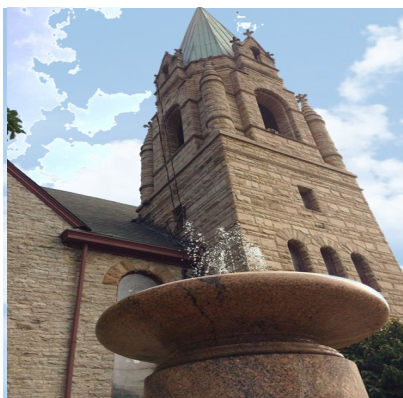




The Ambassador

March 2026

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1951

*Your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be
revealed with him in glory.
Colossians 3:3-4*

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of February, I shared a devotion in some of our Tuesday meetings. It was when we still had all that snow that seemed like it would never melt because it was so cold. When I was checking the mail at home, I would gingerly go out onto my front porch because of the ice and snow. And one day I was struck by this fact. In my front flowerbed, beneath all the snow and ice, buried in the frozen ground, were daffodil bulbs. I was comforted by the fact that while everything seemed miserably cold, growth was happening in the ground. I closed the devotion by sharing the above words from Colossians.

A few weeks later the snow and ice melted, finally! And as the snow receded, I was shocked to discover my daffodils had already pushed through the earth and were stretching through the snow. The stems were four inches tall! I could hardly believe it! I still cannot believe it and I think about it every day when I get my mail. I have long been wowed by how these bulb flowers grow unseen. But I was speechless as I realized they were growing above the ground- no matter what was happening. Snow or not, they were pushing through the earth, reaching toward the sky.

This has me thinking about that passage from Colossians all over again. Our life is hidden with Christ, the apostle Paul tells us. In our baptism, we put on Christ and God continues to work in and through us. This is always true. God is growing us even when things are hard, even when the conditions of our life are not ideal. God is there. Always. Growing us on the outside and inside, in ways that are seen and unseen.

Staff

Senior Pastor Kim Armentrout
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Worship Mary Ellen Clinard
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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

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 **first
church**
M I D D L E T O W N
a united methodist community

Our week of warmer weather passed quickly. The cold has returned, and spring seems far away again. But growth is still happening. It is true for my daffodils, and it is true for us as the body of Christ. May we embrace this gift for it is the grace of God.

Peace,
Pastor Kim

Lenten Series on the Sermon on the Mount

We continue all throughout March in our reflection on the Sermon on the Mount. Originally addressed to the disciples after a crowd had gathered, these teachings of Jesus have become some of the most quoted and most analyzed words that he spoke. Theologians and ordinary folk seeking to be faithful have dedicated themselves to the study of this sermon of Jesus'. Let us join them as we continue our worship series. Let us In Lent, sit at the feet of Jesus and learn what he taught about what it means to be faithful and to be a disciple.



<u>Date</u>	<u>Sermon</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
3.1.2026	Salt & Light	Matt 5:13-16
3.8.2026	The Law Intensified	Matt 5:21-37
3.15.2026	Forgiveness and Love	Matt 5:38-48
3.22.2026	Trusting God	Matt 6:24-34
3.29.2026	Narrow and Wide Gates	Matt 7:1-20



Congratulations Daniel!

It is our joy to announce to one and all that Pastor Daniel passed his interviews to become a Provisional Member for Ordination as an Elder in the United Methodist Church. Pastor Daniel has worked very hard in this credentialing process, and we celebrate with him! He will be commissioned at the West Ohio Annual Conference on May 30, 2026, at Capital University in Bexley, Ohio. We will share more details as we receive them from the conference, and we will also plan a local celebration. Until then – yay Pastor Daniel!!

SHALOM Season Coming to a Close

Founded in 2002 by the late Roy Ickes, our 2026 SHALOM season is coming to a close.

Our church hosted over 70 guests during our week! Not all at once, as some people didn't stay the full week and some came mid-week, etc.,

but on average we provided for over 20 each night. Housing that many people takes a lot of meals, a lot of toilet paper, coffee, and bedding and more. Thanks to our congregation and the congregations of several other churches that provided meals and volunteers!



But although the “overnights” are over, the work of SHALOM goes on throughout the year. Through our church office and other sources, there are requests to SHALOM for birth certificates and other services that SHALOM helps to provide. The work is ongoing. All those involved and all those who received assistance are grateful for this program. Huge shout-out of thanks to Steve Swank for organizing our hosting week and for representing our congregation in such a wonderful way!

Ministry Spotlight — Food Pantry

Mission Statement

The Pantry and Emergency Food distributions exist to share the love of Jesus with as many as FUMC can in the surrounding community. It is to be a “hand-up service” and not merely a “hand-out”. Accountability, evangelism, honesty, fairness and building relationships are the cornerstones of the ministry.

While the definition of the “surrounding community” might have changed, the mission hasn't. Terry Stephens serves as the leader of the group. There are 6 volunteers who staff the pantry every Tuesday afternoon. Pastor Daniel provides translation help since many of our guests are Spanish speaking. While the stalwart 6 are checking guests in, helping them shop, checking them out, and preparing the shopping list, there are several teams and individuals who shop weekly to re-stock the shelves. Our Lenten and Christmas offerings are a huge help as are the individual donations made through-out the year. Thank you for all that you do to help fulfill the mission statement of the Pantry and the motto of our church - Christ Our Life, Service Our Lifestyle.

A Note from Rev. Daniel Cardenas, Associate Pastor

We give you thanks.
Psalm 118:1

When we read Psalm 118, it becomes immediately clear that the psalmist endured severe and prolonged adversity. His distress was so intense that he repeatedly speaks as one who stood at the brink of death. He even describes being surrounded and attacked by powerful nations: "All the nations surrounded me... they surrounded me on every side" (Psalm 118:10–11).

Yet even when he was encircled, threatened, and pushed to the edge, the psalmist anchors himself in a greater reality: no circumstance—no matter how overwhelming or dangerous—can surpass the steadfast love and faithful care of God toward His children.

He does not minimize his suffering. He names it plainly. But in the same breath, he declares that the Lord is his strength and his song—meaning that God Himself is the source of his joy, confidence, and hope. He goes further than simply affirming God's goodness; he calls us to trust in God's active intervention: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things" (Psalm 118:15).

Though he acknowledges that his path has been marked by hardship, the psalmist intentionally remembers who God is and what He has done. That is why he closes the psalm the same way he opens it: "His steadfast love endures forever" (Psalm 118:29).

We are living in uncertain times. We do not know what tomorrow holds. We find ourselves surrounded by pressures that threaten to overwhelm us. But one truth remains unchanged: God is still powerful, faithful, and merciful. He is still able to act mightily on behalf of His children.

So do not lose heart. Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid. He has given us His peace—a peace the world cannot give and cannot take away.

Con amor y cariño.
Pastor Daniel Cardenas =)

LENT

Lenten Lunches

Our Lenten Lunches series continues through March. We've already enjoyed the food/hospitality of First Baptist Church and the teaching of Pastor Kim. This year we are exploring the taken, blessed, broken, and given movements of holy communion. The remaining hosting churches and teaching pastors for the series are:

March 4th - St. Paul's UCC with Pastor Daniel teaching
 March 11th - First Christian Church with Rev. Rich Luh teaching
 March 18th - First UMC with Rev. Jeff Wilder teaching
 March 25th - Pleasant Ridge UMC with Rev. Karen Johnson teaching

We will gather at noon for a simple meal and table fellowship followed by a time of teaching and reflection. First UMC will be hosting on March 18th. If you can help us that week, call the church office and let us know! Thanks!

Lenten Offering

We are continuing to collect items for the Food Pantry. Purchased/donated items can be placed in the Sanctuary behind the communion rail. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity!

These are the items we are collecting:

Toilet tissue (4 pack)	Ramen Noodles (Chicken/Beef)	Vienna Sausages
Laundry detergent	Vegetable/Canola Oil	White Rice
Dish soap	Apple Juice (Half Gallon)	Salt
Shampoo (V05)	Evaporated Milk	Flour
Bar Soap (Zest/Ivory)	Sugar	
Paper Towels		

Lenten Disciplines

Please join others from the church in observing the following spiritual disciplines during Lent this year.

Almsgiving – giving to others who are in need – We are collecting food for our ministries that help to feed our neighbors. The list of items we are collecting is listed above. If you would like to serve in the food pantry, or with Monday morning Breakfast Club, please contact the church office and we will help get you connected.

Scripture Reading – Read part or all of the Sermon on the Mount each day during Lent. It can be found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5-7. As you read, you are encouraged to prayerfully; reflect on the scripture; to let Jesus' words speak to you, noticing what challenges you; and to let the scriptures become for you the Living Word, asking what God is calling you to do, change, be, or become.

Prayer – Pray aloud the Lord's Prayer each day. Pastor Kim will do this with her regular morning devotions but you can choose to pray it at a different time.

Holy Week & Easter Worship

We begin our observance of Holy Week on Palm Sunday, March 29th. We will be celebrating Jesus' triumphal entry with the waving of palms as well as concluding our worship series on the Sermon on the Mount.

On Thursday, April 2nd at 7 p.m. we will have a Maundy Thursday service with communion and special music from the choir.

On Friday, April 3rd at noon we will observe Good Friday with prayer and quiet reflection on the passion story.

And then on Sunday, April 5th at 10:30 we will celebrate Easter with special music and Alleluias abounding! We have been having lots of fun as we are planning this worship service!



Easter Flowers

Yes, it is time to order beautiful flowers that enhance our sanctuary on Easter morning! The order form with choices and pricing information is below. **Please note the deadline of March 8th.** If you have any questions or concerns please call the church office and speak with Pam.

2026 Easter Flower Order Form

Order Deadline: Sunday, March 8th

Lilies: \$16.50 x _____ = _____

Mums: \$20.00 x _____ = _____

Tulips: \$16.50 x _____ = _____

Hyacinths: \$16.50 x _____ = _____

Daffodils: \$16.50 x _____ = _____

TOTAL DUE: \$ _____

All flowers will come in assorted colors, a foil-wrapped pot, and have a bow. **Payment must accompany order.** If you are mailing your order, please make sure it will be received before the deadline above. **Please pick up your flowers after services on Easter Sunday or by noon on the following Wednesday.** (NOTE: the office is closed on the Monday after Easter). Call the church office with any questions (513-423-4629).

Please print neatly and be sure to complete your name and phone number.

☐ In Memory of _____

☐ In Honor of _____

PLACED BY _____ **PHONE (_____)** _____



March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 COMMUNION 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	2 8:00 Breakfast Club	3 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry	4 12:00 Lenten Lunch St. Paul's UCC 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	5	6 10:00 UWFB Board 12:00 First Friday Concert	7 Bishop's Day in the District 9-4 Resurrection Mason UMC
8 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Easter Flower Order Due	9 8:00 Breakfast Club 6:00 Legal Clinic	10 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry	11 12:00 Lenten Lunch First Christian Church 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible	12 2:00 Elizabeth Circle @ Mt. Pleasant	13	14 9:00 Hope Circle @ Bob Evans
15 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	16 8:00 Breakfast Club	17 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 5:30 Finance Mtg 6:00 Council Mtg St. Patrick's Day	18 12:00 Lenten Lunch First UMC 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	19	20 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	21
22 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	23 8:00 Breakfast Club	24 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 6:30 Trustees	25 12:00 Lenten Lunch Pleasant Ridge UMC 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible	26	27	28
29 PALM SUNDAY 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	30 8:00 Breakfast Club	31 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry	April 1 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study HOLY WEEK	2 MAUNDY THURSDAY 7:00 Service	3 GOOD FRIDAY 12:00 Service	4 HOLY SATURDAY

Angela Murphy 02
 Karen Adams 08
 David McGraw
 Neal Walke
 Phil Yapple
 Marilyn Housh 12
 Mary Maurer 13
 Judy Smith
 Patty McGraw 14
 John Beagle 16
 Scott Tucker
 Jennie Webb
 Greg Cooper 18
 Janet Lynch 19
 Tom Atkinson 23
 Luanne Fugate 25
 Grant Edgren 27
 Barb Orth
 Shelley McDaniel 28
 Linda Schmitt 29

Happy Birthday!

Dates to Remember in April:

5 Easter Sunday

10 First Friday Concert

19 Native American Ministries

Birthdays:

1 Butch Adams

3 Gloria Freeman



2026 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

March 6, 2026

Adena Brass

New to our concert series, this popular brass group plays a wide variety of styles. For our First Friday concert they will be joined by our 32-rank pipe organ on several classical favorites!

First UMC - Middletown

@ noon

Free Admission

masks encouraged, not required