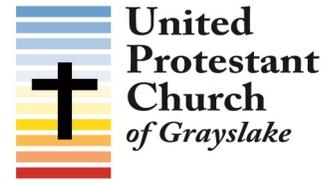


# The Unifier



54 South Whitney Street, Grayslake, Illinois 60030 | (847) 223-8131 | [upc@upcgl.org](mailto:upc@upcgl.org) | [www.upcgl.org](http://www.upcgl.org)

March 2026

Grace to you and Peace,

The forty days before Easter, Lent, are a season that are devoted to a Biblical word, “*metanoia*”. *Metanoia* is translated as repentance, but it literally means to turn.

The Narrative Lectionary’s path to Easter through John’s gospel is a little unique. The texts it shares are unique, however, the path we are invited to walk is spiritually the same path. Beginning this Sunday, March 1, our worship readings from John’s gospel will invite us to turn towards the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus. We will witness the washing of the disciples’ feet and Jesus’ trial before Pilate.

It is an unusual path through Lent, but it will give us a unique vantage point from which to think and pray about what it means, not just to turn towards Jesus in the shadow of the cross, but even more so, what we need to turn away from in our world.

The gospel of John, however, is not the only thing that is unique about our Lenten journey this year. On Sunday, March 15, we will take a brief detour to observe and celebrate the 70th anniversary of the consecration of the Sanctuary. That morning, we will follow the same order of worship that was used on that first Sunday. It is a day that will draw our year of celebration and thanksgiving to God for the history of this wonderful community to a close.

However, while our Lenten journey may be unique this year, our destination in the same. On March 29, we will gather for Palm Sunday, opening our Holy Week observation by enacting the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. This year we are going to offer a unique and fun addition to our Palm Sunday worship! For those who are able, we will gather at the side door of the Church and begin our Procession of the Palms by walking outside and bearing witness to our one true King, Jesus! I hope that you and your family will consider participating in that event.

Even more so, I want to encourage you to plan to take part in our Holy Week services. In particular, our Maundy Thursday service on April 2 and Good Friday Tenebrae service on April 3. Both of these services are unique, special, and I hope, very powerful. On Maundy Thursday, we will be gathering at 6:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall to share a soup and bread supper together, after which time, we will progress to “The Upper Room” (the sanctuary) for a communion worship service centered around that Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples.

Our service on Good Friday is one of my favorite services of the year. The Tenebrae service witnesses to the betrayal and crucifixion of our Lord by focusing on last words of Jesus in his final hours. Each reading is paired with an appropriate hymn/choral piece. The service walks us along side Jesus in his final hours in a powerful and moving way. We end the service by stripping the altar and parting in silence.

Easter is not just the resurrection. You can’t get from Palm Sunday to Easter without going through betrayal and crucifixion. The Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services are as essential as Easter itself. The services will usher us into the silence of Holy Saturday, inviting us to keep prayerful vigil with Jesus and the disciples in our hearts. Please consider prioritizing the entirety of Holy Week this year!

(continued on next page)

My prayer is that our Lenten journey will be tended and guided by the Holy Spirit in all respects this year.

In Christ,

Rev. Jason Okrzynski, PhD  
Senior Pastor

On February 22, we welcomed three new members to our UPC family: Amoon and Sehar Alam, along with their children, Ethan and Emily, and Michal Bylund. Please welcome them and introduce yourself to them as you are able. Pictures are not yet available.

Thank you to all who attended our special congregational meeting on February 22 to discuss the new governance structure and proposed By-Laws for our church. The majority who attended approved the By-Laws with several amendments. More information about the transition to our new governance structure will be coming soon.



Beginning on Sunday, March 29, the Mission Team will be holding a Kringle fundraiser. Kringles are a sweet pastry made of layers of flaky, buttery dough, with a filling and toppings in a wide variety of flavors. Orders will be taken from March 29 through April 12. There are 12 flavors to choose from (or choose them all; they freeze well for 6 months). The Kringles will be available for pick-up on May 9 – just one day before Mother’s Day. What a nice surprise for mom! Each Kringle is 22 oz and will cost \$12. Funds raised will support UPC’s budget.

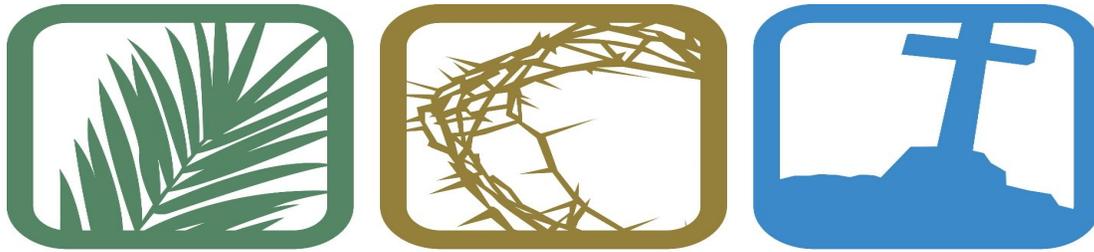
### **YOUTH START 2026 WITH PLANNING & MEDIEVAL TIMES OUTING:**

As the March UNIFIER goes out, youth are in the process of selecting the time they would prefer to enjoy their outing to Medieval Times on Sunday, March 15. Lexie Craig is collecting the information and will be making reservations. All youth in junior high and high school are invited to join the group, and friends within those age groups are welcome. Contact Lexie to get on the list of those attending. At the meeting in February, the youth also selected April 12 as the date they would like to go to Lakeside Entertainment Center in Mundelein for bowling, laser tag, and the arcade—all three were activities listed as top “fun” things to do. The group will be working with some adults to set dates and begin clean-up and redecorating the loft. The first step will be to get rid of the “junk” and unwanted items. Watch for more information in the UPC Tuesday Newsday emails. Contact Erik Fries at 847-366-5040 or erikfries@yahoo.com if you have any questions.



A very special thank you to all members and friends of our UPC family—past and present! During my 60 years as a UPC member, each of you has played a special part in my faith journey, helping my faith deepen and, in the process, helping me grow closer to God. I pray we continue to grow together as we seek to do God’s will, learning together and serving God and others as Christ’s church in this world. God bless all of you!

*Love and prayers,  
Rose Pech, March 2026*



# HOLY WEEK

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

Palm Sunday Worship Service	March 29	10:00 AM
Soup & Bread Dinner in Fellowship Hall	April 2	6:30 PM
Maundy Thursday Service with Communion	April 2	7:00 PM
Good Friday Tenebrae Service	April 3	7:00 PM
Easter Party & Egg Hunt	April 4	2:00 PM
Easter Sunrise Service	April 5	6:30 AM
Easter Breakfast in Fellowship Hall	April 5	7-10 AM
Easter Worship Service with Communion	April 5	10:00 AM

The Adult Lenten Study meets on Sunday mornings at 9 AM in room 106. We are reading and discussing *God on Mute: Engaging in the Silence of Unanswered Prayer* by Pete Greig. Books can be purchased for \$12. See Sue Schmidt if you wish to buy a book. The Lenten study will end on Sunday, March 29.

 UPC Ladies, join us on Saturday, March 7 for BUNCO from 1-3 PM in Fellowship Hall. Prizes and refreshments will be available. Come for an afternoon of fun and fellowship. Friends are welcome! Contact Sue Schmidt for more information at [churchsec@upcgl.org](mailto:churchsec@upcgl.org).

Candy donations are requested for our annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 4. We need chocolate and non-chocolate candy to fill plastic eggs. Candy may be brought to the church office by Sunday, March 29. Thank you for your generosity in supporting this fun event for the kids!



## Financial Update as of January 31, 2026:

YTD Income: \$16,050.23  
 YTD Expenses: \$19,378.96  
 YTD Deficit: **-\$3,328.73**

UPC's  
**EASTER PARTY**  
AND  
**EGG HUNT**

Saturday, April 4th at 2pm

**Grab your basket and join us  
for an Easter book  
and egg hunt,  
followed by refreshments!**



**United  
Protestant  
Church**  
*of Grayslake*

54 S. Whitney  
(847)223-8131  
[upcgl.org](http://upcgl.org)

*75+ Years of Keeping Faith*

**Join us for some Easter Fun!**



# MARCH 2026

## United Protestant Church CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	<b>2</b> 5:30pm Staff Parish (MR) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>3</b> 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106, 105)	<b>4</b> 11:30am Circle 4/5 (Culver's) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	<b>5</b> 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 1:00pm Ladies BUNCO (FH)
<b>8</b> 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am Circle 2 (MR)	<b>9</b> 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>10</b> 5:30pm Circle 9 (Mrs. V's) 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106, 105) 7:00pm Troop 451 PLC (101)	<b>11</b> 7:00pm PUSH (Parlor) 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	<b>12</b> 3:00pm Finance/ Stewardship Committee (MR) 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Worship Service	<b>16</b> 7:00pm Ad Council (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>17</b> 6:30pm Pack 451 Monthly Pack Meeting (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106, 105) 7:00pm Nami Family Support Group (MR) 7:00pm Troop 451 Committee Meeting (101)	<b>18</b> 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	<b>19</b> 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:00pm Troop 451 Meeting (FH) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:00am Adult Lenten Study (106) 10:00am Worship Service	<b>23</b> 6:30pm North Star District Commissioner Meeting (FH) 6:30pm Worship Team (MR) 7:00pm Mission Team (103) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>24</b> 7:00pm AA Ladies (106, 105)	<b>25</b> 7:00pm Alanon (106, 105)	<b>26</b> 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Grace Notes (Choir Room) 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 9:00am Education Hour 10:00am Palm Sunday Worship Service 11:30am Easter Egg Hunt Team (MR)	<b>30</b> 7:30pm AA (106, 105)	<b>31</b> 6:30pm Pack 451 Den Meetings (FH) 7:00pm AA Ladies (106, 105)				

## MISSIONS UPDATE



The next UPC packing session at Feed My Starving Children in Libertyville is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 3 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).

### 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 reams of 8.5" x 11" cardstock paper.

### MIDWEST VETERANS CLOSET

In support of Midwest Veterans' Closet, serving veterans, active-duty military and their families, UPC is collecting packets of unexpired vegetable seeds. Many varieties can be purchased for less than \$2 each. All varieties welcome. Collection runs through March 15. Additionally, we are looking for outdoor planters that are 12" or larger (new or used). Since those living on base are not allowed to dig up their yards, these will be provided so that they can grow fresh vegetables on their decks. The other seeds will be planted on the new property of MVC and the produce will be given to the military and their families. If you are a gardener and have starter vegetable plants you would like to donate, contact Cinda at 847.727.1552.

### COMPANIONS JOURNEYING TOGETHER



On March 29, our fifth Sunday mission presentation will be a speaker from Companions Journeying Together (CJT), a mission designed to help keep inmates connected with their families. After the worship service, members will have the opportunity to help assemble Mother's Day Packets in the parlor. This involves packaging cards, stationery and envelopes, usually about 4-5 pieces, to be delivered to prisons and jails so those who are in custody will have some nice cards, etc. to send to their loved ones. CJT will provide all materials needed. We hope you will stay and help. Inmates who remain in contact with their families do better upon release.

**Avon Township Food Pantry** is one of our Fifth Sunday collection ministries in March. This Food Pantry provides critical support to Township residents, operating a mobile drive-thru pantry and a personal indoor food pick-up service, which are both scheduled regularly for food distribution to citizens who live in Avon Township. The Township serves residents in Grayslake, Hainesville, Round Lake, Round Lake Beach, Round Lake Heights, and Round Lake Park. Food items are received from community-driven support, items provided by student councils and schools; donation drives for specific food items, such as turkeys, side dishes, and trimmings for well over 200 Thanksgiving meals in November; and from areas churches like UPC and Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church, which both have "drop-off" boxes/containers for food items and clothing that are a vital resource for families and seniors. Avon provides, stores, and distributes food donations to all Township residents who are in need. Please remember to pick up something extra when items are on sale and put your donation into the container marked for Avon Township on the rack near the UPC elevator. Remember also, every fourth Tuesday from 6:30-8:00 p.m., UPC and Boy Scout Troop 188 co-sponsor the Avon Township Community Night of Giving, where anyone who wishes may come to the Township Center and help with checking dates, sorting items, stocking shelves, and doing whatever other chores need to be completed. It's a great feeling to know that we're helping to make the food, clothing, and other necessities available and safe for those in need to access. Contact Rose Pech at 847-682-2837 or [rose4nonna@hotmail.com](mailto:rose4nonna@hotmail.com), or a Mission Team member if you have questions or suggestions.

## MARCH JOY SHARING

**malaria** Malaria is one of the world's most common and serious tropical diseases, with about half the world's population at risk of being infected with malaria. Although preventable and treatable, malaria causes significant morbidity and mortality, with the greatest numbers of cases and deaths in resource-poor regions and among young children.

**NO MORE**

- Globally in 2022, there were an estimated 249 million malaria cases and 608,000 malaria deaths in 85 countries.
- The WHO African Region carries a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2022, Africa was home to 94% of malaria cases (233 million) and 95% (580 000) of malaria deaths.
- Children under 5 accounted for about 80% of all malaria deaths in the Africa.

There is a connection between climate change and malaria. Changes in temperature, humidity and rainfall can influence the behavior and survival of the malaria-carrying Anopheles mosquito. Extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and flooding, can also directly impact transmission and disease burden. Catastrophic flooding in Pakistan in 2022, for example, led to a five-fold increase in malaria cases in that country.

In addition to extreme weather events, other drivers of malaria epidemics and spikes in malaria cases include humanitarian crises, biological threats such as drug and insecticide resistance, and socioeconomic constraints.

There are, however, grounds for optimism. Successes include, among others: the roll-out of the world's first malaria vaccine and the recommendation by WHO of a second safe and effective vaccine; the current availability of a new generation of dual-active ingredient insecticide-treated nets; the scale-up of seasonal malaria prevention for children at high risk of severe malaria; and progress towards or the achievement of malaria elimination in a widening circle of countries. By donating to Malaria No More, you can help work towards the day when malaria is eliminated in other countries as it was in the US in 1951. In 1900, malaria was present in approximately 53% of the world. In 2022, that number had shrunk to 27%. World-wide elimination is possible. However, progress is threatened because of proposed funding cuts. It is estimated the cuts could lead to an additional 18 million new cases and 166,000 new deaths a year. Won't you please help? Joy Sharing Sunday is March 15.

## UPC SHOPPER CARDS

Easter is just around the corner, and whether you like your dinner home-cooked or served in a restaurant, UPC Shopper can help. Plan ahead and order gift cards to pay for your meal or your groceries. You can choose from hundreds of restaurants too. Pick up items to fill your Easter baskets from Jewel, Walmart, Target, Meijer, Kohl's, or other stores. You can even put gift cards in your Easter basket. Every time you use a shopper card when making a purchase, you make a donation to Operation Christmas Child (OCC) that doesn't cost anything extra.

*"Be Part of the Fix in 2026."*



**PADS Client Update:** PADS numbers continue to grow, and now more than half of the PADS clients are under the age of 18. Twenty of them are over the age of 55, and of those, eight are over 65. Donations can be made online directly to support the PADS programs by going to their website: [www.padslakecounty.org](http://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 has been delayed due to plumbing problems which require waiting until the ground thaws to make the repairs. Currently, the plan is for staff to move into the building in **July** and a **few families at a time to gradually transition** from their motel into the site. Allen Swilley, PADS Executive Director, will be having an online meeting on March 24 at 7 PM. You can get the link to that meeting and ongoing PADS information, which is shared by Savannah Johnson as it becomes available, by emailing Savannah and requesting that your name be added to her list: [sjohnson@padslakecounty.org](mailto:sjohnson@padslakecounty.org).

**UPC PADS Support for PADS Lake County's Fixed Family Shelter Site:** Our plan to **provide dinner for 60 guests at the fixed family shelter site starting in July is being shared** with other churches and organizations in Grayslake. Have you started sharing this information? If not, please do and feel free to give people Rose Pech's contact information. Volunteers are being sought from around the area for **at least five volunteers who like to cook and would volunteer monthly to work with and supervise** a group of four other people to prepare and pack a dinner meal for 60 for the fixed Family Shelter Site. **Twenty other volunteers** would be divided into the five groups of four for each Thursday. We hope those on the fifth week of the month would be willing to substitute during a month when there is no fifth week for them to be assigned. These "teams" of five will have the food ready for **another two teammates** who will pick it up at UPC, and sometimes food from restaurants, and deliver the meal to the fixed Family Shelter Site on North Lewis Avenue. **People can help by donating shopper gift cards or money for use in buying food and supplies**, checking and donating items on our wish list, which will be publicized with specific items that are needed, or by volunteering when a task that you can do is listed in our newsletter articles. **Everyone can help by praying** for volunteers to step forward, for plans to go smoothly, and for the clients at the fixed family site to have nutritious dinners every day! **GET YOUR NAME ONTO THE VOLUNTEER LIST NOW!** If you're interested in helping in **any** way, please contact Rose Pech at 847-682-2837 or [rose4nonna@hotmail.com](mailto:rose4nonna@hotmail.com). Give your name and contact information (name, address, email address, and phone number).



## WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



**JOIN US FOR BUNCO!**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1-3 PM in Fellowship Hall**

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

**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 101 monthly on a Sunday at **11:30 AM**. Sundays vary monthly based on UPC events. In February, members planned future meetings and separated crayons to be recycled after the broken ones are stripped of the paper so they can be melted and reused by SCARCE. Members are cutting game parts for OCC games at home. Janette Leathem will give devotions at the **MARCH 8** meeting. 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 MARCH 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 MARCH 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.

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

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

**Tyler, Brittany, Danielle, & Joanna** will be home and hope to be in the Grayslake area mid-summer. Watch for our opportunity to visit with them, hear more about their projects in person, and ask questions. Unfortunately, they won't be able to return to Africa in October as originally planned unless they have help with their girls. If you know of anyone who might like to help them, please get information from the UPC office to share with them. See their praises and requests in the prayer section of this *UNIFIER*. Donations are needed toward their Phase 2 project which will cost about \$70,000. Donations may be made by giving to their UPC fund at any time or online using this link: <http://www.ilad.ngo/D2002>.

### March Birthdays

3/2 Amoon Alam  
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 Emily Alam  
3/19 Don Vick  
3/20 Beth Floral  
3/20 Wendell Fry  
3/21 Ann Friesema  
3/22 Gregg Helm  
3/24 Ken Gipple

### 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:** Alam family, Jerry Badgerow, Bill Churchill, Craig Fischel, Marie Frandsen, Gregg Helm, David Holliman, Jan Kendrick, Joanne Lawrence, Joyce Norton, Terry Norton, John Porteous, Cathy Vick, Donald Vick, Dan Watkins, Bobbie Weichman, and Jeff Ziegler.

**Tyler, Brittany & Danielle, & Joanna:** As we prayerfully reflected on this term and continue preparing for our Home Assignment, and after much deliberation, we came to an *important decision: We cannot return in October 2026 as planned unless we have help with our girls.* Let us know if YOU want our recruitment "Kid Helper for Translation Acceleration" PDF to share with anyone who might be interested... Join us in **PRAYING** for a gap-year student; young, retired couple; or someone else as **God's provision for this Mission Critical need!** **Praise:** We got the **FL Housing!** (with fenced in backyard/playground for the girls). We'll base out of **Ft. Myers from July-October** (or longer?). **Request:** Not knowing if we'll return in October is **stressful for Tyler** since it drastically changes what farm and building preparations he would make for a potential extended absence; pray for wisdom in **prioritizing his tasks** during our last month here.

**Relatives & Friends:** 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.*

**Daylight Saving Time  
Begins March 8**



**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

