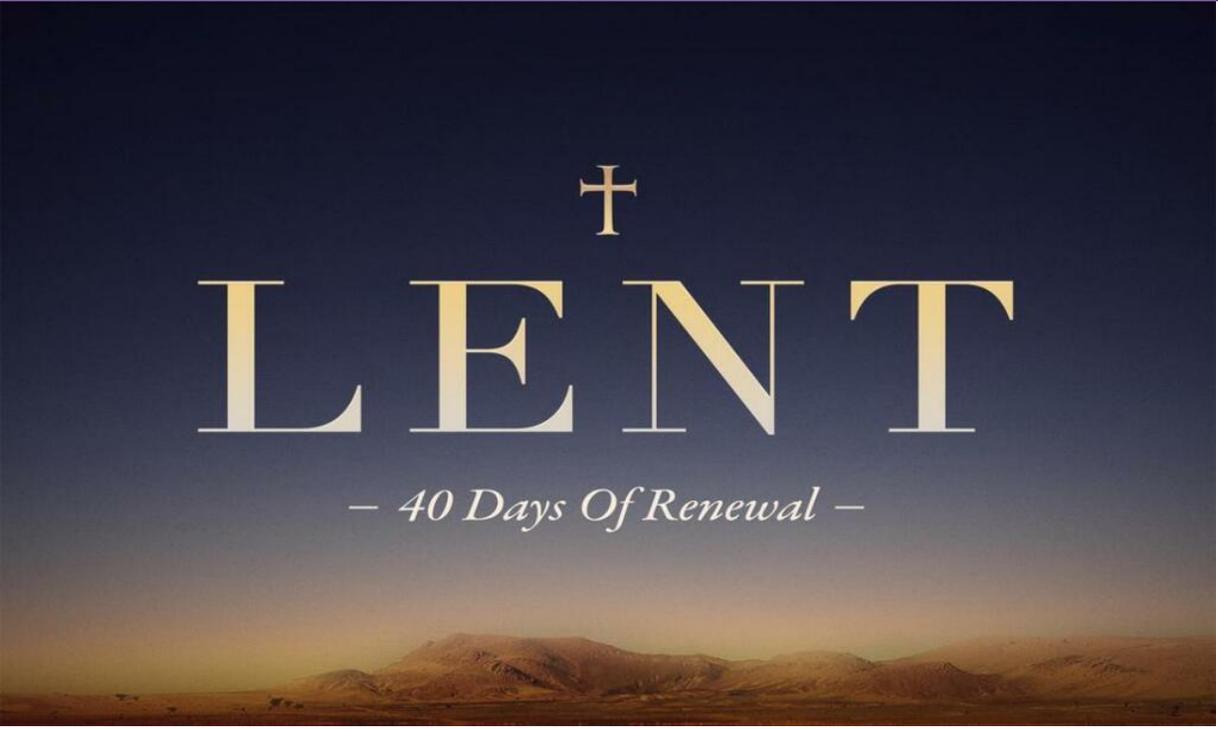


Central United  
Methodist Church  
February 22, 2026

†  
LENT  
— 40 Days Of Renewal —



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Lectionary readings for  
First Sunday of Lent  
February 22, 2026

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Psalm 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

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I celebrate Tae Yoon Kim, our student pastor, being recertified in the ordination process at last week's Lake North District Committee on Ministry (DCOM) meeting. Kudos to him for his persistence, faithful presence, and hard work. This is a journey that takes years of preparation, writing, and interviews at various levels of candidacy.

Way to Go, Tae Yoon!

In 2002, during one of my own ordination interviews, Rev. David Asleson asked a question that has stayed with me for years. "Do you consider yourself a pantheist?" He wondered about my frequent references to nature in my written responses and my emphasis on human experience as a source of authority. I considered for a moment before answering.

Then, I think I found the words to articulate that I don't think of myself as a pantheist, the view that everything is God. And I'm definitely not a theist who thinks God is out there while we are stuck here. So, I stated that I worship the Creator, not the trees or rivers or earth's creatures themselves. The awe I feel in creation directs me towards worshiping the Creator who is in all, just as all is in the Creator. (I didn't know it then, but the word for that is panentheism).

I believe that I concluded by quoting John 15 where Jesus said, "Make your home in me as I make my home in you... I am the true vine, you are the branches... Abide in me, and I remain in you." But the question sent me searching for what I really believe about "God being in all things and all things being in God."

It only took me another decade to learn the word that describes what I embrace about the human/divine relationship: Panentheism. A God of presence, justice, ecology, compassion, and creativity is a panentheistic God.

As a panentheist, I trust mystics and spiritual experiences much more than ecclesiology or systematic theology for sustenance. I resonate with Paul when he wrote of "one God who is parent of all, over all, through all, and within all" (Eph 4.6). I feel seen when I read Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, and Teresa of Avila, who all employ embracing images of us-in-God and God-in-us. Their words come from profound personal experiences of the divine. They inspire confidence in me that being "in Christ" isn't just a metaphor but our true identity.

In retreats, studies, and small groups, I encourage people to honor their unique experiences of God. God is within us and around us. Carl Jung warned that one could lose one's soul by worshiping a "God out there." Even experiences of pain, loss, nothingness, 'the void,' are not separate from God but brought together in a panentheist viewpoint. Both life and death grant us immediate contact with divinity.

As we co-create with God the world we wish to see, may you experience Christ's Consciousness of gratitude, joy, and abundance.

Trust Jesus' Blessings,

***Pastor Biel***

## Worship Service

Join us on **Sunday, February 22, 2026 - First Sunday of Lent** - in the Sanctuary for our in-person service. We celebrate the **Lord's communion every Sunday and we invite all to take part regardless of membership.**

The worship service is available on Zoom at 10:30 am. Please email to request access via Zoom. [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

## Bible Study



Join us for Bible Study from **9 am to 9:45 am** - Sunday morning via Zoom.

If you would like to be on the Zoom list for the Bible Study Class, please email the church office:

[centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

† TOMICS by Tom Gould

Genesis 3:1-6



## New Tax Deduction 2026



Beginning in 2026, taxpayers who take the standard deduction can also deduct up to \$1,000 (\$2,000 for married couples) for cash and check gifts made directly to qualified charities like Skokie Central Church.

What this means: If a person doesn't itemize deductions (and most of us don't), this gives you a new way to reduce your tax bill while supporting causes and charities you care about. It also means you can increase your support because it will cost you less at tax time!

[click here](#) to learn more.

## Donate



We appreciate all the financial support that has been received to support the church and missions. You can now give your financial support to Central in many ways.

**CASH and CHECKS**— Cash and check donations can be placed in the offering box at our church services. Checks can be mailed to the church.

**VENMO** – Using the VENMO app, pay by credit card. Enter Central Church's Venmo email: [centralchurchgiving@gmail.com](mailto:centralchurchgiving@gmail.com).

**ONE TIME DONATIONS OR SET UP RECURRING DONATIONS BY CREDIT CARD OR BANK TRANSFER USING THESE OPTIONS:**

**ONLINE GIVING** – go

to <https://onrealm.org/skokiecentralumc/give/now> ;

or use the QR Code.

**TEXT TO GIVE** – Using our secure online giving platform, TEXT to 73256 and send the message GIVECHURCH. A response will appear with a link to our online giving web page.

## Altar Flowers



The altar flowers this week are provided by Pastor Sylvia Pleas in honor of her Birthday!

## Fellowship



Join us after the church service for a Potluck fellowship - Please bring a dish to share!

The following allergies and dietary restrictions within our congregation are known of: **corn, dairy, gluten, meat and onions.**

# Looking Ahead

**Readers, Flowers & Fellowship, Oh My!**  
**We are always looking for Volunteers.**  
**Please sign up, TODAY!**

**February 22**

**Reader: Pastor Sylvia**

**Flowers: Pastor Sylvia**

**Fellowship: Potluck**

**March 1**

**Reader: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Flowers: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Fellowship: \_Laura R.**

**March 8**

**Reader: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Flowers: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Fellowship: Mariano Santos**

**March 15**

**Reader: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Flowers: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Fellowship: Tina and Ellen**

**March 22**

**Reader: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Flowers: Rose & Ruby**

**Fellowship: United Women in Faith**

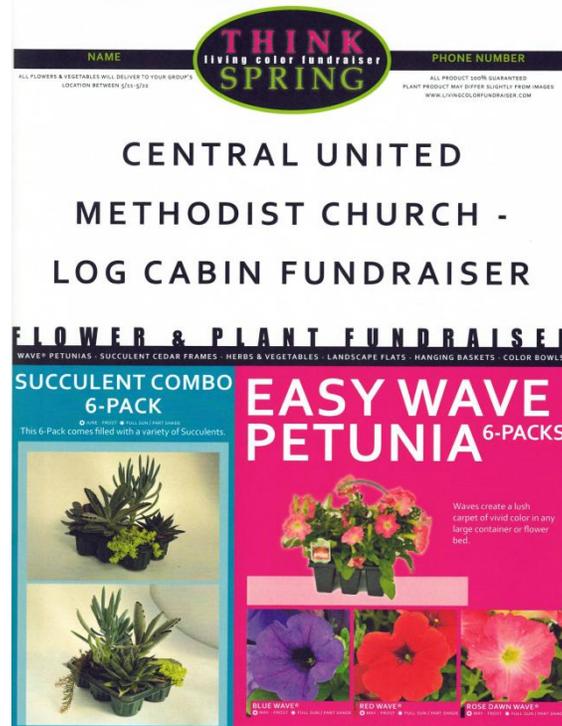
**March 29**

**Reader: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Flowers: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Fellowship: Potluck**

# Think Spring



**Order forms due Sunday, March 29th**  
**Delivery will be in early-mid May**

NEW this year is the Tomato Empress Purple. This purple “cherry” tomato is naturally high in antioxidants and has the same powerful nutrients as blueberries and eggplants. This single tomato plant comes in a quart size pot. Also new this year, the Petunia Firefly (the flowers and new foliage glow in the dark) will come as a single plant in a 3.5 inch ceramic pot. Perfect for a gift and ready to display.

Each order form has room for 12 individual orders. Please share this with your friends and neighbors. Be sure to include their name and cell phone number at the top of the order form. It would also be very helpful to have email addresses. Delivery will be in early-mid May and we'll know the specific information shortly before then.

Order forms with payment need to be turned into the church office by Potluck Sunday, March 29th.

Checks should be made out to Central United Methodist Church or CUMC.  
Forms with payment can be mailed to:

Central United Methodist Church  
8237 N. Kenton Avenue  
Skokie, IL 60076

Thank you for helping us raise funds and make the world a little more beautiful  
in the process.

## Open Style Church Council Meeting

**Monday, February 23, 2026, at 7:30pm hybrid meeting**

The Church Council Meeting will be an open style meeting.  
This means, it is open to all church members. Our discussions  
will include but not be limited to: a) Mission outreach to the community;  
b) Congregational Growth; c) Website, Facebook, Social Media; in general, social  
media access; d) All church picnic; and e) Leadership Development.

## Help Feed My Starving Children





**Wednesday, February 25**

**Noon - 2 PM**

**Feed My Starving Children**

**[740 Wiley Farm Court, Schaumburg, IL 60173](#)**

Join our Central team for this one-of-a-kind experience. You'll hand-pack rice, soy, dried vegetables and a nutritionally complete blend of vitamins and minerals into bags which are then

sealed, boxed, placed on pallets and shipped to incredible partners who distribute the food to children who need it **around the world**.

As a volunteer, you'll get the chance to impact hundreds of kids in just two hours per packing shift. You'll experience what it's like to make a tangible difference today. Car pools may be available.

If you're interested, please email the church office at: **[centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)**

# 2026 Laity Convocation

## Moving Forward with *Hope*



Northern Illinois Conference  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2026 LAITY  
CONVOCAION

Saturday,  
**March 21**

9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Registration 8:30

**Cost: \$15**

Walk-ins welcome, but registration preferred

**\$10** box lunch  
Glen Ellyn location only

Multiple Locations:

**Glen Ellyn: First UMC**

424 Forest, Glen Ellyn

**Satelite locations:**

**Princeton: First UMC** 316 South Church St.

**Freeport: Faith UMC** 1440 S. Walnut Ave.

**Orland Park: Faith UMC** 15101 S. 80th Ave.

**Speakers:**

**Rev. Lindsey Joyce**

**Bishop Dan Schwerin**

**Multiple Young People** from across the conference

Registration and more information at:

**[umcnic.org/calendar/2026-laity-convocation](http://umcnic.org/calendar/2026-laity-convocation)**

**Saturday March 21, 2026**

**9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**First UMC of Glen Ellyn,**

**424 Forest Ave.**

To register [click here](http://umcnic.org/calendar/2026-laity-convocation).

MORTON GROVE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
PRESENTS

# Bible Trivia

at  
SUNDAY  
MARCH 8 - 5-7 PM



Ready to put your Sunday school knowledge to good use? Join us for a beer and Bible trivia at Burning Bush Brewery in Chicago's North Center neighborhood. A free community event!

## Categories:

OLD TESTAMENT  
NEW TESTAMENT  
BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY  
CHRISTIAN HISTORY  
WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

## Hosted by Dan Maurer

Dan Maurer has hosted trivia shows and karaoke in Chicagoland for the last five years. He studies sociology at Northeastern Illinois University.



## More Info

call the office: (847) 965-2982  
mgcc@mgccpresbyterian.org  
www.mgccpresbyterian.org

@mgccpresbyterian



SCAN TO  
RESERVE  
YOUR SPOT!



# Morning Tai-Chi Class



## Weekly on Tuesday Log Cabin- 9 AM

Interested in learning Tai-Chi? Join our free class in the **Log Cabin, Tuesday mornings, 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.** Classes are taught by certified instructors, Jas and Jo Faber. This slow, meditative exercise is designed to improve energy, relaxation, balance and overall health.

Practice Tai Chi from your chair with this gentle 10-minute seated Tai Chi practice for balance and alignment. Relax the body through gentle movements - Tai Chi is a moving meditation. Guided by instructor Arlene Faulk, who shares: "Doing this chair tai chi practice every day for a year launched me on the road to walking again and good health."

To try chair Tai Chi - [click here](#) - Arlene Faulk

If you're interested, please email the church office at: [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

# Central Caring Crafters



## 3rd Thursday of the month Next meeting is March 19

10 AM Ed Bldg. Room 7

If you crochet, quilt, sew and have a heart for other crafts, gather with us to work, to learn how, or just come for the fellowship! Bring a bag lunch and stay for lunch and a treat. We hope to see you there!

If you're interested, please email the church office at: [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

# Tuesday Morning Meditation



**Weekly on Tuesday  
Log Cabin or Online  
10:30 AM CDT**

Join us as we gather to practice Lectio Divina on the weekly lectionary readings.

**Lectio Divina** is a contemplative practice with its Christian roots in the Benedictine tradition. It combines slow,

conscious reading of a biblical or sacred text with contemplation and silent prayer. It is meant to promote communication with God and a deeper knowledge of Christ, in our lives today.

During Lectio Divina we put aside thoughts of studying the text. This is not the time to consider the historical or theological meanings of what we are reading. We read with a willingness to enter into text in a felt sense. The purpose of this practice is to hear, in silence, the word of God, in this moment. What, through this reading, is God saying to me right now? What do I hear that helps me know what it means to walk the Christ path today?

Lectio Divina has traditionally been a communal practice; that is, one shared when in a group but it can be done when alone.

If you're interested, please email the church office at: [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

# Mini Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone who brings food for our Mini Food Pantry. The Pantry needs filling every day. Please bring something on Sunday - even a couple of cans would be gratefully accepted.

Please do not bring any containers - empty jars, etc.

Below is a list of suggested items - because the Mini Food Pantry is outside, it's important to only contribute non-perishable items, such as:

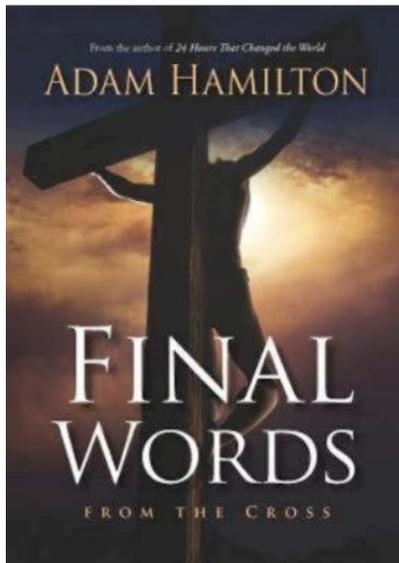


- [Canned goods](#) with ring-pulls
- Hygiene products: toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, soap, menstrual products, etc.
- Tuna and crackers
- Spices; salt and pepper
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Tea and coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Kids' snacks
- Dish Soap
- Stove-top Stuffing
- Non-perishable foods
- Bottled water

Thank you for your support in helping others less fortunate.

If you have questions or suggestions, please email the church office at [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

## Lenten Book Study: Final Words From The Cross



**February 25, 2026 - April 1, 2026**  
**Wednesday - 7 PM - 8 PM**  
**6 week study**

### **In person & Zoom**

You're invited to Join us for this Lenten Study [click here](#) to order- Some copies available in the office.

In life and in death, Jesus' words were powerful and meaningful. Despite the serious effort and increased pain required for Jesus to speak as he hung on the cross, Jesus spoke seven "final words"—statements that have much to teach us about Jesus, his Father, and ourselves: Father

Forgive Them Today You Will Be with Me in Paradise Behold Your Son & help; Behold Your Mother My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me? I Thirst It Is Finished . . . Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit Postscript: The Words After That In 24 Hours That Changed the World, Adam Hamilton took us on a Lenten journey through the last day of Jesus' life.

Now in this inspiring follow-up book, Hamilton explores these final words as seen and heard through the eyes and ears of those who stood near the cross. Each chapter begins with the biblical account followed by a first-person story as might have been told from the viewpoint of one of the characters at the cross. Then the chapter explores the meaning of Jesus' dying words for our lives today. Following the last statement, a postscript recounts the words Jesus spoke following his resurrection, including what truly were the final words Jesus spoke while walking this earth. Join the crowd now and experience the final words from the cross.

Final Words from the Cross offers six chapters/sessions plus a postscript chapter/session, so that classes have the option of a seventh session on Easter Sunday.

If you have questions or suggestions, please email the church office at [centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

# Yoga

MORE INFO  
& REGISTER



## YOGA SAMPLER WITH VICTORIA BIEL

FRIDAYS 5:30-7 P.M.

FULL SESSIONS: \$125/\$156

DROP-INS: \$28/\$35

### SESSION I:

1/9: VINYASA

1/16: YIN

1/23: HATHA

1/30: SOUND

2/6: EFT/SOMATIC

### SESSION II:

2/20: IYENGAR

2/27: VINYASA

3/6: KUNDALINI

3/13: RESTORATIVE

3/20: LAUGHTER



## RESTORATIVE YOGA WITH VICTORIA BIEL

THURSDAYS 5:30-7 P.M.

1/8-2/26: \$200/\$250

3/5-4/30: \$200/\$250

DROP-INS: \$26/\$33



8031 FLORAL AVE. | (847) 929-8001  
MUSEUM@SKOKIEPARKS.ORG



# Prayer of the Week

## Prayer for Peace

by Hannah Grace Injamuri

God of Peace,  
You created us in Your image,  
Calling us to share love, joy, and harmony.  
You designed us for fellowship with You  
And for living together in community.  
Yet, too often, we fail.  
Our selfish desires lead us to conquer,  
To seek relevance and power,  
And to rise above our siblings at their expense.  
We turn indifferent to suffering,  
Fueling wars and inflicting harm  
In pursuit of wealth and control.  
Lord, restore our purpose.  
Remind us that we are called to unity,

To hear the cries of those who suffer  
And to be their help and their hope.  
Lead us away from dividing and "Othering"  
And bring us toward harmony.  
Give us courage to stand for justice and truth,  
To honor the dignity of every person,  
And to walk paths of integrity.  
Shape us into peacemakers,  
That our lives may reflect Your light and love.  
Renew in us the beauty of simplicity,  
The joy found in humility,  
And the grace of sharing bread in fellowship.  
Teach us that true peace  
Is found in community and care.  
By Your Spirit, fill us with peace that overflows,  
So that we may bring Your kin'dom closer.  
In Christ's name we pray,  
Amen.

## Central United Methodist Church

Rev. Timothy Biel Jr., Pastor  
8237 Kenton Avenue  
Skokie, Illinois 60076

Church Email:  
[centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org)

Church Website:  
[www.skokiecentralumc.org](http://www.skokiecentralumc.org)

Church Phone:  
(847) 673-1311

[Send Us An Email](#)



Central United Methodist Church | 8237 Kenton Ave | Skokie, IL 60076-2611 US