

Central United Methodist Church January 18, 2026



Lectionary readings for
Second Sunday after the Epiphany
January 18, 2026

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

"If knowing answers to life's questions is absolutely necessary to you, then forget the journey. You will never make it. For this is a journey of unknowables -- of unanswered questions, enigmas, incomprehensibles, and most of all, things unfair."

– Jeanne Guyon

John the Baptizer lived in a desert community called the Essenes. They were rigorous about simplicity, shared property, purity, intense study of Hebrew scripture, and looking for signs that God's word was being fulfilled. It's no wonder that John cannot keep silent, pointing out Jesus to his disciples as the anointed one. "Even I didn't recognize him...this is God's Son."

Two of them trail behind Jesus for a while until the Lord notices them. "What are you looking for?" he asked.

It's natural to want to know what to expect from a commitment. They asked of him, "Where are you staying?"

In reply, Jesus invites, "Come and see."

The text doesn't give us details about what they "see", only that after hearing Jesus, they believed John's observation that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They left John to follow Jesus.

If their afternoon with Jesus was anything like what we know about his time in Bethany (literally: *House of the Poor*), they witnessed mercy, love, and justice. They saw Jesus humanize the sick, comfort the grieving, welcome children, and empower widows. What they saw was not the familiar brutality of the Pharisee's 'law and order' but real good news with authority.

The Son of God stood in stark opposition to normalized intimidation. He was unlike the powerful men who acted without accountability. He met people with compassion, unlike Rome's violent *Pax Romana*. Andrew was so impressed by what he heard that he ran to his brother Simon and declared, "We have found the Messiah!"

Andrew and Simon didn't come away from Jesus with clear-cut answers like the Sadducees might decree. Instead, like John, they rushed headlong into an experience of the divine. Jesus' way glorified not himself but God. The encounter changed them for the rest of their lives. Simon was so impacted by the first meeting that Jesus altered his name (and gave him an identity to grow into) The Rock, aka Peter, aka Cephas.

Jesus' summons to "Come and See" is a standing invitation for us. May we see ourselves as he sees us and hear the message that our neighbors and we are beloved and worth living for.

Trust Jesus' Blessings,

Pastor Biel

Worship Service

Join us on **Sunday, January 18, 2026** - Second Sunday after the Epiphany - 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 or click this link:

centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

to request the Zoom Link information.

Bible Study



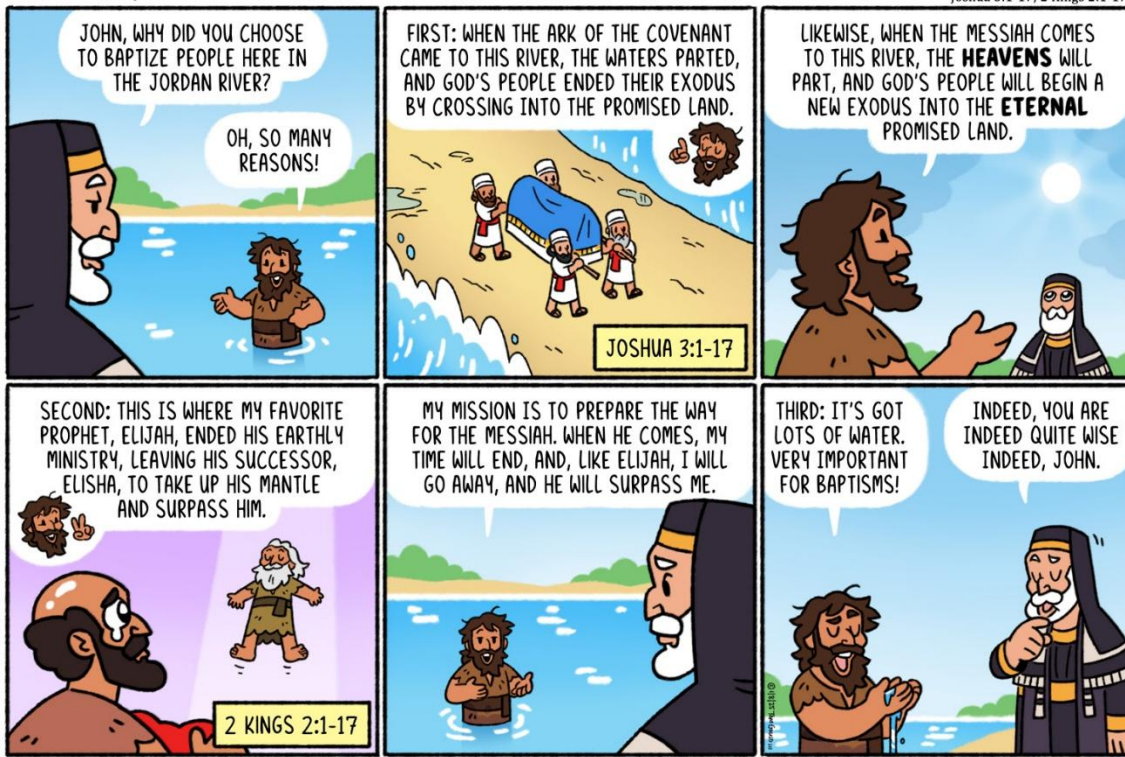
Join us for Bible Study from

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



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.

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 **Pam Castaneda**, in loving memory of her husband, Raul.

Fellowship



Join us after the church service for Fellowship provided by Central Chancel Choir. Please bring your favorite dishes to share.

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

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration



JOIN US IN CELEBRATING REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WITH PRAYERS, TESTIMONIES, MUSIC AND A GUEST SPEAKER.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18
2:30 P.M.

MOUNT PROSPECT: TRINITY UMC
605 W. GOLF ROAD, MT. PROSPECT

WORSHIP SERVICE WITH LIGHT SUPPER AFTERWARDS

THEME: VOICES FROM THE PAST, LEADING US INTO THE FUTURE
SPEAKER: REV. DR. CHARLES WOOLERY, SR.

There is no cost, but registration is requested to help us prepare the correct amount of food.

[Click here](#) to register.

[Click here](#) to watch the live stream via Zoom.

Missions



Dear Church Family,

The various Mission and Outreach activities of this church - Central United Methodist Church has been outstanding in 2025! Congratulations to YOU!

Congratulations to US! We fed our neighbors, our members, our Niles Township community and showed hospitality. We have created Winter Warmth Packages for the community and donated money where there were

grocery and basic needs.

The Mission Committee has been creative in helping others in kind and dignified ways - for instance, the "Winter Warmth Package". The Central Crafters created and designed about 30 flannel scarves, knitted various hats, baby bibs and wash cloths. Our church completed these packages by purchasing mittens, gloves and socks. Some packages were for infants, babies, toddlers and everyone else. Thank you dear family.

The Mission Committee and this whole church continues to support the Mini Food Pantry. Kudos to all!!! Weekly, the Mini Food Pantry Storage Closet receives bags of groceries.

The Mission Committee is thankful for all the monetary gifts to support these three main projects. Through everyone's generosity with dollars or prayers, we were able to support each project in a significant way. This year our church collected enough to donate \$900.00 to the Niles Township Food Pantry. This is the largest gift we have given to date. Other funds went to our Mini Food Pantry and Central's Families. We are very proud to be able to help our church families, our neighbors and our community. We are doing the work of Jesus in our little Kin-dom.

To regularly finance MISSIONS, click on our website address:

<https://www.skokiecentralumc.org/general-6>

This link takes you to the DONATE page of Central's website. Just answer about seven questions and you have made your financial commitment to Missions. Done!

The Mission Committee Members thank you!

We are: Doris Bloom, Jo Faber, Mar Haidari, Linda Hovland, Barb Smith, Kathy Tiffin, Mary Wadleigh, Mae Williams - and YOU!

Looking Ahead

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

January 18

Reader: Pam Castaneda

Flowers: Pam Castaneda, in loving memory of her husband, Raul.

Fellowship: Central Chancel Choir

January 25

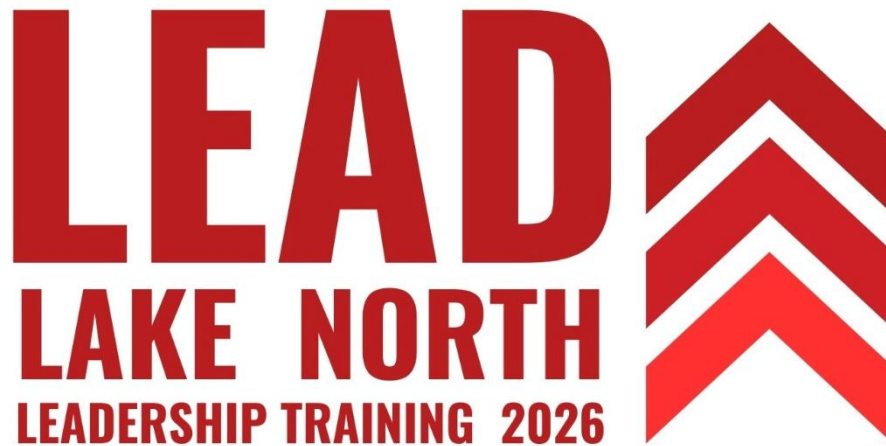
Reader: Remy Yabes

Flowers: Remy Yabes

Fellowship: Pot - Luck / Remy Yabes

Lake North Leadership Training

Location: *United Methodist Church of Libertyville, 429 Brainerd Ave.*



LEADING YOUR CHURCH IN CHANGING TIMES

SAT. FEB. 7
8 A.M. - 12:45 P.M.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LIBERTYVILLE, 429 BRAINERD AVE.

Cost \$15.00
[click here](#) **register.**

Why attend: Now more than ever, local church leaders must adapt how they do ministry. Level up how you serve your congregation by joining fellow local lay leaders, church officers, ministry leaders, clergy and more for a half day of shared learning, insightful inspiration and meaningful connection.

What's new: Our event is conference-style – we'll all be together throughout the event (no breakout groups).

What attendees will learn: Hear from experts and leaders on topics designed to encourage church leaders as they discern how to adapt their ministries.

Schedule:

- 8 a.m. Registration & Light Breakfast Fellowship
- 9 a.m. Worship Service
- 9:30 a.m. Keynote: Fireside Chat with DS Victor Melad, Jr.
- 10 a.m. Community Plenary Sessions
- Supporting the Well-Being of Your Pastor
 - Kelly Wittich, Director of Health and Well-Being, Wespeth and Jodi Benacka, Manager, Health and Well-Being, Wespeth
- Artificial Intelligence: What Local Church Leaders Should Ask
 - Joash Mencias, Shepherding Team, Lake North District
- Panel: Insights for Churches Seeking to Adapt & Innovate
- Rev. Christian Coon, Director of Congregational Development, Northern Illinois Conference
- Rebekah Coffman, Executive Director, Church Properties Reimagined
- Rev. Dr. Abby Mohaupt, Director, Garrett Collective, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
 - Rev. Clayton Edwards, Deerfield Campus Pastor, Kingswood UMC

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.

If you're interested, please email the church office at: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Central Caring Crafters



3rd Thursday of the month
Next meeting is Feb 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

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

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:

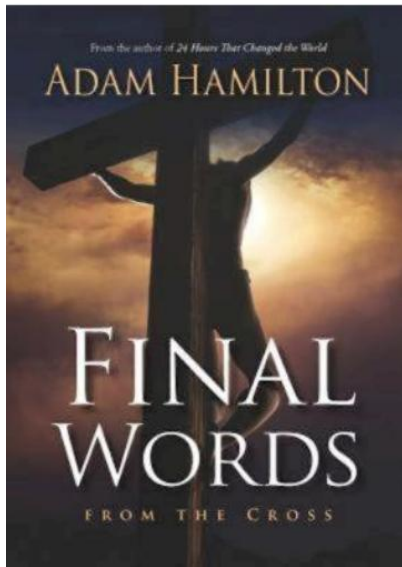


- [Canned goods](#) with ring-pulls
- Hygiene products: toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, soap, menstrual products, etc.
- Tuna and crackers
- Spices; salt and pepper
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Tea and coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Kids' snacks
- Dish Soap
- Stove-top Stuffing
- Non-perishable foods
- Bottled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

Lent 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 Lent 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

Morton Grove Community

MORTON GROVE COMMUNITY CHURCH PRESENTS

having difficult conversations

a free community workshop

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

from 7:00 to 8:30 PM

FEATURING

Dr. Elissa Foster

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

at the LOG CABIN
8237 KENTON AVENUE, SKOKIE

There are many factors that make difficult conversations... well, difficult. Thankfully, there are also many teachings and practical approaches that can help us to move into these conversations with curiosity, grace, and compassion. This workshop introduces some powerful principles and practices that can turn a dreaded conversation into an opportunity to connect more deeply with others and with our higher selves.



Elissa Foster, PhD is a tenured Professor and Faculty Fellow of the DePaul Humanities Center (2022-2024), an award that supported the completion of her first novel. She investigates the relationship between communication and health, especially difficult conversations at the beginning and at the end of life and in clinical environments. She has published over thirty academic articles, a dozen book chapters and one book, *Communicating at the End of Life* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007). She believes that the greatest gift she give to her students is confidence in their ability to make a better world

reserve your seat now!




More info

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

  @mgccpresbyterian

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:	SESSION II:
1/9: VINYASA	2/20: IYENGAR
1/16: YIN	2/27: VINYASA
1/23: HATHA	3/6: KUNDALINI
1/30: SOUND	3/13: RESTORATIVE
2/6: EFT/SOMATIC	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



Resources for Grief and Loss



Grieving loss consciously is at the center of the spiritual path. It is soul work — healthy, cleansing, and intelligent. The process allows us to metabolize the pain of loss and continue living. It lets us open to love.

By honoring what has passed away, we are free to embrace the life that is here.

Yet grief is so deeply painful, so hard to endure.

A question I am often asked is: How do I find refuge in the midst? What can help me move through the pain of separation?

to learn more [click here](#).

Prayer of the Week

Let Go

Dear God,

It's difficult to fully let go of our anxiety, or the world around us when we can't see evidence of all that you're doing – when we can't understand or see your purpose or plan. Today, we pause and remind ourselves of our dependency on you, for we know in our hearts that our circumstances and futures are touched by your hands.

Isaiah 55:8 reminds us that our thoughts are not your thoughts – and that our ways are not your ways. When we are struggling to see clearly and make decisions, we are not alone and that inner peace is something only you can supply.

So today Lord, we purposefully, even urgently, say again that we choose to believe in you. We know that it's often in the most challenging times that you are most at work. Thank you for being the one who gives us the strength to help each other and to see distinctly the choices we face. As we scan our personal horizons, we know that we also must look to you alone for the power and possibility that is our future.

We ask for your guidance so that we might walk fully in your path – a path that you have blessed. We also ask for your face to shine on us – individually, and as a team of colleagues and partners.

Please bring to fulfillment all that you have given us to do in the weeks ahead. Give us a heart of wisdom to hear your voice; and then make our footsteps firm. Please make us strong through your favor and grace.

- Offered by Greg Christopher

Central United Methodist Church

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

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Send Us An Email



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