim UCC Council Meeting—December 17 , 2025, 6:30pm

### APPROVED COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Present: Geoff Nauth, Dave Nestler, Rev. Ashley Nolte, Beth Eernisse, Joy Bloemer, Carrie Britt, Nick Sancomb, Marilyn Linde and Jill Timmerman

Absent: None

**Centering Moment** offered by Ashley – reflection on work and doing it well. Centering moment for January - Beth

**Next Meeting Date:** Monday, January 12, 6:00 pm

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Reviewed draft minutes from November's meeting. Correction to upcoming meeting date required. Dave motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Marilyn seconded. Motion carried. Minutes approved.

#### Treasurer's Report

##### Incoming

Regular giving for November totaled \$27k - \$8k over the same period last year but \$1k under budget. Overall giving, is \$13k under budget YTD. The summer appeal campaign raised a total of \$24k which offsets the 2025 budget gap.

Endowment fund values were up \$6k in November and are up \$68k YTD.

##### Outgoing

November operating expenses were \$26k (\$3k under budget). Payroll was under budget by \$2k and building maintenance by \$1k.

##### Summary

From a pure operating income/expense perspective, we report \$3k income in November. YTD, we report \$29k of income – without the \$24k received from the summer appeal, we would report income of \$5k.

**Other** Additional funds have been received to replenish the Pilgrim Family Fund. Balance is now at \$6,600.

Jill motioned to approve Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion seconded by Marilyn. Treasurer's report approved.

#### Pastor's Report

Pastor's report was reviewed. No questions.

#### Committee Liaisons

Building and Assets –

Flow logic value and coffee maker projects are complete. Equipment is up and running.

Investigating ventilation issues in sanctuary near choir loft

Hearing assistance proposal is moving forward. Should be submitted to Council for approval soon.

Finance – no additional updates

Staff – Treasurer's position has been filled. Co Treasurer's John Waldhart and Caryn Boegel will assume the role when Carrie and Joy step down at end of January. Still seeking a new Missions Director and Ashley is leading the team in the interim. Jill Timmerman has stepped forward regarding the open Finance Deacon position and will work with Kathy Monroe beginning in January. Staff retreat has been rescheduled for Sunday, February 8 (will start after church and will conclude before 4 pm).

#### Old Business

New member, active/inactive status – tabled discussion

Council cloud storage – no update

WISE team covenant – slightly revised document was reviewed. One minor change was suggested. Marilyn motioned to approve the revised document. Motion seconded by Nick. WISE covenant approved as revised.

2026 Church Budget discussion – Revised preliminary budget has been submitted to Council by FAC team. Still projects a loss for the coming year but at a more manageable level. Specifics of several budgeted line items were discussed. Jill motioned to approve the updated proposal and Nick seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Update to Church's Constitution – Proposal is to add a section 7g related to emergency expenditures (eg – furnace failure, water leak). Change is intended to streamline response time in emergency situations by limiting the number of council member approvals required before making spending commitments. Council agreed to submit the proposed change for approval at the Church's annual congregational meeting. Note that Constitution also needs to be updated to change references from Association to Conference to reflect their recent reorganization.

#### New Business

Endowment Policy Update – Endowment team has proposed some updates to the existing policy. Proposed changes were reviewed and discussed. Nick motioned to approve and Dave seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Congregational meeting – Meeting will be between services on February 1. Agenda will be determined at January council meeting. In addition to the new co Treasurers who have already been identified, there will be one additional council vacancy to fill.

#### Action Steps between now and next meeting –

Council members were asked to submit suggestions for new council member nominations to Geoff by January 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Adjourn** Dave motioned to adjourn. Marilyn seconded. Motion passed and meeting adjourned.

*I joke that I am the one that a person from the Suicide Prevention Hotline hung up on. As I think back now, the person didn't hang up on me because I wasn't worthy of help, but because he had to decide where his time and effort was most needed and my faltering response of "I don't know" to the questions "Are you going to hurt yourself?" didn't place me in a high enough risk category. Nonetheless, this experience highlights how hard it is for me (as it is for many) to reach out and 1) identify my need, 2) request help, and 3) accept help.*

This is my depression in a nutshell – being aware of and appreciative of all the blessings in my life (and acknowledging my want of those blessings) and feeling so woefully inadequate and undeserving. I have never lost sight of the fact I am – and have always been – immensely blessed. I have been surrounded by a closeknit, loving, and supportive family and friends like family my entire life. I have never **NOT** known love or acceptance. I have always been told – and more importantly shown – that I am loved and valued. I have led a charmed life – loving family and friends, good health, success in school and other endeavors, opportunities to experience and grow, a profession that provides meaning, an amazing church life and palpable abiding faith – and I am eternally grateful for all these gifts. And I feel guilty – so exceedingly guilty. I feel loved but unworthy and undeserving.

Still, I am fortunate that throughout this journey with depression, I have had a myriad of loving, supportive people who readily (and, here's the thing, *often unknowingly*) took issue with, and stood up to, my maladaptive depressive thoughts. I may have tried (and continue to try) to hide my depression from others, but I have never been alone (as much as I desperately do not want to burden others with my molehill problems).

I firmly believe this depression has been an ever-present companion since my early teens although I was never formally diagnosed with major depressive disorder until my mid-twenties. Ultimately, two specific experiences in my twenties pushed me to acknowledge my need for professional help. One occurred at church. (As mentioned, faith has always been a deep, steadfast framework for my life. Never once have I questioned God's existence or the sacredness of life.) I went to take Communion (a practice I cherish to reconnect and atone), and I found myself frozen when I tried to raise the bread to my mouth. I looked at that small piece of bread that symbolized so much to me and realized that every muscle fiber was fighting my desire to raise the bread to my mouth because my brain was telling them I was not worthy (staunchly going against my fundamental belief that Communion is a gift of grace and that God has already determined everyone is deserving). The other occurred at home. I was struggling mightily with perverted, negative thoughts that overruled everything in my brain – I went a week without sleeping, I didn't eat, I couldn't stop crying when alone, and yet I didn't know why I was crying. I only knew that I was "bad." I was a bad mom, a bad teacher, a bad wife, a bad daughter, a bad sister, a bad friend – I was a bad person. I finally called my husband at work (he worked nights) and begged him to come home. I told him I didn't know what was wrong, but I was terrified of scaring our children because I couldn't stop crying. When I saw a psychiatrist the next day, that was still my cry – I may be a bad mom, but I am still their mom; I would not do anything that would make them feel responsible for my tears. I am thankful for the relief I experienced from effective medication and therapy that was part of my treatment.

At first, I reached out because my children and loved ones deserved better from me. Twenty-five years later, I continue with treatment because I am working toward the day when I believe that I also deserve better from myself. Over the years, my students have been subjected to cheesy little notes from me – one of my favorite signatures is "Remember, it's science: You have mass. You take up space. YOU matter!" *Isn't it grand that we all matter!?*

- Karen Tiffany, WISE Team Member





## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

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Registration is open for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference, to take place April 10-11 at Green Lake Conference Center. The theme of the meeting, **"Cultivating Community: Rooted in Christ and Bearing Fruit,"** points to the broad, deep relationships the Holy Spirit makes possible across the Conference as we share resources, stories and ministry how-to's.



[Register for Annual Meeting](#)

[Reserve accommodations and purchase meal tickets at Green Lake Conference Center](#)

***Do you have Voice/Resonance Issues that could benefit from an Evaluation or Voice Session?***

**The CUW Speech-Language, and Hearing Clinic offers voice evaluation and therapy sessions.**

**If you are experiencing:**

- ~ Hoarseness
- ~ Throat pain or soreness
- ~ Loss of voice after a long day of using it
- ~ Changes to pitch or volume

Or are interested in learning more about vocal quality, effectiveness, and ways to maintain a healthy voice

**A Voice/Resonance Clinic is currently being offered by Concordia University on Mondays through March 16 (noon or 2:00 pm).**

**Call 262-243-2134 or email [SLH.clinic@cuw.edu](mailto:SLH.clinic@cuw.edu) for a one-time evaluation, which may lead to a follow-up**



### **Wisconsin Nurses Honor Guard –**

#### ***Nurses Honoring Nurses***

After a selfless career in caring for others, the WI Nurses Honor Guard will honor their fallen colleagues at a funeral or memorial service. To request a service or to volunteer, visit their website:

[www.winurseshonorguard.com](http://www.winurseshonorguard.com)

This service is provided free of charge, but donations are welcome.

The group will honor any Wisconsin licensed/registered LPN, RN, or Advance Practice Nurse within the boundaries of Wisconsin and based on their volunteer availability. Further info is posted on our community board.



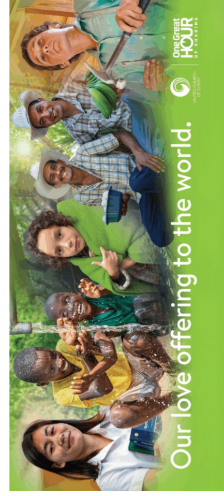
# FEBRUARY 2026



Night of Warmth  
thru February



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Comm Worship 8 & 10:30 am <b>Annual Meeting</b> 9:15 am Children's Hour	2 Sermon & Scripture 10:30a SCOPA—1:00 pm	3   <i>Boy Scouts—6:30p</i>	4 *Vespers—6:15 pm *GarageBand—6:15 pm *Confirmation—6:30 pm *Bible Study—7:00p	5   <i>Overeaters Anon 6:30p</i>	6  St. Ben's Desserts	7
8 Worship 8 & 10:30 am Adult Study & Choir 9:15 am Children's Hour 10:30am Mission Trip Mtg. 11:45 am	9 Cribbage—1:00 pm  Chimin' In 7:00 pm	10 Women's Journey 12:30 pm  Grief Support Group 1:30 pm <i>Boy Scouts—6:30p</i>	11 *Vespers—6:15 pm *GarageBand—6:15 pm *Confirmation—6:30 pm *Bible Study—7:00p	12 Worship Team TBD  <i>Overeaters Anon 6:30pm</i>	13  Sheepshead 1:00 pm	14 Girl Scouts 12:30 pm 
15 Comm Worship 8 & 10:30 Adult Study/Choir 9:15am Children's Hour—10:30am <b>Trivia &amp; Lunch</b>	16  Council Meeting 6:30 pm	17	18  Potluck Meal: 5:45 pm Service: 7:00 pm GarageBand Pract: 7:45p	19  Coffee Chat 10:00 am Dominoes—1 pm  <i>Overeaters Anon 6:30pm</i>	20	21
22 Worship 8 & 10:30 am Adult Study/Choir 9:15am Children's Hour—10:30am	23 Sermon & Scripture 10:30 am Funsetters 1130a Chimin' In 7:00 pm	24  Staff Meeting 6:30 pm  <i>Boy Scouts—6:30p</i>	25  Fellowship Meal: 5:45 pm Service: 7:00 pm GarageBand Pract: 7:45p	26   <i>Overeaters Anon</i>	27  Sheepshead 1:00 pm	28  Girl Scouts 12:30 pm



One Great Hour of Sharing:  
February 18– Palm Sunday

