

THE GARDEN

“...some of the seed fell on good soil” Mark 4:8

Feb. – March 2026
Newsletter

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Pastor Barbara’s Office

Hours: Available
Mondays, Wednesdays,
and Thursdays by
appointment.

Green Pond United
Methodist Church

www.greenpondumc.com

Navigating Change with Faith & Hope by Pastor Barbara

“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord... plans to give you a future with hope”

(Jeremiah 29:11).

As I prayerfully consider the changes ahead for myself and the congregation, I began to think of the many ways change has a way of finding us throughout our lives—sometimes quietly and slowly, sometimes all at once. Scripture reminds us that change is part of the rhythm of life with God. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” says the writer of Ecclesiastes. (3:1). God’s people have always lived through seasons of beginning and ending, of growth and release, of waiting and becoming.



Some changes come with excitement and anticipation; others come with challenging questions before we have clear answers. Faith does not require us to sort all our feelings out right away. The Scripture also speaks honestly about these thresholds. Again and again, God meets people not after change has come and gone, but right in the middle of it. Through the prophet Isaiah, God offers a promise for moments just like these:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine... When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:1–2). God does not promise certainty at every step, but God does promise God’s presence.

Even gentle transitions can unsettle us, but the unfamiliar can then invite reflection—what have we loved, what have we learned, and how may God be shaping us for what comes next? The deepest work of faith can come from intentionally listening for the answers to these questions. And for those times that have no answers, the Psalms remind us that all our feelings—gratitude and grief, hope and hesitation can be brought before God. “How long, O Lord?” (Psalm 13:1) is not a prayer of doubt, but of trust—the trust that God hears us and is still near.

As we look ahead, we do so grounded in a promise that has carried the church through every season:

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28). This promise does not mean that everything will be easy, but it is a reminder that God is always at work, guiding and sustaining the body of Christ.

(continued on next page)

Announcements

GPUMC FINANCE SUMMARY DECEMBER 31, 2025

	DEC. 2025
COLLECTION	
OTHER	25,910.26
INCOME	1,748.13
HOUSING	1,833.33
REIMBURSE	
EXPENSES	(21,241.38)
GAIN/(LOSS)	8,250.34
	YTD 2025
COLLECTION	199,069.96
OTHER	
INCOME	25,078.09
HOUSING	
REIMBURSE	21,999.96
EXPENSES	(261,862.47)
GAIN/(LOSS)	(15,714.46)

For now, the invitation is simple: stay rooted in prayer, remain connected to one another, and trust the One who holds the church yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Christ is the foundation, and the Spirit continues to move among us with wisdom and compassion. As we move forward through the next few months together—may we do so with open hearts, steady trust, and confidence in the God who has always been faithful and will continue to lead us into what comes next.

Staff Parish Relations Announcement—Mary Anne Constable (Chairman)

On Sunday, January 25th, the Staff Parish Relations Committee announced that Pastor Barbara will be stepping out of church ministry in June of this year for personal reasons. She will be giving her last sermon on June 14th. Green Pond UMC will be receiving a new pastor the first week of July.

We are eternally grateful for all that Pastor Barbara has done for us as a church family. She has brought us to a place where we feel we can only move forward and upward in how we minister to each other and the community. She has worked hard to create a welcome and inclusive environment here, one that we as members of this congregation will continue to support. She will be missed.

The Staff Parish Relations committee met several times throughout the month of January to discuss and plan for this upcoming transition. We also met with the District Superintendent to share our thoughts with him about what we believe this church needs from a new pastor.

We ask that you please pray for wisdom and discernment as the District Superintendent and the Conference Cabinet meet during the next few months to select a new pastor for us. If you have any questions, please reach out to a committee member: Mary Anne Constable, Raylene Frankenfield, Megan Schaeffer, Christine Backman, Teresa Smith, or Maxine Willoughby.

Lenten Bible Study—Pastor Barbara

Our Bible study for Lent will be offered Tuesdays at Noon and Thursdays at 7 PM.

This year's Lenten study will be based on Pastor Barbara's sermon series inspired by the book "The Message of Jesus" by Adam Hamilton. You may wish to order a book to follow along (available for \$12.99 at Amazon and Cokesbury.com or on Kindle for \$9.99), but the books are not required to join in this study.

More than 3 billion people claim to follow Jesus, but other than a few verses, how many truly know what he taught? In fact, much of what people think Jesus taught, he never actually said. This six-week study will provide a broad understanding of the important themes of Jesus' teaching throughout the gospels.

The first meetings will be Tuesday, February 17 at Noon and Thursday, February 19 at 7 PM at church.

Spotlight on...Celia Williams—Christy Backman

Celia was born on the beautiful Caribbean island of Dominica and grew up deeply involved in the Methodist Church, which shaped both her faith and her love of learning and led her to attend a United Methodist college in Iowa. Since then, her life and work have taken her across the United States and Canada, and now she calls Palmer Township home. She has been a part of Green Pond UMC since around 2014, and first felt connected to the church when she experienced the choir's music and spirit. She became Director of Children's Ministry in March 2025 and loves helping children grow in their faith, teaching them that they are never too young to do good. She treasures her time with the children, their wide-eyed wonder, and the stories they share.



She focuses on connecting people and fostering community, believing that God calls us to learn, serve, and grow together. Drawing on her professional experience in science and research she created *Science Saturday*, a virtual program that introduces children to chemistry through hands-on experiments. The program continues to grow and has led to her being invited to present at the American Chemical Society (ACS) Meeting in Atlanta this March, where she is also an active committee member. She also brought *Science Saturday* to Green Pond UMC for a special event, *Spice Up Your Saturday*. She leads *The Walkers Unlimited* and *The Hardback Life* book club, groups that connect people through shared interests, including members of the church, and the broader community. Celia shares her love of learning as an adjunct professor in the College of Business at Lehigh University and through *The STEM Track, LLC*, which she founded to provide STEM education. She is grateful for the constant support of her family members, who encourage her ministry, service, and commitment to helping others.

Celia enjoys gardening, hiking (her favorite spot is Jacobsburg State Park), listening to music, photography, playing tennis, and reading, especially mysteries, historical stories, and inspiring biographies. She draws inspiration from Psalm 121, which guides her work and ministry. She feels blessed to share her talents, energy, and love of learning with the children, families, and community at Green Pond UMC, and we are grateful for the gifts she brings to our church family.

Educational Assistance Articles—Alex Konya

Attention Graduating High School Seniors

If you are a graduating high school senior and an active member of the church, you may apply for the Jack H. LaFever Memorial Achievement Award. Jack was a life-long member of First UMC who died in a car accident in 1986, at the age of 23. An applicant for this Award must be an active church member. Selection is based on church and community service, scholastic achievement and extracurricular activities. You do not have to be considering post high school education to be eligible for the Award. Applications may be picked up in the church office or from Alex Konya (alexander.s.konya@lmco.com) and must be returned to the church office no later than **Friday, May 1st, 2026**.

Attention Post High School Students

Church members planning to enroll or continue in college, vocational or technical school, or those who are currently enrolled, and need help with the cost of furthering their education, should apply for an interest-free loan from the church's Educational Assistance Fund. Loans are based on the availability of funds and must be repaid in full. An applicant for this loan must be an active church member. Applications may be picked up in the church office or from Alex Konya (alexander.s.konya@lmco.com) and must be returned to the church office no later than **Friday, May 1st, 2026**.

A Lenten Journey for Children & Youth



Lent is a special season to prepare our hearts for Easter, and it begins this year on Ash Wednesday, February 18. For 40 days, **we will follow Jesus' example by praying, fasting, and making small sacrifices** as we reflect on His love and faithfulness. During this season, we are invited to practice **repentance** by saying sorry for our wrong choices, **reflection** by thinking about Jesus and how we can follow Him, and **renewal** by growing in kindness, faith, and good habits. Lent is a time to slow down, remember Jesus' journey, and consider how our daily choices can help us grow closer to God at home, at church, and in our communities.

During this season, here are some ways you can explore Lent:

- **Acts of Kindness / Small Sacrifices:** Help someone at home or a neighbor, share a smile, or give up a small treat.
- **Family Conversations / Prayer:** Ask your family what Lent means to them, share your thoughts, and say a short prayer together.
- **Creative Time / Reflection:** Draw, color, or make something that reminds you of God's love.

Can you figure out these words and phrases that remind us of Lent?

1. **SCROS** – A symbol of Jesus' love and sacrifice
2. **DAWESNHADSYE** – The day Lent begins each year
3. **SIGNFTA** – Christians often do this during Lent to grow closer to God
4. **YRAP** – Something we do to talk to God during Lent
5. **FIESCRACI** – Lent invites us to practice this by giving something up

As we begin this journey, remember Psalm 51:10 –12 (New Oxford Annotated Bible):

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit."