

## THE MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER

“What will you give up for Lent?” That was a question I heard starting this time of year when I was growing up. I heard that question from my cousins, who were all Roman Catholic. But being a Protestant I wasn’t sure what Lent was. As I grew older, I realized that not only did they “give things up,” they also changed their eating habits—Fish only on Fridays. By the time I was in seminary I had a rather good idea of what Lent was about, and we even talked about it; for maybe fifteen minutes in a church history class. But since I’ve been a pastor, I’ve started to have a deeper appreciation for what is one of the oldest traditions of the Christian Church and I would like to share with you a little bit about Lent and how we can use its traditions to help us in our spiritual growth. The original period of Lent was only 40 hours. It was to be spent in fasting, and remembering the suffering of Jesus and his time in the tomb. The first written references to these 40 hours of fasting are found in one of the “Early Church Fathers,” Irenaeus of Lyons, who lived between 130—200. He says that this time of fasting went back to the earliest days of the Church. The 40 days of Lent were established in the 600’s when Pope Gregory the Great initiated the practice of “Ash Wednesday,” and made this the start of Lent. The idea of placing ashes on the forehead was a reminder of the biblical idea of repenting in sackcloth and ashes, and of our mortality: **“You are dust, and to dust you will return.”** (Genesis 3:19)

So why extend this time of fasting and repentance to 40 days? Well, it has some strong biblical foundations. Specifically, Jesus’ 40 days in the desert, a time of testing and temptation in preparation of his earthly ministry. Lent was/is a time for us to prepare ourselves for the Easter vigil—Good Friday through Easter Sunday, as well as our on-going ministry in the world. Lent is a time to help us in our spiritual disciplines, to be more intentional in doing things that we should be doing on a regular basis, fasting, praying, almsgiving and scripture reading. When we “give up something for Lent,” we are doing a kind of fasting. In giving up something and going without we are learning self-control, one of the Fruits of the Spirit, (See Galatians 5:22). When we give up something, we should also be adding something to our lives: time with God by being in prayer. One of the easiest ways is to take and read one of the Psalms each day as a prayer. Traditionally Lent has also been about helping the poor and doing acts of charity and mercy. Now, these are things that Christians are to be doing all year round, but again Lent is a time to be more intentional in doing them, perhaps by going beyond your comfort zone in what you’ve done in the past.

I pray that as we enter Lent, both as a congregation and as individuals, we will grow closer to being more like Jesus, which is the goal we have as being his disciples, and the real purpose of Lent.

*Pastor Leuk*

The youth brought their gift of music to the Avon Nursing Home as they sang Christmas carols, while our choir director, Linda Rosebrough, accompanied them on the keyboard. Spreading the joy of the Advent season is a vital ministry of the church. The young people at Avon UMC are answering the call to participate in the service.



## LENTEN STUDY

“Why Did Jesus Have to Die? --- *The Meaning of the Crucifixion.*”

Despite the crucifixion's central place in Christian faith, the New Testament offers few clear answers about how Jesus' death saves, or why, exactly, he had to die. The New Testament writers use a host of metaphors—ransom, sacrifice, reconciliation, victory—but never explain exactly how it works or why it had to happen this way.

What if that's because we've been asking the wrong question? What if the cross isn't a transaction to be explained, but a living Word from God meant to transform who we are and how we live?

We'll be reading and discussing Adam Hamilton's book during Lent.

**The study will be on Tuesday evenings, at 7pm, starting on February 24 in the church's library ending on Tuesday March 31 (Holy Week).**



## Birthdays and Anniversaries

### Anniversaries

#### Birthdays

Feb 2	Jaxyn Crandall
Feb 3	Connor Duryea
Feb 3	Mavis Preston
Feb 4	Ashley Gage
Feb 5	Nicole Fay
Feb 8	Jane Passamonte
Feb 9	Asheley Gage
Feb 12	Barb Kahler
Feb 19	Matt deRis
Feb 21	Sadie Quinn Gage
Feb 21	Steve Stephenson
Feb 22	Malinda Wilson
Feb 28	Jennifer Brasdovich



February is Black History Month – a time to reflect on the history of black Americans and to honor the individuals and groups who have worked tirelessly toward racial justice.



National Random Acts of Kindness Day is celebrated annually on February 17th, encouraging people to perform anonymous, selfless acts of kindness to spread positivity and build community, a concept originating from writer [Anne Herbert](#) in the early 1980s. It's a day to practice compassion, whether through small gestures like paying for someone's coffee or larger efforts like volunteering, with the goal of creating a ripple effect of goodness.



February 18, 2026

# February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> 9am Coffee Hour – FH  10am Worship Service	<b>2</b> 3pm Food Addicts - SSR	<b>3</b> 1:30pm TOPS - FH	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 7pm SPPRC - Zoom	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 9am Coffee Hour – FH  10am Worship Service  2:30pm Girl Scouts - SS	<b>9</b> 3pm Food Addicts – SSR  5pm Safe Sanctuary Training - TBD	<b>10</b> 1:30pm TOPS - FH	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> VALENTINE'S DAY
<b>15</b> 9am Coffee Hour – FH  10am Worship Service  11am Mardi Gras Potluck Dinner	<b>16</b> PRESIDENT' S DAY  3pm Food Addicts – SSR  3pm Food Addicts – SSR  7pm Trustees - L	<b>17</b> Random Acts of Kindness Day  1pm Book Club  1:30pm TOPS - FH	<b>18</b> 6:30pm Ash Wednesday Service	<b>19</b> 7pm Interfaith Meeting	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9am Coffee Hour – FH  9:30am United Singers  10am Worship Service	<b>23</b> 3pm Food Addicts - SSR	<b>24</b> 1:30pm TOPS – FH  7pm Lenten Study - L	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 1:30pm TOPS - FH

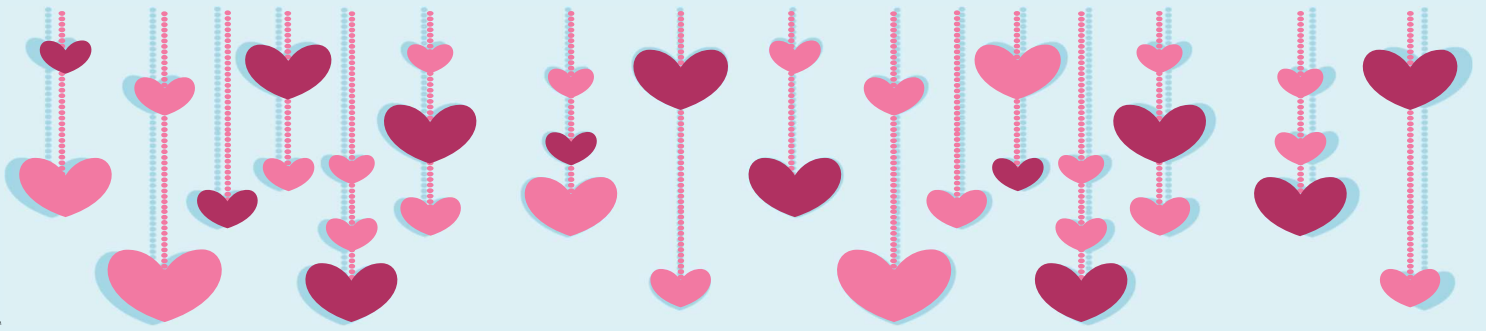
## CELEBRATING LILL JOHNSON'S 102<sup>ND</sup> BIRTHDAY!

Lillian Johnson and June Depard made a visit to the sanctuary on Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Nancy Sullivan, Karen Henderson, and Craig Bailey for making that happen. Lill explained that she felt like she was "home" when she entered the sanctuary. She found the angel banner that she made and enjoyed listening to the Chancel Choir. Chancel Bells, and an organ piece played by Allen Walck. We serenaded Lill with "Happy Birthday" in honor of her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday. This was an amazing evening with some very special people who have not been able to attend our services in several years.



### CHRISTMAS GIVING

On Christmas Eve, \$778 was given as the offering, to be equally divided and sent to the Avon Food Pantry and the Geneseo Parish Outreach Center. The Outreach Center is a non-profit medical ministry located at the Geneseo United Methodist Church and has been providing medical services to the community for 21 years. \$350 was also given to our church Emergency Fund. Thank you to all who contributed in any way.



## A VALENTINE PRAYER


Father, today I lift up in prayer all those who may be feeling lonely or unloved. Wrap them in Your comforting embrace, and remind them of Your promise that You will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). May Your love be the guiding light in my life, shaping my thoughts, words, and actions

## MARDI GRAS POTLUCK DINNER

Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup> following worship service . . .

Bring a dish to share, come for fun, come for friends

**Postmaster:**  
Time-Dated Material.  
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**FEBRUARY 2026**