

*Abundant
Grace*

Welcome to Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

Thank you for worshiping with us at Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ (ERUCC) this morning. We extend a special welcome to our guests.

If you are a guest, please visit us at the Welcome Table in the lobby. We would love to meet and learn more about you, and we are available to answer your questions. Please also feel free to reach out to someone sitting near you and ask them questions about the service or church. We encourage you to join us in the Community Room for Fellowship after the worship service for casual conversation and connection over light refreshments.

ERUCC is an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ. We welcome into the full life and ministry people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

For Children: We have trained nursery staff for ages 0-4. A deacon or greeter can guide you to the nursery. Children aged 5 and above are invited to stay and worship with their families. Children's programs, books, and crayons are in the rear of the sanctuary near the welcome table and a children's table is available for quiet activities at the front of the sanctuary.

We ask that you **please silence your cell phones** during our worship service. We also ask that you refrain from applause after our choirs sing and allow the music to resonate in the quiet of the sanctuary and in your hearts. Our musicians are playing and singing for the glory of God. They know you appreciate their efforts and their gift.

Restrooms, accessible and equipped with changing stations, are located on the 2nd floor, below the sanctuary, and on the 1st floor, outside the Community Room. Single-occupant, all-gender, accessible restrooms are located outside the North and Flora Rooms on the 2nd floor.

There is more information about our church in this bulletin and on our website: www.erucc.org.

Mission Statement of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

We, the members of this congregation, seek to celebrate in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ, by nurturing spiritual growth through worship, study and prayer; by caring for one another as God cares for us; and by proclaiming God's love for all people as we work to help our neighbors near and far.

We commit ourselves to develop and implement specific programs to fulfill our mission.

15 WEST CHURCH STREET, FREDERICK, MD 21701
(301) 662-2762 • erucc@erucc.org • www.erucc.org



EVANGELICAL REFORMED
United Church of Christ
– An Open and Affirming Congregation –



February 22, 2026

First Sunday of Lent

10:30 AM

The numbered hymns are from The New Century Hymnal

**All who are able may stand*

Bold text read in unison

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

PRELUDE

*** CONGREGATION CENTERING PRAYER**

Matt and Kelly Huetting

As we walk together through this time of transition, we give thanks for the faith that has shaped us and look with hope toward what lies ahead. We covenant to proclaim and embody God's love and justice for all people, serving our neighbors both near and far. Through faithful living and active participation in our congregation, we commit to following in the way of Jesus to build a community of extravagant welcome and inclusivity for all people. May we continue to reflect God's light through our love and hope in all that we do. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE CENTERING CANDLE

***THRESHOLD MOMENT**

Dan Smith

They're Out of Wine

– written by The Rev. Sarah A. Speed

They kicked off their sandals when the dancing began.
Everyone flooded the floor. He was there,
head thrown back, laughing at the stars.
Everyone could see it was joy and hope in the air,
the kind of love that makes it impossible not to dance.
So the whole community spun and twirled, jumped and clapped,
pushing back the pain of the world for a night.
Reveling in the fact that two people could stand to
build something beautiful in this fractured world.
But before too long, a tug on his sleeve.
I wonder if Jesus stopped dancing when he heard the news.

I wonder if he looked out over the crowd of happy people.
I wonder if he could see their joy poking through their fragility.
And I wonder if he knew, in that moment, that joy was holy,
that joy would sustain them, that joy was a form of resurrection,
so he turned water into wine and the dancing did not stop.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy One, it is easy to see the mustard plant and forget to marvel at the seed. It is easy to taste good wine and not appreciate it. It is easy to miss the holy that is in our midst. So as we turn to your text today, we pray, surprise us. Speak to us. Move through us. Draw us closer to your good news. We wait with bated breath. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN**

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling

#67

**Let me enter God's own dwelling
Open wide the lovely door!
Here, all earthly powers exceling
God receives the sick and poor
Joy, my heart, in this dear place
Here I see God face to face**

**I have come to church to meet you
Condescend to come to me!
Anxious, needy, I entreat you
Come inside and welcome be
Here at home, within my breast
I, your temple, richly blessed**

**Make my mind and body holy
Sanctify my ears and lips
Life my spirit, poor and lowly
All bright vanities eclipse
Take my praise, however flawed
As an offering, worthy God**

**In this hour of Gospel sowing
Let my earth be fruitful ground**

**Intellectual light bestowing
Raise my green faith, sweet and sound
Let me prove a stalk of wheat
When your harvest is complete**

**Reinforce me, weak and failing
Making sure your precious word
Thieves and evil unavailing
Lives within my heart secured
Shining word, my starry guide
Planted for me, deep inside**

**Let me hear when you command me
Let me leap to do your will
When I wander, reprimand me
Comfort me when I lie ill
In the hour of silent dread
Feed me with your heavenly bread**

***CALL TO TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**

You may have heard, “All is fair in love and war,” or “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But God says, “Forgive seventy times seven.” God says, “I am slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” God says, “Turn the other cheek.” God’s mercy catches us by surprise. So with wonder and gratitude, let us go to God in prayer. Let us be surprised by God’s grace all over again. Friends, let us pray:

***PRAYER FOR GRACE**

**Loving God,
somewhere along the way we picked up the message that in order to be faithful, we have to be serious.**

We have to pray on our knees without ceasing.

We have to be somber in worship and quiet in our studies.

We have to check our wiggles and our questions at the door.

But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—unruly and untamed. You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant. And all of a sudden, we wonder: Can we be like that mustard seed? Can we be faithful and unruly? Can we be playful and curious? Can we be messy and

still be yours? We know the answer already. The Spirit whispers: of course, of course, of course. Forgive our doubt. Pull us closer into your embrace. With faith like a mustard seed, we pray. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE**

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

God's grace is wild and unruly.
God's mercy is abundant and surprising.
God's love is expansive and unending.
So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"
the answer is and always will be:
of course, of course, of course.
This is the good news of the gospel.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Children, youth, and all who wish to join them are invited to come forward for a special message.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

*Children aged 5 through 5th grade who wish to participate in **Junior Church** may meet leaders at the back of the sanctuary. Children will return to their families in worship by 11:30 AM.*

HYMN

In the Bulb There Is a Flower

#433

**In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.**

**There's a song in ev'ry silence,
seeking word and melody.
There's a dawn in ev'ry darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.**

**In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.**

THE SCRIPTURES

Betsy Selby

Matthew 13:31-32 NT page 14

Reader: May God bless the reading of this word.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Fed by Good News

Tommie Bradshaw

MORNING PRAYER

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

Our God calls us to seek and find the hints of the Kin-dom in our world, and to nurture its growth among us. We will use our gifts, tithes and offerings to rebuild the body of Christ. **Amen.**

This is a time during worship when we respond to God's gifts of love by offering the gifts of our lives. For many of us, this is when we make a financial gift to our church's ministries and programs. We also use this time to ask God how we might use the gifts of our hands and hearts to share God's love.

If you wish to give, you can give online at www.erucc.org, by placing your gift in the offering plates in the rear of the sanctuary before or after the service, or by scanning the QR code to give from your phone.



OFFERTORY

Christ Hath a Garden

Senior Choir
– G. Near

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Grow these gifts in your love,
Bless our offerings, our hearts and our hopes in your love
To make us worthy of your work for your Kin-dom in heaven,
And among us here, even now.
Fill these gifts and each of us with your goodness. Amen.**

***CLOSING HYMN**

Come to Tend God's Garden

#586

**Come to tend God's garden, seeds of hope to sow,
Planting fields of justice, watching mercy grow!
In an arid wasteland, spread a verdant health!
In a land of tumult, cultivate God's peace!**

**As we tend God's garden, from its furrows rise
Stems of fresh beginnings, stretching toward the skies!
Graciousness, our meadow, joyfulness, our root,
Unity, our foliage, righteousness, our fruit!**

**May God's garden flourish, may our toil succeed,
May God bless our actions, every word and deed!
Serving Christ each season, with God's diagram,
Charted by the Spirit, for the task at hand!**

***BENEDICTION**

As you leave this place, when you meet anger, speak with love.
When you meet fear, speak with hope.
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
But no matter what, speak this good news.
For the good news of the gospel is love and justice for all.

It is joy that surprises, and nonviolence that transforms.
The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,
so go forth speaking.
For if you won't, then who will?
Thanks be to God
for this good, good news.
Amen.

During the postlude, please remain seated, letting the music flow over you as a closing blessing.

POSTLUDE



Worship Notes: Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. *Led by the Spirit...Backed by the Word: Service Prayers for the Lent 1A* was written by Dr. Sharon R. Fennema who serves as a free-range facilitator, ritualist, activist, teacher, and writer whose work lives at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and embodied spiritual practices. She is a founding member of the Liberating Lineages Collective.

Please join us for **Fellowship** with light refreshments and time for casual conversation after worship in our Community Room (1st Floor).

At fellowship today, Team Zero will offer chocolate fondue prepared on an induction cooktop with gluten-free dipping options. We are hosting this event in conjunction with Mobilize Frederick's Cooking Up Cleaner Air project and with support from Interfaith Power and Light. Cooking on gas stoves poses health and environmental risks and induction cooktops are an inexpensive way to mitigate those risks. Jess Schaefer, a Maryland Conservation Corp intern will be at fellowship to answer questions about the project. Please share our ERUCC radical welcome with her while tasting our delicious chocolate fondue.

The flowers on the altar this morning are placed by Darryl Glick and Mark Ulrich to all of us who have hope and are praying for a world where we can proudly be ourselves and stand up to those that insist on threatening us.

The yellow rose is presented by John Stush and Audrey Rayfield in memory of their uncle, Jack Kiser, US Army.

Attendance Last Sunday: 11 at 8:30 AM, 133 at 10:30 AM, and 78 online.

Watch
Worship
Live



Watch worship live every Sunday at 10:30 AM or on-demand:
<https://erucc.org/visit/sunday-live-stream>

Serving Today: February 22

Deacons: Angela Brittain, Jim Brittain
Elder: Peter Brehm
Scripture Reader: Betsy Selby
Acolyte: Vivian Bowman
Greeters: Paul McGinley
Cliff Barr
Welcome Table: Elizabeth Slade
Audio/Visual: Jeff Baker, Jeff Schaeberle
David Howard
Nursery: Kim Sexton
Fellowship: Linda Coyle, Shelley Weakly
Eric Weakly, Colleen Baldree
Chuck Baldree

Serving Next Week: March 1

Mark Ulrich, Quynn Adkins
Eric Weakly
Camryn Huenger
Wyatt Pomeroy
Felicia Bishop
Rob Smith
Julie Clark
Ethan Kline, Jeff Baker
Kelly Esslinger
Emily Spear
Julie Clark, Joe Adkins
Quynn Adkins, Hollie Mercier
Kyle Miller, Pat Dorsz, Zaydan York

Next Sunday: March 1 – Second Sunday of Lent

Luke 7:36-50 | Matthew 25:35-40

Simon and some Pharisees host a dinner for Jesus and an unexpected guest arrives: a woman from the city who kneels at Jesus' feet and washes him with expensive perfume. Simon scoffs at this party foul, but Jesus reorients his focus, asking him to truly see the woman and recognize that she has shown "great love," offering the tender hospitality he was not granted when he entered Simon's home. The woman with the alabaster jar shows a shocking, extravagant love that exemplifies the Greatest Commandment: to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself. Will the other guests see that loving God goes hand in hand with loving neighbor? We've paired this story with Jesus' words in Matthew 25. When we care for the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned—each of whom are created in the image of God—we are showing love for God, too.

John Shillingburg will be preaching and leading worship. The Senior Choir will sing.

Ways to Give to Evangelical Reformed UCC

WEBSITE

www.erucc.org/give



one time or recurring gifts

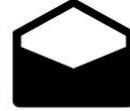
MOBILE



Scan to give from your mobile device

CASH OR CHECK

made payable to
Evangelical Reformed UCC
15 W. Church St,
Frederick MD 21701



offering plates
are available in the
rear of the sanctuary
before and after worship

PRAYER LIST

We invite you to hold the following people in your prayers this week. Though we may not know the specifics of their needs, God does, and our prayers are a meaningful way to surround them with love and support.

ERUCC seeks permission before adding a name to this list or in worship announcements. There are many for whom we pray and visit whose names are not listed in the bulletin by their request.

Baby James (Jeanellen Kallevang)	Tom Ford	Jim Baldree (father of Chuck Baldree)
Allen, Joan, and Larry Maples	Karen Stitely	Lee Thomas
Charlie Woodward	Donna Baumgardner Smith (friend of Sandra Trout)	Marcia Eisenstein
John Stush	Bill Cassell (brother of Ave Barr)	Derek C. Hupp (grandson of Beanie & Gaylon Cornell)
Izzie Sims (friend of Molly Black)	The Murray/Lennox/Cable Family	Wayne Kolb (friend of Stefan and Judi Mach and Tony and Linda LaFianza)
Debbie Jennings (<i>friend of Kathleen Jefferson</i>)	Rhea Stein	Jeannette Johnson
Charlie and his mother, Amanda Brown (friend of Rachael Bowman)	Doris Esslinger	Jackie Keyser (sister-in-law of Betsy and Phil Selby)
Robert Debonis (uncle of Sophia Carliss)	Sandra Trout	Marcy Channell (daughter of Jo Ann Fritz)
Sandy Maples (sister-in-law of Allen and Joan Maples)	Charlie Van Eman (son of friends of Kathleen and Niel Jefferson)	Paige Coffey
Betsy Fisher	Mary Staley	Fran Wenner
Barbara Heverley	Pat Condo	Bonnie Devilbiss
Todd Starr (nephew of Mary Staley)	Wells Condo	Tina Prescott (daughter-in-law of Barbara & Bill Prescott)
Sharon DiDonato (aunt of Darryl Glick, friend of Mark Ulrich)	Kitty Bradley	Heleen (sister of Karin Mens)
Isa Baxter (granddaughter of Kathy Gelles-Baxter)	Beanie Cornell	Kathy Blue Shores (friend of Jean Fish & Barb Biser)
Ginny Peters	Tom Frazier	
	Pauline Marendt	
	Kayla Merry (niece of Kim Sexton)	
	Carol Spera (mother of Mark Ulrich)	
	Emogene Wyand	
	Bob Pinner	
		Confirmands and Mentors

PASTORAL CARE

ERUCC wants to be there for you when you're experiencing an illness, hospitalization, or other life event for which you or someone you love may need a visit.

Members who are in nursing homes and those who currently reside in their homes but are unable to come to regular Sunday morning services will receive communion from our pastoral team. Our Faithful Friends Team also makes visits, calls, and sends care cards.

If emergency pastoral care is needed in the case of crisis, death, or severe illness, please contact the church office at (301) 662-2762 or erucc@erucc.org.

Activities, Events, and Announcements

SEMINARY SUNDAY

Historically, ERUCC has supported Lancaster Theological Seminary. Lancaster Theological Seminary and Moravian Theological Seminary have officially merged to become The School of Theology at Moravian University. This union brings together a united faculty and a shared, innovative curriculum designed to meet the challenges of 21st-century ministry with a continued commitment to justice-minded and accessible theological education.

Each year, we participate in Seminary Sunday to experience how seminaries prepare future church leaders. This year, Seminary Sunday is today, February 22nd. Tommie Bradshaw is currently a Master of Divinity student with Fletcher Seminary and will be preaching for us.

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS REVIEW SESSIONS

A Constitution and Bylaws Study Group has completed a draft of a revised document, and we invite the entire congregation to be part of the next step. Three upcoming sessions will offer an opportunity to hear more about the recommended revisions, ask questions, and share your feedback as we discern together the best path forward for ERUCC's governance and ministry.

Review the current draft: <https://tinyurl.com/ymaaemst>

Please join us **Sunday, February 22, in the Community Room at approximately 12:00 PM**

CHURCH DIRECTORY - DEADLINE EXTENDED (March 2)

We are off to a great start with the Church Directory Update. The snow and cold snap threw a wrench in our timeline! **The submission deadline is extended to Monday, March 2.** Please OPT-IN by completing a digital or paper form.

You can access the digital Opt-in form via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/ERoptin26>. Paper forms will be available at Fellowship and the office through March 2. Submit a personal photo via email OR a church volunteer is available through March 1 to take photos before and after the 10:30 Service. Tom Dorsz is taking photos 2/22. Come to the Welcome Desk or Reception Desk in Keiffer Lobby.

Thanks for participating in this opportunity to build connection and community with our ERUCC family and new settled Pastor. **Questions?** Contact Barbara Barry at ebbarry1@gmail.com or via text at (240) 422-7888.

LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE WITH REV. JOHN SHILLINGBURG

Sunday morning, 9:15 – 10:15 AM, Zoom: bit.ly/ERSunstudy

Wednesday evening, 7:00 – 8:15 PM, Zoom: bit.ly/ERWedstudy

North Room / Zoom

Led by Rev. John Shillingburg, this is an ongoing class, with new members welcome at any time. No prior Bible knowledge is required. The class explores scripture in its original context, considering who wrote it and how it has been interpreted over time. This multi-faceted approach leads to deep learning and engaging conversations.

THEOLOGY AMONG THE PEOPLE WITH REV. DR. REBECCA SHILLINGBURG

Tuesdays

North Room / Zoom, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Zoom: tinyurl.com/tuetap

Join us as we read and discuss *How We Learn to Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith* by Mariann Edgar Budde beginning February 8.

Bishop Mariann Budde of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, D.C., guides readers in how to find courage in pivotal life moments, using personal stories, scripture, and pop culture to explore themes like deciding to go, stay, or start. The book argues that bravery isn't a single act but a journey built from small, conscious choices, offering hope and practical wisdom for navigating uncertain times.

LET'S TALK – LENTEN STUDY

“Mary Magdalene – A Woman for Our Time” with Rev. Richard Leslie

Sundays February 22 – March 29

Downtown Community Room / Zoom 9:15 AM

Zoom: <https://tinyurl.com/erucclentenstudy>

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice.” (Psalm 130)

We will gather to study Cynthia Bourgeault's book, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, beginning on Sunday, February 22. It is not necessary to buy the book, but it is available new and used online. We will begin promptly at 9:15 AM.

SACRED CONVERSATIONS

Tuesday, February 24

Flora Room, 2:00 PM

Join us for our next monthly gathering where we will share stories and challenges related to life's changes, body limitations, and shifts in dependency. This is a sacred space to listen, pray, and connect as we navigate challenges and transitions related to life's changes, body limitations, and shifts in dependency. Pastor Kirstin will lead us in this time of holy sharing, emphasizing the importance of leaning on each other and recognizing that we are not alone in our journeys. Contact Ave Barr, Linda Coyle, or Pastor Kirstin with questions.

GENTLE YOGA

Tuesdays

Community Room, 7:00 PM

Experience tranquility and wellness in this Gentle Yoga Class. Led by experienced Yogamour instructors, this nurturing practice focuses on gentle postures, mindful breathing, and deep relaxation techniques. Participants of all levels are welcome.

NEW! Pay what you can or drop-in for free. The donations will be used to purchase food for the Frederick Community Fridge & Pantry, located in the church parking lot.

Questions? Contact Renae, rdkline15@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY PRAYERS

Wednesdays

Sanctuary, 4:00 – 4:30 PM

On Wednesday afternoons, you are invited to enter the church (doors open at 3:45 PM) and proceed to the front of the sanctuary in silence. We will pray silently in our own personal traditions. We begin promptly at 4:00 PM and end at 4:30 PM. What you can expect: substance for your everyday journey. Led by Rev. Richard Leslie.

WORK CAMP OPPORTUNITIES

There are two opportunities in 2026 for members of the Central Atlantic Conference to help our neighbors in North Carolina – April 12-18 and June 21-27.

Register for the April trip: <https://tinyurl.com/mb2925rx>

Please contact Rev. Chance Martinez-Colon, for more information or to register for either trip: pastorchance.graceucc@gmail.com.

FREDERICK SCHOOL OF RELIGION

The 42nd Frederick School of Religion will be offering 7 classes covering a broad range of topics.

WHEN: Monday and Tuesday afternoons and Monday and Tuesday evenings, for six weeks starting March 16, 2026.

WHERE: Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick (UUCF) 4880 Elmer Derr Road Frederick, Md.

All 6-week long courses are eligible for up to 1.2 Continuing Education Units. For more information and registration forms, you may call 240-651-1865 or 240-490-5657 or visit our website at www.frederickschoolofreligion.org.

DINNER CHURCH – “MONDAY’S TOGETHER”

Grace UCC is beginning a new ministry called “Monday's Together” where they will gather once a month, on the fourth Monday of the month, at 6:30 pm for dinner church. Dinner will be provided and our worship time together will include music and conversation. Their very first “Monday's Together” is on Monday, February 23, 2026 at 6:30 pm, and they have extended a special invite for our ERUCC Neighbors to join. I will be there, and I hope you will consider this too! <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1C5sV73NoU/>

INQUIRERS’ CLASSES

Two options to choose from:

Sunday, March 8 – Flora Room, 3:00 – 5:00 PM, *or*

Thursday, March 12 – Zoom, 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Interested in learning more about ERUCC and what it means to be part of our community of faith? We warmly invite you to join us for **Inquirers’ Class** — a time to connect, ask questions, and explore what membership at ERUCC looks like.

At our Inquirer’s Class, you’ll meet our pastors and church members, hear more about our values, beliefs, and history, and learn about the United Church of Christ — our wider church family.

Who should come? Anyone curious about ERUCC, whether you’re brand new or have been worshiping with us for a while, but haven’t taken the step of membership. ERUCC members looking for a refresher or who simply want to be part of meeting and welcoming others into our church community are also welcome.

To register, please email Ann Watkins at erucc@erucc.org, or stop by the reception desk in Kieffer Lobby after worship.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. **Questions?** Contact the church office at erucc@erucc.org or (301) 662-2762.



Children & Youth Activities, Events, and Announcements

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

Sundays, 9:15 – 10:15 AM

Join us for a joyful hour of learning, connection, and faith formation with classes for all ages.

Children in Pre-K; K – Grade 2; and Grades 3 – 5: please check in at the reception desk in the Kieffer Lobby (main building).

Pickup: All families must check out children with leaders in their classrooms at 10:15 AM.

JUNIOR CHURCH

2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays

Children in K – Grade 5 are invited to Junior Church most Sundays during the school year. Children begin worship at 10:30 AM in the sanctuary with their families and, after the Thought for the Day, are dismissed for creative, well-supervised spiritual formation activities. On the first Sunday of each month, children remain in worship to participate in worship and receive communion with their families. (Special activities are provided in the children's worship space on these Sundays).

YOUTH DRESS UP DINNER

Community Room

NEW DATE: Sunday, February 22, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

The Youth Dress Up Dinner is postponed until Sunday, February 22. Contact Barb Barry (she/her) ebbarry1@gmail.com with questions.

CLIMATE HOPE ART CONTEST

We celebrate the opening of the 2026 Climate Hope Art Contest sponsored by the UCC Climate Justice Organizers. UCC children and youth are welcome to participate by drawing, painting, or coloring their own work of art to bring this theme to life. We will pass out templates during Sunday School and have additional flyers available at the reception desk in the Keiffer Lobby.

We will accept submissions until March 18. Please submit artwork to Pastor Kirstin, to Ann at the reception desk, or share by email to awatkins@erucc.org. Contact Pastor Kirstin, ksrhoads@erucc.org, with questions.

GOD'S KIDS' CLUB

Friday, March 20

Community Room, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Theme: TBD

Pack a lunch, bring a water bottle, and clothes to play outside.

God's Kids' Club offers fun, faith-based programming for children on many scheduled school-closure days, providing both a safe place to be and meaningful opportunities for youth to serve as helpers. Activities can include Bible stories, crafts, games, and service projects, all of which focus on exploring faith and building community.

Please register at <https://tinyurl.com/ERUCCGKC320>

EAST GERMANY GROUP IS COMING THIS SUMMER

July 5-16, Approximate Dates

We will need help with host families and other hospitality for 10-12 people. Feel free to ask our planning team: Matt Pomeroy, Owen York, Barb Barry, Jeff Baker, or Pastor Kirstin, if you have any questions!

IMPORTANT "SAVE THE DATES" FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

March 20	God's Kids' Club, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
March 19-21	Youth & Confirmands Overnight and Interfaith Services
April 3	God's Kids' Club, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
May 2	Tots Family Flower Photos
June 22-26	Full Day VBS in partnership with All Saints Episcopal
July 16	East Germany Group is Coming!
July 26-31	Gretna Glen Camp for Children, Lebanon PA

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

No matter their mental health challenge.

No matter their immigration status.

No matter their sexual orientation.

No matter their economic status.

No matter their gender identity.

No matter their disability.

No matter their religion.

No matter their race.

Love your neighbor. No exceptions.

Lent 2026 at ERUCC



This Lent, we are grounding ourselves in the good news of Jesus’ teachings. Over the next 7 weeks, our objective is not to simply examine some of the core tenets of Jesus’ ministry, but to truly embody them in our daily lives.

Jesus’ words are easily distorted and sanitized in our modern world. Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it’s not necessarily comfortable. Jesus’ ministry can be described as “radical,” which comes from the Latin word “radicalis,” meaning “root” or “ground.” Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be. Can we be “good news”

people in a world too often burdened by bad news?

This Lent, let us remember that the good news really is good news. It is joyful—like fine wine saved for celebration. It grows like a mustard seed and smells like perfume poured from an alabaster jar. It tastes like bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. The good news is alive in the world.

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

Each week offers commentary, poetry, visual art, written reflections, hymns, and reflection prompts. Devotionals will be available starting Sunday, February 15, in the back of the Sanctuary or by request through the church office. We encourage you to engage in the weekly art and reflections at your own pace, imagining where God might be meeting you in between the dichotomies and supposed binaries.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL CARDS

A collection of 52 daily devotional cards – each with a question for reflection and a short prayer, spanning from Ash Wednesday through the first few days of Easter will be available starting Sunday, February 15, in the back of the Sanctuary or by request through the church office.

MIDWEEK LENTEN WALKS

Wednesdays

12:00 PM in front of Kieffer Lobby

Each Wednesday of Lent, beginning February 25, any who want to can join in a 20-30 minute prayer walk around our Lenten theme for the week. Meet at noon with comfortable walking shoes and a water bottle or snack if you wish. We will wander, not speedwalk. Our intention for Week 1 will be looking for something that surprises us!



The poster features the title "Lenten Prayer Walks" in a green, rounded font at the top. Below it is a list of dates and themes: February 25 (Looking for things that surprise us!), March 4 (Looking for things that show love!), March 11 (Looking for ways that nature or community work together!), March 18 (Looking for people caring for each other), March 25 (Looking for justice, mercy & faithfulness), and April 1 (Looking for signs of celebration!). The background is light green with stylized trees and leaves. At the bottom, there are illustrations of people walking and a phone number: "Questions? Call 301-662-2762".

Wednesdays
Start at ERUCC
Kieffer Lobby
12:00 noon

**Walk with wonder:
Looking for GOOD NEWS
through observing our
community each week!**

Everyone welcome - bring a friend!

CAC LENTEN CONTEMPLATIVE SERIES

Join us for a journey every Wednesday at noon through Lent, we will be led in a contemplative time of prayer and community on Zoom. Spiritual directors or those who work in the discernment discipline from around this conference will lead us weekly. The world we live in is chaotic and frenetic, so this Lent let us be diligent in slowing down to sit in Spirit for a moment. The link is here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89607593102...>

Meeting Code 89607592102

Password 211204

February 25

Reverend Jack Cuffari is ordained as both a UCC Minister, and an Interspiritual/Interfaith Minister. A spiritual director, teacher, preacher, and facilitator, Jack serves as Pastor at the First Congregational Church of Haworth, NJ and Spiritual Director in Residence at the First Congregational Church of Montclair, NJ. He has developed a Spiritual Direction process called The 5 Doors. Jack is a member of Spiritual Directors International, the Order of Universal Interfaith (OUnI), and is a certified Disaster Relief Chaplain and trained Hospice Volunteer.

Ministers, Staff, & Lay Leaders of Evangelical Reformed UCC

MINISTERS AND STAFF

Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads ~ *Associate Pastor for Faith Formation & Parish Life* ~ ksrhoads@erucc.org

Alison E. Shafer ~ *Director of Music*

Jaci Clayton ~ *Facilities Manager* ~ jclayton@erucc.org

Ann Watkins ~ *Administrative Assistant/Receptionist* ~ awatkins@erucc.org

Ashley Murphy ~ *Nursery Attendant*

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel ~ *Pastor Emerita*

The Rev. Fred Wenner ~ *Pastor Emeritus*

CONSISTORY

Peter Brehm ~ *Acting President* | Matt Hueting ~ *Vice President*

David Kehne ~ *Secretary* | Robert Morris ~ *Treasurer*

Rebecca Shillingburg ~ *Worship Chair* | Peter Brehm ~ *Finance Chair*

Shelley Weakly ~ *Mission, Evangelism, and Social Justice Chair* | Vacant ~ *Property Chair*

Julie Clark ~ *Stewardship/Generosity Chair* | Holly Davis ~ *Christian Education Chair*

Mark Ulrich ~ *Head Deacon* | Larry Martin ~ *Member-at-Large*

ELDERS

Ave Barr | Peter Brehm | Matt Hueting | Jeanellen Kallevang | Susan Kulp | Eric Weakly

DEACONS

Quynn Adkins | Tommie Bradshaw | Robin A. Brady-Slifer | Robin L. Brady-Slifer

Angela Brittain | Jim Brittain | Kyle Miller | Mark Ulrich

SETTLED PASTOR SEARCH AND CALL COMMITTEE

Rachael Bowman | Tommie Bradshaw | Karl Cooper | Linda Coyle | Matt Hueting

Terry Logee | Jen Powell | Bud Rossig | Eliza Stitely

Sunday Morning Schedule

subject to change

8:30 – 9:15 AM	Early Worship , Sanctuary
9:00 AM	Coffee and Conversation , Kieffer Lobby
9:15 AM	Let's Study the Bible , North Room
9:15 AM	Let's Talk , Downtown Community Room
9:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Nursery Care
9:15 – 10:00 AM	Children's Sunday School <i>Pre-K</i> , Nursery <i>K – 2nd Grade</i> , Liz Coffey Room <i>3rd – 5th Grade</i> , Thomas Room
9:15 – 10:15 AM	Youth Sunday School <i>Middle School Youth/Confirmation</i> , Flora Room <i>High School Youth</i> , Alcove
10:30 – 11:30 AM	Worship , Sanctuary and Online at www.erucc.org Junior Church , Thomas Room <i>Participating children are dismissed from Worship (2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays)</i>
11:30 AM	Fellowship , Downtown Community Room

Stay Informed



Subscribe to receive e-news from ERUCC at <http://eepurl.com/gDNCu5> or by scanning the QR code.

Worship services and events at Evangelical Reformed UCC are sometimes photographed and videotaped to document the vibrant life of our church. If you do not wish to be included in these recordings, please notify a deacon or the church office. Always obtain permission prior to sharing images and videos that include minors on your personal social media.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 22, 2026

Matthew 4:1-11

Abundant Grace

The season of Lent begins with a 40-day trip into the harsh and desolate wilderness. While it might not be as enticing as a trip to Tahiti, it is an important one, nevertheless. It is our time to learn from Jesus how to deal with our own wild beasts, our own hungers and thirsts, and our own run-ins with the Tempter, by leaning on God's Word.

This year, though, I don't need to say "yes" to this invitation to follow Jesus into the desert. That's because I have never emerged. I have been in a state of wilderness lostness for quite some time. Wild beasts remain nipping at my ankles. False promises of stones turning into bread have not satiated the hollow pit in my soul. And tempters seem to be trying to get my attention everywhere I turn.

It is easy to "do" Lent when everything is right in the world. When we feel safe and hopeful, Lent becomes a season of eagerly listening to God, slowing down, praying more, and helping others. But when worries of rising grocery bills and whether it is safe to go out in a public place overtake your thoughts, you wonder: Is this harsh world the norm?

I know I am not alone asking this, as studies show how hurtful and hateful society has become. There was a recent poll that revealed a whopping 47% of Americans agreed that people have become ruder to one another since Covid. The other day, a colleague shared an insight that I found profound. She observed how there was a growing sense of entitlement, yet no one had any shame over the things they said and did.

Perhaps this Lenten season is not so much about entering the wilderness as it is about helping one another exit it — to find our way back to hope by holding even tighter to God's Word, by kicking the wild beasts away, and by claiming the name of Christ when tempters tout false promises.

For here is the good news for all my perpetual wilderness wanderers. There are always — always — angels among us eagerly waiting to administer the help that we need. Perhaps there is one sitting in the pew next to you.

Redeeming God, there are many of us who seem to be trapped in a never-ending wilderness. The weight of the world's worries and fears are robbing us of joy and hope. Strengthen us. Grant us courage. Increase our faith. May this Lent we reach out to one another so that we emerge from our desert desolation together, united in a love that no evil can destroy. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)

