



*Central and Algonquin United
Methodist Churches*

Sunday, March 8, 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 8, 2026
Liturgical Colors: Purple
Third Sunday in Lent
CCLI License# 3999519

Ushers/Greeters: Kelley Bunker / John Proulx
Liturgist: Ray Bell

PRELUDE

WELCOME/MISSION STATEMENT

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

***Call to Worship:** (Inspired by Psalm 112)

Leader: Blessed are those who revere the Lord, who find joy in
walking His way.

People: We come to learn that joy again.

Leader: Light rises in the darkness for the upright.

People: Shine Your light among us.

Leader: When troubling news surrounds us,
the steadfast heart does not collapse.

People: Make our hearts steady in You.

Leader: The generous reflect God's own character—gracious,
compassionate, righteous.

People: Form that character within us.

Leader: Our hope is not fragile. Our foundation is not shifting sand.

People: We stand on the faithfulness of the Lord.

Leader: Come, let us worship the One who holds us firm.

People: With grateful and steady hearts, we praise Him.

*OPENING HYMN

“How Firm a Foundation”

UMH 529

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

*PASTOR’S OPENING PRAYER *

Gracious God,

We come carrying many things—distractions, concerns, questions.
Some of us feel steady this morning. Some of us do not.

You tell us that those who trust in You do not have to live in fear.
You promise light in the darkness. Anchor us in that promise now.

Quiet what is restless within us. Steady what feels uncertain.
Open our hearts to the wisdom of Christ—the wisdom that saves.

Holy Spirit, give us eyes to see and hearts that are not easily shaken.
Amen.

TIME FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE READING:

This morning’s reading comes from a letter written by a man named Paul.

He was one of the earliest Christian leaders, and he’s writing to a young church in a busy, influential city.

It was the kind of place that admired intelligence, success, and strong personalities.

If you could speak well, win arguments, or impress a crowd, you were respected.

But Paul reminds them that when he first came to their city, he didn't try to dazzle anyone. He didn't rely on polished speeches or clever ideas.

Instead, he centered everything on one message: Jesus Christ — and His crucifixion.

That may not sound impressive. In fact, at the time, it sounded weak and foolish.

But Paul says something surprising: what looks like weakness may actually be God's deepest wisdom —and it's the Spirit who helps us see it.

Listen now for a different kind of wisdom as we hear these words.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING 1 Corinthians 2: 1-12

1. And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.
2. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
3. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.
4. And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
5. that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
6. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

7. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ^{had} ordained before the ages for our glory,
8. which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
9. But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

10. But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.
11. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.
12. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God

All: **Thanks be to God**

SERMON

Redefining Winning

***Big Idea:** In Lent, we slow down long enough to let the cross challenge our definitions of strength, success, and victory. What looks like defeat may be God's deepest work.*

INVITATION TO OFFERING

In a world that often measures worth by accumulation, we give as a quiet sign of where our hope rests.

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 that our trust rests not in appearance or applause, but in Your power made known through Christ crucified. Use them in ways that may seem small to the world, yet strong in Your hands.

HYMN

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

UMH 298

WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE,

Leader: Lord, in your Mercy

All: Hear our prayer.

Pastor:

Trusting the God whose grace is stronger than sin, whose love meets us in our brokenness, and whose cross changed the course of the human story, let us pray for the Church, the world, and all who are in need.

For the Church

Faithful God, form Your Church not around performance or prestige, but around Christ crucified. Teach us to trust Your Spirit more than our own strength.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the World

God of all people, in places where power is misused and victory is defined by force, reveal the deeper wisdom of the cross. Turn hearts toward justice, mercy, and humble courage.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Creation

Creator God, in this season of reflection, remind us that Your redeeming love extends to all You have made. Help us live gently and gratefully within the world You sustain.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Our Community and Congregation

Holy Spirit, where we feel small, uncertain, or weary, steady us in hope. Shape us into a people who measure faithfulness not by applause, but by trust.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Those in Need

Compassionate Christ, You entered fully into human weakness. Draw near to the sick, the grieving, and the burdened, and let Your quiet strength be their comfort.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Ourselves

Gracious God, during these Lenten days, loosen our grip on the world's scoreboards. Teach us to rest in what You have already accomplished through Jesus.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pastor:

Into Your hands, O Lord, we place all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy 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 8, 2026

Ad Board Meeting is scheduled for March 10th at 7pm



Easter Flower Orders are being taken. Flowers will be displayed during Easter Sunday Service. 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 15th, also please plan to take your plant(s) after Easter service.

Save the Date

Mon., Mar., 16th – Rebecca Circle meeting at 1:30pm

Wed., Mar. 19th - 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. 29th – Palm Sunday

Thur., Apr. 2nd – Maundy Thursday, 6:30pm at Algonquin UMC

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

Sun., Apr. 5th – 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., 5th – Katelyn Bell **Mar., 6th** – Ray Bell
Mar., 11th – Mallory Baier **Mar., 17th** – Kathy Bankson

Mar., 18th – Kathy & Kevin Larson (31st)



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

“In the Cross of Christ I Glory”

UMH 295

IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST I GLORY

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE