

## February Noisy Offering February 25

Our Noisy Offering for February will support RAVE Ionia/Montcalm (I/M). RAVE I/M serves the communities located in Ionia and Montcalm counties. They offer free and confidential services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence as well as victims of homelessness. RAVE I/M is committed to supporting healing and empowering individuals in crisis as well as educating individuals and the community on the power of health relationships.

Prayerfully consider giving on **February 25**.  
Your change could change a life.



## SOUP-ER BOWL soup can & cracker drive

In collaboration with Zion Lutheran Church, we are collecting soup and crackers for "Feed the Need."

"Feed the Need" is currently providing Weekend Food Bags for 110 children in the Lakewood School District.

### What is needed:

- 10-1/2 oz cans of condensed soup
- Individual serving size crackers (saltines, goldfish, oyster, etc.)

### When:

drop off donations in the Fellowship Hall through February 11



- ⇒ **Thank you for the wonderful Christmas gift! You are all so generous and thoughtful. Happy New Year! ~~ Mike McCartney**
- ⇒ **Thank you for the Christmas staff gift; your thoughtfulness and generosity are very much appreciated. ~~Jackie Spagnuolo**

### PASTORAL REFLECTION

Greeting friends in Christ,

Where did January go!? Between snow days and snow banks, 2024 has rolled in and we are already underway with what is sure to be a year of change and organizing. I am quite excited about the pastoral goals for this year and the several plans in the pipeline for helping those goals be lived out. We are also anticipating the beginning of Lent this month and we are going to focus our attention on something that winter often does not have us consider - pruning.



Lent is often reflected upon and reacted to as a kind of morose season in the life of the church. Having reflected on this season throughout my brief career thus far, one thing I can say is that I've gotten into the habit of thinking differently about it. Consider the example of Ignatius of Loyola, a saint and mystic of the church, who is not only the patron saint of soldiers but also an example of reflection and imagination refining our faith. The Examen is his most famous practice - the prayerful examination of our lives in the wake of our story with God. In my spiritual direction, I find a regular practice of honest reflection to be liberating.

Lent, I believe, is meant to be more liberating than grotesque in its presentation of our temporary nature. When deciding upon the central symbol for this season this year, a tree being pruned came to mind. Not only does having a tree grow wildly out of control often result in damage to the tree and its surroundings, but so do we at times, in our wandering through life, grow in directions we do not expect. Wounds are acquired, habits are forged, old scars are unearthed, and we find ourselves reacting to our lives rather than responding to them. Lent is our opportunity to look at the growth of our own lives and examine them.

I spent most of the summer examining the trees on the grounds of the parsonage and considering what limbs were providing an encumbering weight and which were providing shade and health. Seeing limbs grow into other trees, jutting into the boughs of another, I feel as though I was beholding the sermon series for this season when I reflect on it. It is a reminder to me that God uses everything for our good and our growth in love. Anticipate a season in which we use our time in worship to examine the experiences of life and what wisdom Christ offers so that we might prune our hearts for more love and grace within.

In Christ,

Rev. Paul Reissmann

Central United Methodist Church is located in downtown Lake Odessa at 912 4th Avenue.  
Contact us at 616-374-8861 or [kim@centralchurch-lakeo.org](mailto:kim@centralchurch-lakeo.org).

**Check out our Facebook page for weekly sermons, current activities, and other events.  
Central United Methodist Church—Lake Odessa**

## Keeping Christ Central

### State of the Finance Report

#### Stats for December 2023

**Average Attendance:** 55

**Operating Fund:**

Receipts \$13,834

Expenses \$16,327

**Other Designated Giving:**

Building Fund \$ 390

General Missions \$ 60

Helping Hands \$ 220

Christmas Baskets \$ 210

LAMA \$ 55

Community Dinners \$ 473

### Recent Memorial Giving

A lasting legacy remains when you honor a loved one or friend with a Memorial Gift. Your gift to Central Church becomes a living tribute to their memory. The impact of your gift will transform the world for Christ. We praise the Lord for the lasting legacy provided by our generous donors.

**In Memory of Peg Faulkner: \$1,465**

**In Memory of Virginia Decker: \$835**

We would also like to thank those who made memorial contributions/gifts to UMCOR/World Hunger in honor or memory of someone special.

**Your generous donations totaled \$255.**

The Fellowship & Care Committee will have the prize wheel at the Lakewood Community Easter Egg Hunt at the Lake Odessa Park on March 30th. Beginning on **March 3rd**, they will be accepting donations of small prizes for the event. Cash donations will also be accepted.



**Prize ideas:** Candy (without peanuts), small prizes such as books, coloring books, sidewalk chalk, bubbles, etc.



Pictures from the 2023 Egg Hunt

### What Is Our Operating Fund

As we start off our new financial year, it is appropriate to take a look at the most important fund in our Church, the Operating Fund.

The Operating Fund is where all the dollars that are not specifically designated to a project go. These dollars literally allow us to be in ministry. They pay utility bills, office supplies, salaries, coffee, music, and everything else that is an everyday expense.

It is the balance in this fund that determines how much is spent on programs, not the budget. We use the budget as a way of planning for the future and a tool of measurement. When a group in the church works on a budget, they are saying, "This is what we want to do." Throughout the year they look at the budget reports and see what they have been able to do. The difference is the amount of money in the Operating Fund.

The Operating Fund is the lifeblood of Central Church's financial life. As you prayerfully consider your financial commitment for 2024, please ask yourself if you are offering God your **First Fruits or Leftovers**.

**When writing checks, please take care to write 2024 for the year!**

If you have offering envelopes from 2023, recycle them and begin using the 2024 envelopes.

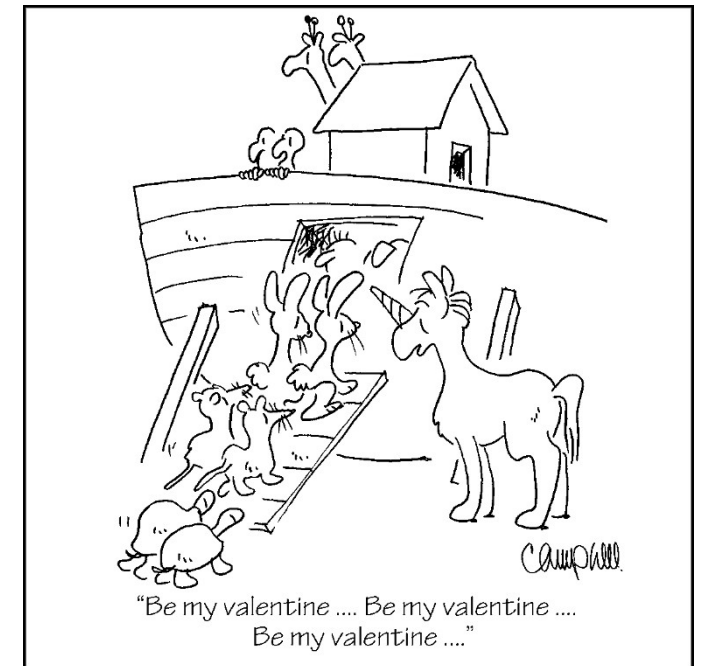


### Wedding Host/Hostess Needed






The church is looking for a couple of people who can be available for those wishing to use the church for their special day.

These people would need to be available to open and close the church for wedding rehearsals and the wedding. They would need to be able to answer questions and assist the couple, their families and guests.

If you are interested, please contact the church office.



# February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Community Respite 1-4pm  Comm. Dinner 4-6pm	2  Groundhog Day	3
4	5	6 Fresh Food Truck 2pm  Rental 6 pm	7 Adult Bible Study 5:30pm	8 Community Respite 1-4pm  Comm. Dinner 4-6pm	9	10
11 	12 Mission Comm. 10am  Blood Drive 12pm	13 Trustees 7pm	14  Ash Wednesday  Adult Bible Study 5:30pm	15 Community Respite 1-4pm  Comm. Dinner 4-6pm	16	17
18	19  presidents' Day	20 Finance Comm. 7pm	21 Adult Bible Study 5:30pm	22 Community Respite 1-4pm  Comm. Dinner 4-6pm	23	24
25 Noisy Offering for RAVE	26	27	28 Adult Bible Study 5:30pm	29 Community Respite 1-4pm  Comm. Dinner 4-6pm	 LEAP YEAR	

\*Dates and Times subject to change

Sunday School—Sundays at 9:30 am  
Worship—Sundays at 10:30 am  
Belding Adult Education Classes—  
Tuesdays & Wednesdays 9 am—12 pm  
Honeybee Fitness Class—Wednesdays at 6:30 pm



## Upcoming Sermon Series "The John Wesley Story" Jan 28, Feb 4, Feb 11

**What is a "Methodist" anyway?** It's on the sign out front of the church, but what does it even entail? You may have heard of John Wesley, but **who is he and why does he matter?** We're telling the story in January and why the story still matters to our **flavor** of Christianity, even in 2024.

## Looking ahead to Lent

Ash Wednesday—February 14  
Palm Sunday—March 24  
Maundy Thursday—March 28  
Good Friday—March 29  
Easter Sunday—March 31



- 2/03 Nanette Biang
- 2/05 Thelma Curtis
- 2/06 Sam McNeill
- 2/09 Lori McNeill
- 2/12 Margot Bailey
- 2/14 Sadie Acheson
- 2/16 Jacob Spagnuolo
- 2/20 Sally Strater
- 2/20 Ella Acheson
- 2/24 Barbara Wareing
- 2/27 Jonathan Freidhoff
- 2/28 Rev. Paul Reissmann



The Fellowship & Care Committee invites you to a special coffee hour to celebrate Fat Tuesday following worship on **SUNDAY, February 11th**. Please bring a delicious dessert or treat to share with everyone as we celebrate the last Sunday before Lent begins.

The Lakewood Area Ministerial Association will be holding the Community Good Friday Service at Central Church on **Friday, March 29th at 1 pm.**



**RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE at Central Church**  
**Monday, February 12**  
**12 to 5:45 pm**

