



*Central and Algonquin United  
Methodist Churches*

*Sunday, March 1, 2026*

*With Pastor Marty Johnston*

Mission Statement:

**Connecting all people to God by building bridges  
of caring, outreach, and acceptance.**

Central United Methodist  
Pastor Marty Johnston  
March 1, 2026  
Liturgical Colors: Purple  
Second Sunday in Lent  
*CCLI License# 3999519*

Ushers/Greeters: Ray Bell, James Bankson, Del Carter  
Liturgist: Marcia Jenkins-Ball  
Communion: Marcia Jenkin-Ball, Colleen Arbic

## PRELUDE

## WELCOME/MISSION STATEMENT

Connecting all people to God by building bridges of  
caring, outreach, and acceptance

**\*Call to Worship:** (Inspired by Psalm 121)

**Leader:** When we look at the hills—at the challenges ahead, at the weight of the world—where does our help come from?

**People:** Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

**Leader:** The One who formed the mountains is the One who watches over us.

**People:** God does not grow weary. God does not look away.

**Leader:** When our footing feels uncertain—

**People:** God keeps our feet from slipping.

**Leader:** When the journey feels long—

**People:** God keeps watch over our coming and going.

**Leader:** By day and by night—

**People:** The Lord is our keeper.

**Leader:** So we gather with confidence, not because life is easy—

**People:** But because our help comes from the Lord.

\*OPENING HYMN “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

UMH 117

O GOD, OUR HELP IN AGES PAST

\*PASTOR’S OPENING PRAYER \*

Faithful God, You have been our help in ages past, and You are our hope for the years ahead.

You do not sleep. You do not waver. You do not let go.

When the road rises before us, You steady our steps.

When the world feels heavy, You hold us fast.

Today we gather with confidence —because You are faithful.

Lift our eyes. Strengthen our hearts. Fill us with Your grace and joy.

Through Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

TIME FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE READING:

Nicodemus was not a spiritual lightweight. He was a Pharisee, a member of the ruling council, a teacher of Israel. If anyone understood Scripture, doctrine, and how God was supposed to work, it was him.

And yet he comes to Jesus at night. Not casually. Not curiously. Carefully.

Because something about Jesus doesn't fit inside his categories. The signs are undeniable, but the implications are unsettling.

Before Nicodemus can fully frame his question, Jesus interrupts the entire system he's built his life on: "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

For a man who has spent decades mastering the law, Jesus says starting over is the only way forward.

And in the middle of that collision — between certainty and surrender — we hear the words we know so well: "For God so loved the world..."

Not as a sentimental slogan, but as a declaration that everything Nicodemus thought he understood is about to be redefined.

Let's step into the conversation.

## FIRST SCRIPTURE READING John 3: 1-17

- 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.
- 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."
- 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

- <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’
- <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”
- <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”
- <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?
- <sup>11</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.
- <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?
- <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.
- <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
- <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should [\[c\]](#)not perish but have eternal life.
- <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God

All: Thanks be to God

SERMON

Not to Condemn

*Big Idea: God meets us in confusion and does not condemn us there  
— He gives us new life.*

## The Great Thanksgiving

*(Conversational, Methodist, Lenten tone)*

**Pastor:**

Friends, this is not a table for the perfect. It is not a table for those who have everything figured out.

This is a table for those who come — even at night — with questions. A table for those who know they need mercy.

Christ our Lord invites to His table all who love Him, who earnestly repent of their sin, and who seek to live in peace with one another.

So let us confess before God and one another.

*(Brief silence )*

**People:** Merciful God, You meet us in our confusion and do not condemn us there. You shine light not to shame us, but to heal us. Forgive us for the ways we resist Your grace. Restore us by Your Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Pastor:** Hear the good news: God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

**People:** In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God.  
Amen.

**Pastor:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** And also with you.

**Pastor:** Lift up your hearts.

**People:** We lift them up to the Lord.

**Pastor:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People:** It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**Pastor:** It is right... and a good and joyful thing...to give thanks to You, Father Almighty. Before we ever reached for You, Your grace was already reaching for us.

When we wandered, You pursued. When we hid, You called our name. When we stood condemned by our own brokenness, You sent Your Son — not to condemn, but to save.

And so, with Your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of Your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Pastor:**

Holy are You, and blessed is Your Son Jesus Christ.

Lifted up on the cross, He became for us not a symbol of shame, but the source of healing.

By His suffering, He bore our sin. By His death, He destroyed death. By His resurrection, He opened the way to new life —life born from above.

On the night in which He gave Himself up for us, He took bread, gave thanks to You, broke the bread, gave it to His disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

When the supper was over, He took the cup, gave thanks to You, gave it to His disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is My blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

And so, in remembrance of these mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died;  
Christ is risen;  
Christ will come again.**

**Pastor:**

Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

By Your Spirit, give us new birth. Give us courage to step into the light. Give us hearts shaped not by condemnation, but by grace.

Through Your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in Your holy Church, all honor and glory is Yours, almighty Father, now and for ever. Amen.

*(The elements are served)*

### Prayer After Communion (Unison)

Gracious God, we thank You for meeting us at this table not to condemn us, but to renew us.

By Your Spirit, give us courage to walk in the light, to release our shame, and to trust Your saving love.

Send us into the world as people restored by grace and shaped by mercy.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### INVITATION TO OFFERING

Freely loved and not condemned, we now offer our gifts in gratitude to the God who first gave Himself for us.

### OFFERTORY

### DOXOLOGY

UMH 95  
OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

### \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Gracious God, receive these gifts as signs of hearts renewed by Your mercy and shaped by Your love. Use them — and use us — to carry Your saving grace into a world that longs not for condemnation, but for hope.

HYMN

“Hallelujah! What a Savior” (v 1-4)

UMH 165  
HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOR**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE,****Leader:** Lord, in your Mercy**All:** Hear our prayer.**Pastor:**

Trusting the God who meets us in the wilderness, who calls us into the light, and who sent His Son not to condemn but to save, let us pray for the Church, the world, and all who are in need.

**For the Church**

Holy God, shape Your Church into a people marked by mercy rather than judgment. Keep us faithful to the cross and bold in proclaiming Your grace.

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.****For the World**

God of compassion, where fear and anger divide, sow patience and understanding. Guide leaders toward justice and peace.

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.****For Creation**

Creator of all, renew the earth in this season of turning. Teach us to care for what You have made with gratitude and restraint.

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.****For Our Community and Congregation**

Faithful Spirit, where we feel weary, give strength; where we feel uncertain, give trust; where we feel small, give courage rooted in Your love.

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

### **For Those in Need**

Compassionate Christ, draw near to the sick, the grieving, and the anxious. Lift burdens, mend hearts, and bring hope that endures.

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

### **For Ourselves**

Gracious God, free us from shame and teach us to live as people born from above — confident in Your mercy and steady in Your love.

**Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

### **Pastor:**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we place all for whom we pray, trusting not in our goodness but in Your saving grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS – March 1, 2026**

**Thank you to all who helped with assembling the March Flame. Your help was greatly appreciated.**



Daylight Savings Time starts Sunday March 8<sup>th</sup>. Don't Forget to set your clocks ahead one hour.

**\*\* Today** the youth will be outside after the service to collect a Mission Love Offering and new this year, we now have a *Misson's Change Jar* (located on the table at the top of the stairs). All proceeds will go toward helping elementary school children with their needs.



**Easter Flower Orders are being taken.** An **order form** is inside the bulletin. The order form and payment may be placed in the offering plate or may be returned to the church office Mon.-Thurs. 9am-2pm. Deadline to order is Sunday, March 15.

### Save the Date

**Mon., Mar., 16<sup>th</sup> – Rebecca Circle** meeting at 1:30pm

**Wed., Mar. 19<sup>th</sup> - Family Night** at CUMC Fellowship Hall @ 5:30 PM – 7 PM. Come enjoy a tasty dinner, fun activities, and a meaningful lesson for all ages. Bring the whole family—everyone is welcome!

**Sun., Mar. 29<sup>th</sup> – Palm Sunday**

**Thur., Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Maundy Thursday**, 6:30pm at Algonquin UMC

**Fri., Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Good Friday Community Services at the** Presbyterian Church is (tentatively 1:00pm)

**Sun., Apr. 5<sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday breakfast** will be at CUMC in the Fellowship Hall @ 9:15 AM.

**The Mission/Outreach** in coordination with our children will be making **Blessing Bags** for homeless. We will also include a note of encouragement from United Methodist Church. The Salvation Army will be keeping them to offer anyone who may need them.

*Here are some ideas for items we wish to include.*

Examples: (please buy travel or small sizes ) deodorant, ChapStick, shaving cream and razors, band aids, instant oatmeal, trail mix, wool socks, hat, scarf, travel mug. If you wish to donate a gift card, we can purchase the items needed. Please pass that to either Kathy (in office), or Diane Bell....thank you.

*We already have toothbrushes and toothpaste graciously donated*

*There will be a white basket for the items donated located upstairs outside the office, under the Church bulletin board.*

**Join us for Bible Study, led by Raymond Bell,  
every Sunday at 9:30 AM in the CUMC lounge  
*We are presently studying "The Chosen - season 5"***

**Central Birthday/Anniversary**

**Mar. 1<sup>st</sup>** – Mary Beth Aikins      **Mar., 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Jerry Cook  
**Mar., 5<sup>th</sup>** – Katelyn Bell      **Mar., 6<sup>th</sup>** – Ray Bell

**Mar., 1<sup>st</sup>** - Julie & Dennis Hill (46<sup>th</sup>)



Nursery is available for infants through age 3 during worship with Mallory Baier. The nursery is located downstairs, and ushers will be happy to assist you.

\*CLOSING HYMN      “Of Father’s Love Begotten”      UMH 184  
OF FATHER’S LOVE BEGOTTEN

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE