

First Congregational United Church of Christ

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February 2026 Newsletter



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Our mission is to embrace people of every age and stage of life and help them become the most loving version of themselves possible.

The Pastor's Column

Busy Times

Unbelievably, Lent is right around the corner. We begin a new Lenten series with an Ash Wednesday service, February 18 at 6pm. It is a shorter service, and you will be invited to receive ashes, if you wish. I hope you come.

Meanwhile, we are preparing for the next phase of our journey with Convergence, seeking to create a strategy for the near future for our church. There is a training session (first of two) that will be led by Cameron Trimble, Executive Director of Convergence. It will be on Zoom, and we will get you the link as soon as possible, if you are unable to attend in person or prefer to be at home. The rest of us will gather in fellowship hall on March 1 at

11:30 am for that training session (it should last no longer than 1.5 hours).

Then we will get into our series, Tell Me Something Good, produced by our friends at Sanctified Arts. The authors remind us that, “following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it is not necessarily comfortable. The good news should bring us back to our roots, back to what grounds us: loving our neighbor, caring for the vulnerable, pursuing justice and mercy, and resting on God’s unending grace.”



I hope this will be another moving series for our community. The Reaching In team will let you know what our plans are for the upcoming Holy Week, and we will arrive at Easter on April 5.

In the meantime, we will continue to have food and fellowship, Bible studies and choir, confirmation, and community. In everything we do, may we do what is ours to do and pleasing in God’s sight. May we continue to grow spiritually and wholistically through our ministries together.

Thank you for all you do and for who you are as God’s people.

Blessings,

Pastor Greg

Committee Minutes are available and attached.

Lent

Lent began as a time for Christian converts to fast, pray, learn, and prepare for their Easter baptism and echoed Jesus’ 40 days of fasting and temptation. Since Nicaea, the 40 days begin Ash Wednesday and conclude Maundy Thursday, excluding Sundays. The new Christians studied the tenets central to Jesus’ life and ministry: radical welcome, neighborly love, caring for others, feeding the hungry, nonviolent responses to injustice. Jesus’ teachings are the good news of liberation, love, mercy, and grace.

At Lent, we remember that the good news really is good news. It is joyful, it expands, and it surrounds us. It meets our needs. It makes us laugh with the relief of God’s mercy. The good news lives within us. We hope the good news will inspire us all to positive action in a world desperate for it.

February Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays:

- 3 Alan Trender
- 5 DeLayni Brown
- 6 Joanie Sietsema
- 7 Callie English
Evelyn Pratt
- 10 Margaret Hellenberg
- 18 Aysia House
- 27 Jay Anderson

Anniversaries:

- 28 Jim & Vicky Rigney



Office Hours

- **Pastor Greg** will not be preaching February 1 or 15. Judy Gatewood-Keion preaches on the first. Communion will be celebrated February 8. Rokko Jans will preach on February 15.



Announcements

- In February, we will be collecting a special **“Back to Basics” offering**—half for support of the Refuge and half for the Food Pantry. For any donations made online, please also email us at office@firstuccgaylord.org noting “We donated \$X through the website” so that we can correctly designate the funds.
- **Food Pantry** always needs volunteers. In February, FCC staffs it the 5th and 6th from noon to 2PM. Contact Don Storing at 989-464-9648 for more information or to volunteer.
- **Confirmation** meets on the 8th and 22nd.
- Choir will sing about love on February 15 and would like to accompany the song with a **video sharing your pictures of love**. Please send them by February 10 to Brenda Brummel at brendabrummel@me.com, 810-623-1691 or bring them to church.
- **Church Council** will meet regularly on the third Thursday at 5PM both in-person and on Zoom.

- Mark your calendars for two **Convergence** trainings at 11:15AM both March 1 and 29.
- Share **concerns, joys, announcements**, and/or **news** by contacting Liz at office@firstuccgaylord.org or Pastor Greg at pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org.
- Please **update your meetings** with Liz for next month **by the Newsletter Deadline (two days after the third Wednesday)** so our church calendar is accurate.
- **In February**, we are down a volunteer, so we could really use your **help clearing snow on Thursdays** through the 17th.



~ In Our Prayers ~

In February, the UNA is holding Onekama First Congregational UCC in prayer.

Mary Sue Evans requests prayers for her husband as he faces health issues.

Maggie Shanahan Menkes (Kathy's daughter-in-law) –for her healing and for increased energy. Pray for the entire family to restore their spirits and energy levels so they can do all that needs to be done each day.

Jason Peterman's aunt is recovering from a recent hospitalization.

Liz Larson's cousin, Bart Kjolhede, who had open heart surgery January 19 to replace an infected pacemaker and heart valve. He is in ICU at Henry Ford Hospital, Grosse Pointe.

Louanne Spearman as she continues to heal at home.

Laura Bantens, who asks for prayers for employment and finding where she belongs. Her mother, *Connie*, needs prayers for the same.

Jay Jans, Rokko Jans' brother—Jay under hospice care in Illinois.
Jason Peterman – who is dealing with a variety of health issues.
The English Family – as they manage medical and family challenges.
Chris Crubaugh – who is dealing with medical issues. Continued prayers
 Chris and Laura Bantens as they adapt.
Madison Crawford – as she suffers from neurological and vision issues.



Prayer requests are received by the church office. Names will appear on the list for two months. Please let the office know if this time needs to be extended, or if it is time to remove a name.



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE



Confirmation



Our confirmation class continues meeting about twice a month. Sometimes we meet by ourselves at church and other times we meet with our friends at Peace Lutheran Church.

In January, we served at Community Meal. Over 50 diners were served! We also met for class

on January 11 and 18.

In February, we plan to meet on the 8th and 22nd.

We are beginning to talk about plans for a confirmation service in May. More details to come!





"A PEOPLE THAT VALUES ITS
PRIVILEGES ABOVE ITS
PRINCIPLES SOON LOSES
BOTH." - DWIGHT D.
EISENHOWER.

Please come to lunch and

TOWN HALL ON HOMELESSNESS

Feb 5 Noon-1:15

hosted by The Refuge
at Otsego Public Library

Tarin Sheffield & Elise Gapczynski from NEMCSA
Megan King of the Women's Resource Center of Northern MI
Jessica Villet of MiWorks!
Pam Morgridge of Alpine Adult Crisis Residential Inn



February



2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
10a Worship—Judy Gatewood-Keim preaching, no communion	16a Gaylord Gratitude NOON Reaching in 6p Compassionate Friends	3	46a Gaylord Gratitude 5p Ukelele Group	411a Bible Study NOON Food Pantry NOON Homeless Townhall Free Lunch @ Library 12:15p Fellowship 4p Choir	56a Gaylord Gratitude NOON Food Pantry 4p Community Meal 6p Talking Circle	7
8	96a Gaylord Gratitude	10"Love" photos due to Brenda Brummel	116a Gaylord Gratitude 5p Ukelele Group	1211a Bible Study 4p Choir	136a Gaylord Gratitude 4p Community Meal 6p Talking Circle	14February 14
10a Worship/Communion 11:30a Confirmation	15	16	17	18	19	20
10a Worship—Rokko Jans preaching	16a Gaylord Gratitude 7p Reaching Out (Zoom)	17Chinese New Year Shrine Tuesday NOON Lunch Group @ Big Buck	18	19	20	21
			19a Wednesday 6a Gaylord Gratitude 5p Ukelele Group 6p Ash Wednesday Service 7p Trustees (in Person/Zoom)	20	21	22
10a Worship 11:30a Confirmation	22	23	24	25	26	27
	23		246a Gaylord Gratitude 1p Church Book Club 5p Ukelele Group	2511a Bible Study 4p Choir	266a Gaylord Gratitude 4p Community Meal 6p Talking Circle	288:30 a Pet Partners
	Newsletter Deadline					