The Unifier

United Protestant Church of Grayslake

54 South Whitney Street, Grayslake, Illinois 60030 | (847) 223-8131 | upc@upcgl.org | www.upcgl.org February 2026

Grace to you and Peace,

On Sunday February 22, UPC will be gathering after church to vote on the proposed By-Laws update. Updating the By-Laws is far from the most enjoyable process in the church. United Protestant Church was blessed to have an exemplary team made up of Bill Churchill, Jennifer Cooper, Ann Friesema, Dale Message, and Jerry Wessale. These folks have worked diligently for 15 months to bring our governance structures up to date, and I cannot thank or celebrate their generosity, commitment, and professionalism enough.

To those in the Governance Task Force, and perhaps the Administrative Council, it may feel like the vote is the end of the work. In another sense, however, it marks the beginning of the work for the congregation. I anticipate a smooth transition into the new By-Laws. In this case, the updates were needed because the old governance model was right fitted for a much larger church. What that means practically is there is less bureaucracy and red tape in the new model. That is not to say that we are doing away with constraints and mandated process entirely; we have not. However, the mandated positions and limits on ministry are simplified and streamlined. The truth is that most of what goes on at UPC will not seem much different at all.

All that said, this will still be a time of moving into a new way of doing ministry together. Ministry teams and the members and volunteers who do that ministry should feel more empowered to go about doing their ministry. The Board will consist of fewer members and, with less responsibility over the day-to-day details of ministry, should be free to deal with bigger questions of where God is calling UPC to go in the future. That said, learning to live according to the new By-Laws will take patience, communication, and even some experimentation as we adjust. Above all else, trust in each other and in the guiding hand of God to deliver us into a new and energized age of living under these proposed By-Laws together.

It is my high hope that everyone at UPC will all read the By-Laws. I know they are not the most exciting read, but moving into a new way of doing things together is a task that is significantly more important than voting on the By-Laws in word only. The goal here is not just to change our written governance, but to actually live into a new way of “being church” together. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or to any member of the Governance Task Force in the next month if you have any questions about the new structures. Whatever else, please plan to join us on Sunday, February 22 for the special congregational meeting.

In Christ,

Rev. Jason Okrzynski, PhD
Senior Pastor

FEBRUARY 2026

United Protestant Church
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	**2** 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	**3** 12:30pm Apogee School Cooking Class (Kitchen) 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106)	**4** 11:30am Circle 4/5 (Culver's) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	**5** 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	**6**	**7**
8 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am Circle 2 (MR)	**9** 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	**10** 2:00pm Budget & Finance (MR) 5:30pm Circle 9 (Mrs. V's) 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106) 7:00pm Troop 451 PLC (101)	**11** 7:00pm PUSH (MR) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	**12** 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	**13**	**14**
15 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	**16** 7:00pm Ad Council (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	**17** 6:30pm Pack 451 Pack Meeting (FH) 7:00pm Nami Family Support Group (MR) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106) 7:00pm Troop 451 Committee Meeting (101)	**18** 6:30pm North Star District Commissioner Meeting (MR) 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	**19** 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106,105)	**20**	**21**
22 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service 11:15am Special Congregational Meeting	**23** 6:30pm Worship Committee (MR) 7:00pm Mission Committee (103) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	**24** 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106)	**25** 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	**26** 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106,105)	**27**	**28**

MISSIONS UPDATE

The next UPC packing session at Feed My Starving Children in Libertyville is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 3 from 7:15-8:45 p.m.** If you are interested in participating, please contact Cinda Bartz at bartzc@sbcglobal.net.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD (OCC)

We are collecting the following items for Operation Christmas Child throughout the month of February: hair accessories, combs, brushes, stuffed animals, baseballs, and softballs. The Mission Committee has set a goal to pack 200 shoebox gifts in 2026.

JOY SHARING FOR FEBRUARY

Our Joy Sharing for February benefits Tyler and Brittany. TYLER & BRITTANY run a FRUIT TREE FARM in WEST AFRICA. Its MISSION is *to use farm profits from fruit sales to provide fruit trees to poor rural farmers so they have year-round access to nutritious food* and its VISION is *to help every child in their region eat enough for their daily nutritional needs.* THANKS for helping us provide access to nutrition and God's Word in Kon! More information about their mission in West Africa is on the next page. Joy Sharing Sunday is February 15.

COMPANIONS JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Are you up for a challenge? Are you willing to try something new? This year for Lent, consider picking up 40 Christmas cards from the mission table - one for each day of Lent. Take them home and write a few encouraging sentences to the men and women who are in prison and won't get to spend the holidays with their families. (Suggested messages are on the mission table as well.) Sign the card with your name (or "member") and "United Protestant Church". Put the card back in the unsealed envelope and return them to the mission table. This is a great way to put our faith into action as we all try to grow closer to Christ this season. Questions? See Cinda Bartz or Rose Pech.

UPC SHOPPER

With Valentine's Day just a couple of weeks away, now is the perfect time to pick up or order UPC Shopper gift cards for that special someone. You can give them as gifts or use them to buy the gifts or food for your celebration. If you are going to the movies, dinner, or even taking a trip, we can help. Besides the most common restaurant gift cards we keep in stock, there are many others available to order. Please order before February 5 to ensure the cards are here before Valentine's Day. Remember, each gift card you buy supports Operation Christmas Child.

Be Part of the Fix in 2026

YOU can Help Eliminate Physical & Spiritual Poverty!

God called Tyler & Brittany to work with the unreached in West Africa through a Fruit Tree Farm alongside Bible Translation

The Kon are in Physical & Spiritual Poverty:

- No Church or Scripture in their language
- 68-82% of children under 5 in our region suffer from Severe Child Food Poverty (UNICEF: they only ate from 0-2 of 8 food groups the previous day*)

Our **Farm** has a Dual Focus:

1. Cashews—Cash Crop
2. Fruit Trees, Greens, & Beans—Local Nutrition

Our goal is to provide year-round access to an increased variety of nutrients

Help Us Transform Lives by Providing *Access* to NUTRITION & GOD'S WORD in Kon!

Strategic Prayer Requests:

1. **TEAMMATES:** God to provide a *Nanny* (6+ month commitment), *Agriculture/Garden Teammates* (Long-Term), & *African Christian* (for Brick Machine)
2. **TREASURE:** Raise $75,000 for Phase 2 of Farm Building Campaign

JOIN OUR *ENGAGEMENT TEAM*:

1. *PRAY* Regularly; get Weekly Updates so you can pray informed
2. *GIVE* Occasionally to fill the gap when one-time needs arise
3. *GIVE* Monthly to sustain our work as an Essential Partner
4. *GO* Short or Long Term to develop shared experiences with the unreached; you'll never see life the same

CONTACT: Brittany@fruitfarm.africa

* https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-food-poverty/

United Protestant Church of Grayslake

PADS LAKE COUNTY Helping the Homeless Find a Way

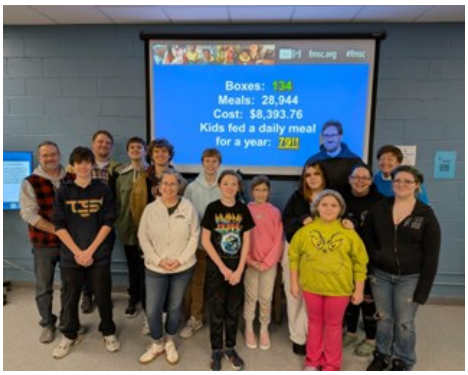
SAINT GILBERT CATHOLIC CHURCH Reaching Out With Servant Hearts

PADS Client Update: PADS numbers continue to grow with the cold weather we've had, and with the growing number of people who have reached the point where they can't afford their housing and still buy food and pay for other necessities. Almost half of the PADS clients continue to be under the age of 18. PADS has limited funds, so some of the clients are still being served without the ability to receive housing. Donations can be made online directly to support the PADS programs by going to their website: www.padslakecounty.org. Click on the word "Donate" in the upper right corner of the home page, click on the type of donation you wish to make, and follow the instructions from that point. Donations can be made in honor or memory of someone.

PADS Fixed Site Shelter Update: Construction at the fixed site on North Lewis Avenue in Waukegan should be completed by the end of April. At this time, the plan is for staff to move into the building and get organized the first of May. Families will gradually transition from their motel into the site a few families at a time soon after. Volunteers will be needed during the site's completion and prior to clients' arrivals and as the families move in. More information will be available about these needs and how volunteers can help when that point is reached.

UPC PADS Support for PADS Lake County's Fixed Family Shelter Site: Volunteers from UPC, St. Gilbert, and others throughout the community will be working as a part of **UPC PADS** to prepare and provide a weekly dinner for clients. As we get closer to May and learn more about logistics, our plans are evolving. Everyone can help in a BIG WAY by PRAYING! Many can help by donating small items that will be on our wish list, buying gift shopper cards to donate, baking desserts once or twice a month, etc. Some can help in ways that take more time. We'll need **substitutes** to be scheduled when regular volunteers won't be available. **Someone** is needed **to contact restaurants** for food/meal donations prior to May and after. About **25 people** will be needed monthly **to prepare dinner for 60 people at UPC one Wednesday a month**. At least **10 other monthly volunteers** will need **to pack the meal items** into their vehicles **at UPC <u>and/or</u> pick up donated meals at a restaurant**, and **deliver the meals to the shelter site** before a set time **on Thursday**. These 35 monthly volunteers will be scheduled prior to the middle of April for a specific week and set number of months, starting in May and going through December or into 2027. Substitutes will be scheduled in advance if they are needed for vacations, etc. THE VOLUNTEER LIST IS BEING MADE NOW! If you are interested in helping in **any** way, please give Rose Pech (rose4nonna@hotmail.com or 847-682-2837) OR the church office your name and contact information (name, address, email address, and phone number). **Adults, and possibly high school students,** will be able to sign up on a PADS Lake County Signup Genius to go to the fixed shelter site on a date of your choice to **help set out and serve the food, visit with the clients, and clean up** afterwards, and to help in other ways. Rose Pech can help individuals and groups get started with this process, but this will not be coordinated through UPC PADS.

YOUTH GROUP ENDED 2025 & STARTED 2026 BY VOLUNTEERING AT FMSC!



Members of the UPC Youth Group were joined by some of their parents and leaders on December 30 when they volunteered at FMSC in Libertyville. This was the first time for some youth to pack at FMSC. It was a joy to see how they volunteered to do any necessary tasks AND to see their enthusiasm afterwards—and hear requests to do it again!

Every youth in our Youth Group wanted to volunteer at FMSC, but December 30 didn't fit some schedules, so another date was also set. This gave a second opportunity to some of those who had gone the first time. Three of the people who couldn't volunteer on December 30 were joined on January 19 by some of the group who had previously volunteered.

Plans are being made for the Medieval Times outing that was second choice on the group's original "Things to Do" list. Information is being gathered about activities and events which youth would like to add to the current list. Calendars are being checked for dates in February, March, and April which will work for all or most youth to participate. Watch for more information in the UPC Tuesday Newsday emails. Contact Erik Fries at erikfries@yahoo.com or 847-366-5040 if you have any questions.

Avon Township Community Night of Giving: Regular 4th Tuesday night monthly sessions will resume on February 24 from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at the Avon Township Center. Join members of UPC, Boy Scout Troop 188, and others from Grayslake and the surrounding area as we sort items, stock food shelves, hang clothing, or do whatever other tasks are needed. Contact Rose Pech if you need more information at 847-682-2837 or rose4nonna@hotmail.com.

The Ash Wednesday Service is scheduled for February 18 at 7:00 p.m. Ashes will be available that morning at 7:00 a.m., as well as during the service.

A Special Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 22 following the worship service to discuss and approve the new proposed UPC By-Laws presented by the Governance Task Force. All members are encouraged to attend this important meeting. The proposed By-Laws were emailed to the congregation on January 29. Printed copies are available upon request.

WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT WCF? Contact Sue Schmidt, Catherine Vick, Ruth Gheysen, Rose Pech, or call the church office at 847-223-8131 for more information. Updates in Sunday bulletins, Tuesday Newsday emails, and UNIFIER.

LADIES BUNCO! Saturday, March 7, 1:00-3:00 PM in Fellowship Hall. Watch for more details in the March UNIFIER, Tuesday Newsday, and Sunday bulletins.

CURRENT INFO & UPDATES: Ladies 18 to 108: We'd love to have you join us!

Circle 2 members meet in the UPC Meeting Room or Room 103 monthly on a Sunday at **11:30 AM.** Sundays vary monthly based on UPC events. In January, members cut Dominoes for an OCC game and donated money for stamps to mail cards to honorary members and friends who can't join us. More 2026 meeting dates and missions will be planned at the **February 8 meeting.** Watch the **Tuesday Newsday emails, Sunday bulletins, and monthly UNIFIERS for future dates.** Contact Catherine for more info.

Circle 4/5 meets on the **first Wednesday** of the month **at 11:30 AM at Culver's** in Grayslake. Their next **lunch meeting will be FEBRUARY 4**. Contact Sue Schmidt.

Circle 9 meets at **5:30 PM on the second Tuesday** of each month **at Mrs. V's on Rollins Road in Round Lake Beach.** Occasionally, a meeting must be cancelled, so please check with Ruth Gheysen or one of the Circle 9 members prior to joining these ladies for **dinner on FEBRUARY 10.**

Circle 10 does not meet in person on a regular basis, but members are in contact with each other on Facebook. Contact Jasmine Walker.

Circle	Day/Date	Time	Place	Contact
2	Sun., Feb. 8	11:30 AM	UPC Meeting Room	Catherine Vick
4/5	Wed., Feb. 4	11:30 AM	Culver's in Grayslake	Sue Schmidt
9	Tues., Feb. 10	5:30 PM	Mrs. V's in Round Lake Beach	Ruth Gheysen

Tyler, Brittany, Danielle, & Joanna celebrated Tyler's 10th anniversary in Africa in January and having $19,000 of the $30,000 needed for phase 1 of their Building Campaign! Other praises are for the encouragement Brittany is receiving as she reads *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, brickmaking now almost completely done by Shovel and crew, and cleaning and organizing done in preparation for Container's arrival. Prayer requests include the urgent plea for a **Nanny** from **now until April 2026** and **for 6+ months October 2026,** for **an African Christian for farm and brick machine.** The 2025 Fruit Farm Photo Review is on display at UPC. All sizes of donations are needed and very much appreciated. These may be made by giving to their UPC fund at any time or online using this link http://www.ilad.ngo/D2002.

February Birthdays

2/1 Frank Garnier
2/2 Dave Schmidt
2/4 Timothy Knapp
2/12 Garrett Fries
2/21 Alva Mall
2/23 Michelle Adams
2/23 Warren Bell
2/28 Wendy Holliman

February Anniversaries

2/18 David & Karen Runyon
2/22 Craig & Barb Fischel
2/26 Dale & Nancy Message

UPC's Continued Prayers for Members, Relatives, and Friends:

Members: Jerry Badgerow, Bill Churchill, Craig Fischel, Marie Frandsen, Gregg Helm, David Holliman, Jan Kendrick, Joanne Lawrence, Joyce Norton, Terry Norton, John Porteous, Dan Watkins, Bobbie Weichman, and Jeff Ziegler.

Tyler, Brittany & Danielle, & Joanna: are thrilled that the container finally arrived in the Village. In addition to the prayers and donations, it took over a dozen people to help with logistics of getting items from the US (ordered in July) to the capital and the two-day drive to them. Thanks to all who made getting the container to them possible. Requests are for healing as Tyler has a painful finger infection; wisdom in adjusting their National Translator contract to meet host country's legal requirements; and favor as Tyler finds storage place for all the new farm supplies.

Relatives & Friends: Alam family, Bruce Baird, Kathy Behm, Betty Bournes, Mary Brase, Barry Burgett, Don & Tina Busch, Lorine Cooper, Daniel Dorman, Brad Fuller, Judy Hendrickson, Jennifer Hitch, Trish Jelinek, Rick Juern, Ben Kelly-Fuller, Mary Mason, Hubert & Sharon Maston, Albert Meier, Gloria Meier, Pat Mielke, Marilyn Mockenhaupt, Tommy Nellessen, Melissa Norton, Gail Russell, Gary Sadlack, Eric Schmidt & family, Ray Sisco, Stephan, Erik & Kacie Stanley, their son & Erik's mother, Diane, Bri Walters, Sue (PADS friend), Wendy, and Michelle.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

To Access UPC's Calendar On Line

http://www.mychurchevents.com/calendar/calendar.aspx?ci=L6F0H2O9G1F0O9L6I3

Contact Us

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Church Office Hours:
Tuesday & Thursday
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Grounded | Empowered | Transformed

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