

# The Unifier



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March 2025

Grace to you and Peace,

“Now about eight days after (this) Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. While Jesus was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Suddenly (Peter, James and John) saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking about his **exodus**, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.”

-Luke 9:28-32

This Sunday, March 3 is known as Transfiguration Sunday. Transfiguration Sunday is the last Sunday of the Season after Epiphany, but it is also the Sunday we read the story of Jesus’ transfiguration before the disciples. Luke’s account, which we will read this year, does a masterful job of telling the story in a way that both draws us close to this season of making complicated things clear, and also pointing us towards the Season of Lent. While Jesus is praying, something remarkable happens and the disciples can see the difference. The problem is that they do not understand it, at all. They are told that Jesus is going to Jerusalem to fulfill his mission, and it is clear that they do not yet have a clue what that will be. They want a “mountain top” (spiritual) experience. However, Luke’s use of the Greek word for *exodus* points us to a more important aspect of our journey to God: namely that it is in the witness of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross that we see the depths and heights of what God is calling us to.

Ash Wednesday always follows Transfiguration Sunday. This Wednesday March 5, we will commence our Lenten journey at two distinct times. The sanctuary will be open at 7 a.m. for the imposition of ashes and prayer. At 7 p.m. we will be gathering for a Lenten worship service and the imposition of ashes. The current practice of “forty days” of fasting heading up to Easter dates to at least the fourth century Nicene Council. At that time the 40 days of Lenten fasting are connected as preparation for the feast of Easter and at that time became a common practice throughout Christendom. However, before Nicaea it seems that there was no fast before Easter. Rather, among many communities there was an earlier fast of three weeks in preparation for baptism. This three-week period may draw an even earlier pre-Christian origin in a three-week long Jewish fast in preparation for Passover. I want to propose that there is a profound connection between preparing for Passover and preparing for Holy Week that should inform our understanding of Lent. Let me explain.

The Passover is the Jewish feast remembering the liberation of Israel from slavery. The liberation, however, was not yet entirely fulfilled by the Israelites crossing over the Red Sea. Rather, the Israelites wandered in the desert for **40 years (!)** before they were finally allowed to enter the promised land. In the Rabbinic teaching it is commonly taught that what happened here was an essential part of the liberation of the people; namely the generation that had been formed to be slaves needed to pass away in order for the next generation to be prepared to receive their freedom. Our 40 days of Lenten fasting should do the same for us. Lent is the most serious and austere season of the year; the fasting and austerity are not the ultimate end of Lent any more than escaping Egypt represented the complete exodus of God.

The Lenten season is meant to serve as a container for a time of extended, focused, and intentional prayer. These forty days are a spiritual journey meant to set our faces on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. However, if the exodus is to be the ground of this action, we must learn to see the death and resurrection of Christ as something far better and more profound than an act of divine punishment enacted on God’s own son. We are on a journey of repentance and fasting for sure. However this is a spiritual journey that depends on Grace. Lent is about turning towards Christ, and expecting patiently to receive even more freedom! The Apostle Paul brings all of this together in his famous passage from Romans 6:

"We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

-Romans 6:9-14

However you practice this fast season, let it be a journey through the cross to something even greater here and now. The freedom we are receiving from Christ is about more than an eternal destination. Like Moses, the resurrected Christ is calling us to turn towards a freedom here. Christ promises a new life of faith, hope, and love now. We are not just trying to be good people, Jesus leading us to live our lives to the full (John 10:10), and promises us a share in overcoming the world (John 16:33).

Lent is a hard and serious spiritual season. It is one worth suffering through well; however, if we believe the many promises of The Word, there is so much more that we stand to achieve by the grace and Mystery of God.

Just in case all that theory is too much, permit me to leave with the words of U2's lead singer, who often has a gift to summarize theology into accessible words:

High, higher than the sun  
You shoot me from a gun  
I need you to elevate me here  
At the corner of your lips  
As the orbit of your hips  
Eclipse, you elevate my soul

I've got no self-control  
Been living like a mole  
Now going down, excavation  
I and I in the sky  
You make me feel like I can fly  
So high, elevation

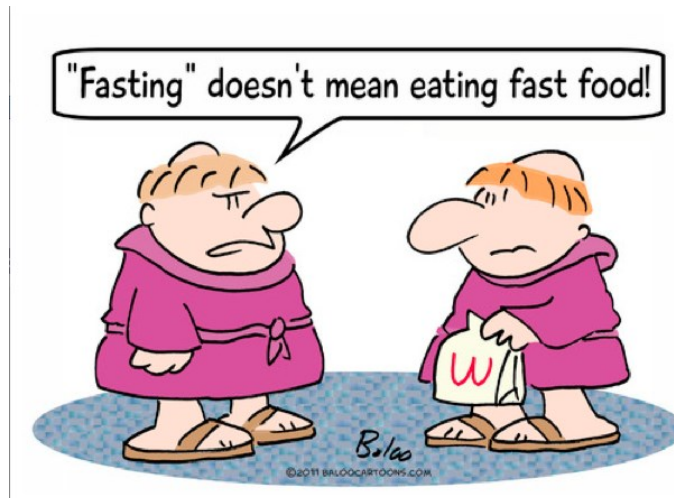
A star, lit up like a cigar  
Strung out like a guitar  
Maybe you could educate my mind  
Explain all these controls  
I can't sing but I've got soul  
The goal is elevation

A mole, digging in a hole  
Digging up my soul  
Now going down, excavation  
I and I in the sky  
You make me feel like I can fly  
So high, elevation

-Bono (from the song "Elevation")

In Christ,

Rev. Jason Okrzynski, PhD  
Senior Pastor



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

Dear Church Family,

How did we get through the month of February so quickly? With February coming to an end, Lent is soon upon us, with Ash Wednesday on March 5. I hope that you will join us for our Ash Wednesday service and each Sunday as we prepare ourselves for Easter. I am excited about our Lenten study. We will be reading through the book *Lent: The Season of Repentance and Renewal*, by Esau McCaulley. I really appreciate Esau's voice and his writing on Lent in this book providing us with a reflection upon the season and encouraging us to spiritual formation becoming more like Christ. I want to share with you briefly the description from the back cover of the book.

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### **"Lent is inescapably about repenting.**

Every year, the church invites us into a season of repentance and fasting in preparation for Holy Week. It's an invitation to turn away from our sins and toward the mercy and grace of Christ.

Often, though, we experience the Lenten fast as either a mindless ritual or self-improvement program. In this short volume, priest and scholar Esau McCaulley introduces the season of Lent, showing us how its prayers and rituals point us not just to our own sinfulness but also beyond to our merciful Savior.

Each volume in the Fullness of Time series invites readers to engage with the riches of the church year, exploring how its traditions, prayers, Scriptures, and rituals all lead us to Jesus."

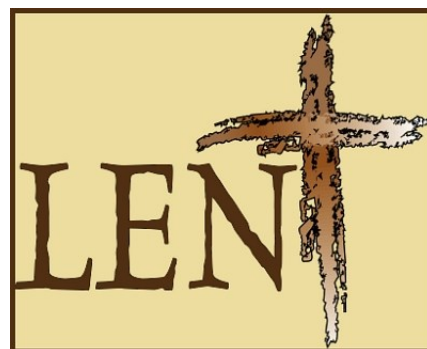
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As we begin to enter into the Lenten Season, I encourage you to find a spiritual practice to do throughout the season. Find ways to seek Jesus as we prepare to celebrate His grace and mercy. I hope that you will join us on Sunday mornings throughout Lent as we seek to do this together in faithful community.

On the family front, William recently played at a friend's house and upon returning he asked me if we had a cardboard box and tape. I asked him why he wanted those items, and he told me that his friend had a basketball hoop on the back of his bedroom door, and so William wanted to make his own hoop. Not wanting to discourage this creativity, I pointed him in the direction of our cardboard recycling. He didn't use a box from that pile, instead found one that was being used to hold some other items and went about cutting it in half and then taping it to the back of his door with painter's tape. So, now the sounds of his feet playing basketball in his room can be heard throughout the lower level of our house.

Blessings,

Ryan Aubrey  
Director of Christian Education





JOIN US FOR A

# ST. PATRICK'S DAY

POTLUCK!

SIGN UP SHEET IN PARLOR

**MARCH 16**  
**11:30**







# MARCH 2025

## United Protestant Church CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	3 7:00pm Stewardship Committee (MR) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	4 9:00am Park District Preschool Class (202) 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106)	5 11:30am Circle 4/5 (Culver's) 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH)	6 9:00am Park District Preschool Class (202) 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	7	8 1:00pm Ladies BUNCO (FH)
9 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am Circle 2 (MR)	10 7:00pm Children's Ministry Committee (MR) 7:30pm AA (106, 105) 8:00pm Christian Ed. Commission (MR)	11 9:00am Park District Preschool Class (202) 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)	12 6:00pm Confirmation Class (Loft) 7:00pm PUSH (Parlor) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH)	13 9:00am Park District Preschool Class (202) 2:00pm Budget & Finance (MR) 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 6:30pm North Star District Friends of Scouting (MR) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:30pm AA (106,105)	14 6:00pm Girl Scout Troop Meeting (FH)	15 8:00am Men's Group Breakfast (FH) 10:00am Girl Scout Council Event (Sanctuary)
16 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am St. Patrick's Day Potluck (FH)	17 7:00pm Ad Council (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	18 9:00am Park District Preschool Class (202) 6:30pm Pack 451 Monthly Pack Meeting (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106) 7:00pm Nami Family Support Group (MR) 7:00pm Troop 451 Committee Meeting (101)	19 6:00pm Confirmation Class (Loft) 7:00pm North Star District Commissioner Meeting (MR) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH)	20 9:00am Park District Preschool Class (202) 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:30pm AA (106,105)	21	22
23 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	24 7:00pm Mission Committee (103) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	25 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106)	26 6:00pm Confirmation Class (Loft) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH)	27 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 6:30pm North Star District Nominations Meeting (MR) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	28	29
30 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	31 6:30pm Worship Committee (MR) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)					

# MISSIONS UPDATE



The next UPC packing session at Feed My Starving Children in Libertyville is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 4 from 7:15-8:45 p.m.** If you are interested in participating, please contact Cinda Bartz at [bartzc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bartzc@sbcglobal.net).

After the FMSC packing session at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 26, everyone is invited to a Dutch treat luncheon at Lambs Farm in Libertyville. Feel free to join us even if you don't participate in the packing session. RSVP to Cinda ([bartzc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bartzc@sbcglobal.net)) by March 24.

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD (OCC)

We are collecting the following items for Operation Christmas Child throughout the month of March: toy cars, trucks, and boats, sewing kit items, children's underwear, yo-yos and dolls.

## JOY SHARING FOR MARCH

### **Save Lives and Bring Hope to Those Affected by Suicide**

Our Joy Sharing opportunity for March is the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). In part, their mission statement shares that they are "a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death." They are dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. They focus on mental health by engaging in the following core strategies:

- Fund scientific research;
- Educate the public about mental health and suicide prevention;
- Advocate for public policies in mental health and suicide prevention;
- Support survivors of suicide loss and those affected by suicide.

Please prayerfully consider financially supporting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention March 16 on Joy Sharing Sunday, or make your contribution whenever you wish. Thank you.

## 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 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.



*Missions Thrive in 2025!*

## AVON TOWNSHIP

### **UPC COMMUNITY MISSION at Avon Township Center:**

The All Pro Rebels softball team, their two leaders, and a UPC PADS volunteer joined some UPC WCF Circle 2 members on February 25 for our monthly mission sorting food.



**YOUTH, ADULTS, AND FAMILIES** from UPC and other churches and organizations, and individual volunteers are welcome to volunteer at the Center on **the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month, except for March** when the Center will be a location for early voting. Sort food, clothing, and/or other donations at the Avon Township Center, 433 E. Washington Street, Round Lake Park, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. (Shorter time if needed.)

An Avon Township Volunteer Application is required. Complete one when you arrive if one hasn't already been submitted. Printed forms are on the UPC Mission Table or can be requested by email. A sign-up sheet is on the Mission Table, but advance sign up is not required. This service is already blossoming into a community project. **Our next session will be Tuesday, April 22.** Come any month you're available! Contact Rose Pech, 847-682-2837 or [rose4nonna@hotmail.com](mailto:rose4nonna@hotmail.com) for more information or to have an application form emailed to you.

## FIFTH SUNDAY MISSION—AVON TOWNSHIP

The Avon Township Food Pantry (ATFP) is the focus of our first Fifth Sunday of 2025. The Fifth Sunday of March is meant to highlight an on-going mission of UPC. In conjunction with encouraging people to volunteer their time at ATFP, we are also reminding folks that they need and appreciate donations. Consider picking up one (or more) extra item(s) the next time you go to the store. Food and cleaning supplies are always in short supply. Start your spring cleaning early and donate used clothing while cleaning those closets.



*UPC members and friends are invited to attend a free pancake supper at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church located at 31 Park Avenue in Grayslake on Tuesday, March 4 from 6-8 p.m.*







## **PADS LAKE COUNTY & UPC PADS:**

### **Fixed Family Shelter Site Update:**

As noted in a February Tuesday Newsday, PADS has been working with an engineering firm and has hired a general contractor who will be hiring subcontractors to do the work required for the fixed family shelter site to be ready for occupancy this fall.

### **PADS Clients receive more donations from UPC:**

Sunday school students decorated and filled 20 activity bags for children who are in the PADS program. These were delivered to the PADS office along with over \$1,400 of additional donations consisting of clothing, gas cards, children's toys, cleaning supplies, and food on February 20.

### **Current Food Needs:**

- Donation delivery to the First Presbyterian Church in Libertyville have slowed down significantly. All food items and cleaning supplies are needed and can be donated at UPC, delivered to First Presbyterian Church from 4:00 to 5:30 PM on Wednesdays, or provided directly to First Presbyterian Church by using this link: [https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/XD5I2ZRDQKE5?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/XD5I2ZRDQKE5?ref_=wl_share)
- Sack lunches for all seeking help from PADS can be donated at 1800 Grand Avenue in Waukegan any weekday. Use their online signup genius for an open date, or call 847-689-4357 to set the date and time you would like to deliver lunches to the office.

## **Repair the Harm Update:**

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) filed for bankruptcy relief in 2020, overwhelmed by lawsuits of child sexual abuse related to the program as far back as the 1960s. The United Methodist Church (UMC) became involved because of their long-standing relationship with Scouting troops in churches. The UMC committed \$30 million to the Survivor Trust Fund, and the amount allocated to the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) is \$754,348. To date, the NIC has collected \$547,223 leaving a balance of \$195,205 to raise. Every church within the NIC is encouraged to contribute. If you wish to help with this cause, payments can be made online at [UMCNIC.org/RepairtheHarm](http://UMCNIC.org/RepairtheHarm) or via check. Please make checks payable to Northern Illinois Conference and mail to 303 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2020, Chicago, IL 60601. Please include a note or indicate on the check memo line that this is for the BSA or Repair the Harm.

## **UPC Financial Update as of January 31, 2025:**

YTD Income: \$19,523

YTD Expenses: \$27,906

YTD Deficit: **\$-8,383**

## **Daylight Saving Time Begins March 9**







*WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN  
FELLOWSHIP*  
**JOIN US FOR BUNCO!**  
**SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1-3 PM**

**INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT WCF?** Contact Sue Schmidt, Catherine Vick, Ruth Gheysen, Rose Pech, or call the church office 847-223-8131 for more info! See the church bulletin, Tuesday Newsday, and UNIFIER updates.

**Circle 2** meets once a month on a Sunday at **11:30 AM in the UPC Meeting Room, and the next meeting will be March 9 when circle members will greet and serve in Sacred Grounds.** Sundays vary based on other UPC events. Contact Catherine Vick.

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

**Circle 9** meets year-round at 5:30 PM on the second Tuesday of each month **at Mrs. V's on Rollins Road in Round Lake Beach. Their next meeting will be March 11.** Occasionally, a meeting must be cancelled, so please check with Ruth Gheysen or one of the Circle 9 members prior to going to a meeting.

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

Check the table below for meeting information and choose what works for you!

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

**Tyler, Brittany, Danielle, & Joanna** are grateful for the prayers and financial support they receive from UPC. See their recent praise items and prayer requests on the UPC Prayer List. Thanks to all who gave to the Joy Sharing for Tyler and Brittany Fund in February. Donations may still be made to the fund now or at any time. Donations are much needed and can also be made at [www.ilad.ngo/D2002](http://www.ilad.ngo/D2002).



*Ladies, join us on March 8 for BUNCO at 1 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Refreshments and prizes will be available. If you have never played before, it's an easy game to learn. If you are able to roll dice and count to 21, you already know how to play. Come for an afternoon of fun and fellowship! Contact Sue Schmidt for more information.*

### March Birthdays

3/2 Stephanie Perdew  
3/3 David Holliman  
3/6 Evelyn Munts  
3/6 Jeff Ziegler  
3/12 Tom Christensen  
3/14 Marie Frandsen  
3/15 Kim Lenzen  
3/19 Don Vick  
3/20 Beth Floral  
3/20 Wendell Fry  
3/21 Ann Friesema  
3/22 Gregg Helm  
3/24 Ken Gipple  
3/27 William Aubrey

### March Anniversaries

3/9 Erik & Sarah Fries  
3/24 Warren & Terese Bell  
3/28 Drew & Abby Madden  
3/30 Richard & Cynthia Floral



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

**Members:** Craig Fischel, Marie Frandsen, David Holliman, Jan Kendrick, Joanne Lawrence, John Porteous, Dan Watkins, Bobbie Weichman, and Jeff Ziegler.

**Tyler, Brittany, Danielle, & Joanna:** praises include 1) Brittany's article on the efficacy of teaching a foreign language to young kids was published in their organization's newsletter; 2) got their first dry season rain which helped cool down temperatures for several days; 3) Tyler installed translation software on a tablet he already had and they are excited to see if this works better for Brittany rather than on a computer. Requests include 1) trip to Hope got delayed so wisdom needed as Tyler makes the best use of his time; 2) new chief brought repair men to fix village pump; pray he follows through with starting a village committee to collect funds for repairs and training a villager for maintenance; 3) increase monthly funds by \$400; 4) energy for everyone on days Joanna doesn't nap well; 5) God's provision of an African believer to help them by living on and helping manage the farm.

**Relatives & Friends:** Allen Anglin, Kathy Behm, Joe Boccaleoni, Kathy Weichman Bradley, Lorine Cooper, Patricia Davis, Judy Hendrickson, Jennifer Hitch, Mary Mason, Albert Meier, Gloria Meier, Pat Mielke, Tommy Nellessen, Sohail Rana and the Alam family, Gary Sadlack, Ray Sisco, Stephan, Erik & Kacie Stanley, their son & Erik's mother, Diane, and Bri Walters.

**Long-term prayers:** Bruce Baird, Betty Bournes, Mary Brase, Don & Tina Busch, Brad Fuller, Trish Jelinek, Rick Juern, Conny Kappler, Ben Kelly-Fuller, David Novak, Sue (PADS friend), Wendy (friend of Rose Pech), and Michelle (friend of Linda Markham).



**Ash Wednesday Worship Service**

**March 5 at 7 p.m.**

**To Access UPC's Calendar On  
Line**

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

**United Protestant Church of Grayslake**  
54 S. Whitney Street  
Grayslake, IL 60030

