



Pilgrim Church



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

From the Desk of Pastor John

When it comes to healthy relationships, transparent communication is vital. This is true for all relationships, from personal, intimate relationships to professional relationships. Whether information is good or bad, communicating it clearly, honestly, and thoroughly allows for informed decision-making, future risk mitigation, and responsible use of resources. In contrast, withholding or misrepresenting information can be toxic to relationships. Not only does it increase the risk of poor decision-making and the risk of something going wrong, it builds distrust.

Distrust is never a good thing. A sensible person thinks twice before building an authentic relationship with someone they feel they cannot trust. No one wants to give of their time, energy, and

resources if they cannot trust that those gifts will be respected, valued, and managed faithfully. You may have found yourself in a relationship like that in the past. I'm sure you set boundaries to protect yourself: refused to lend them money over concerns of how it might be spent, avoided telling them anything in confidence, or treated their words with skepticism so you would not end up looking like a fool for believing them.

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

Ephesians 4:25

(Continued on page 2)

February 2024 Newsletter

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*No matter who you are,
or where you are
on life's journey,
you are welcome here!*

Transparent communication – honest, upfront communication – is always the best option, even when the information needed to be shared isn't good.

It is sometimes hard to be straightforward and honest with information, I know. One never knows how the truth will be taken, especially if it's not-so-good news. Transparent communication also comes with vulnerability and accountability; someone may be critical of decisions made or how resources were handled. There may be uncomfortable questions that must be answered. But, in order to have healthy, collaborative, and productive relationships built on trust and mutual respect, transparent communication is essential. This is true in our personal relationships, professional relationships, and in our church.

As we move into 2024, it is important to have transparent communication between the congregation, church leadership, and me. To have a healthy congregation, we must all participate in communication. Therefore, not only am I recommitting myself to being transparent about my ministry here at Pilgrim, I will also be collaborating with Council and Finance to ensure that you, the congregation, have full access to transparent reports so that you may be fully aware of decisions made and our church's financial health.

That being said, you, as a member of the congregation, have a responsibility to participate as well. I strongly encourage you to be engaged. Just coming to worship isn't going to cut it, if we are going to be a healthy, collaborative, and effective congregation. Get involved and ask questions. Come to meetings. Ask questions. Engage with your elected church leaders and get to know them. Ask questions. Fellowship with one another.

Did I mention asking questions?

God has called us to be Pilgrim United Church of Christ; He has knitted us together to be in relationship with each other as part of Christ's body. We must do our part. We must be engaged, work together, and, most importantly, communicate clearly and precisely with one another regarding the health and ministry of the church as we strive to grow as disciples, build sacred community, and carry out our mission of loving one another and serving Jesus.

Blessings, Pastor John

Pilgrim United Church of Christ

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Cheryl Huber

Pianist:
Maverick Li

Children's Ministry Director:
Jessica Warne

Bell Choir Director:
Russ Whittaker

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Learning Center
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Business

Council Highlights

January Council meeting highlights:

- Fresh Altar Flowers have returned to worship! Call the church office to schedule your special Sunday. One arrangement is \$40, two are \$70.
- Pilgrim is HOME and it feels AMAZING! Things are a bit dusty and there is a bit of an echo, but it's home.
- We have had several impromptu meetings with our contractor (8:18) to discuss we are with the Community Center and getting caught up with invoicing. We are currently on hold due to slow release of insurance funds. Once released, we will be finishing the focus on the Community Center.
- We have reached out to several attorneys, both here in Florida and in Texas, to provide guidance on our next steps dealing with the abandonment from our previous contractor and how to collect back those funds we lost.
- One of our Council members has joined forces with our Property and Grounds Committee to discuss work on the sanctuary with a public adjuster. We want to have as much information on what will be needed, and the costs associated with them, as we can while we continue our discussions with our insurance company.
- A member of Council stepped forward to pay the costs of getting our golf cart up and running again. Thank you to you and the Property and Grounds Committee for taking care of this.
- If you are curious what Council, Finance, or any other Mission that meets – come check them out. You all have a voice and impact on our church and its future. You all have gifts that are seen by others, but sometimes go unused; and we want to see them used! Please stop in, fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. (new time) in the Church Library.

Printer Ink Cartridges

Pilgrim Church may recycle up to 20 used cartridges per month of any used ink or toner cartridge and receive \$2 back in recycling rewards per cartridge. We collect your used ink cartridges and deliver them monthly to Staples for our credit.

Name Badges

The Season of Lent through Easter worship, brings us many new faces. Do you know where your Pilgrim name badge is? We are placing an order on February 29. Let us know if you need a replacement name badge. Cost is \$10, the badges will be ready before Holy Week.



Lent

What is the purpose of celebrating Lent?

Lent is a 40-day period starting on Ash Wednesday (February 14, 2024) and ending on Easter (March 31, 2024), during which Christians prepare their hearts for Easter, and draw near to God through the practices of prayer, fasting, and giving.

If you count the days on a calendar you see there's 46 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, that's 6 Sundays. All Sundays *throughout the entire year* are considered "little Easters" and are meant to be days of celebration.

Together, these three pillars of Lent help us draw closer to God, which is the true purpose of the Lenten season.

Jesus in the desert for 40 days

Moses on Mount Sinai for 40 days

the 40 days of Lent are a physical reminder to draw near to God.

Ash Wednesday

Traditionally Ash Wednesday is a time to consider the reality of sin in our lives, our failures to live up to the promise of the image of God. Psalm 51, known as the classic "Penitential Psalm", is used to give voice to our sorrow for sin and to our hope for forgiveness. Join us for worship on Wednesday, February 14 at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Center. Doors will open at 6:01 p.m. for any early arrivers.

Holy Week

More details on these special days in the March 2024 newsletter.

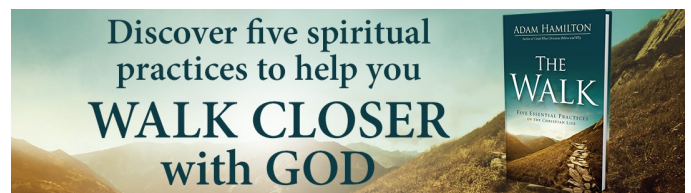
Palm/Passion Sunday (Sixth Sunday of Lent)

Maundy Thursday

Good Friday

Easter Day

Lent Bible Study



All Pilgrims and friends are welcome at Pastor John's Lent Bible Study. This year he will cover "The Walk" on Wednesdays, starting February 21 at noon and 6:30 p.m. in the Library. Join us for this special time growing closer to God in this time of fellowship and study.

Examine five essential spiritual practices rooted in Jesus' own walk with God. How do we walk with Christ—daily follow him, grow in him, and faithfully serve him?

In the Gospels, Jesus modeled for us the Christian spiritual life. The apostles taught it in their writings. And the Church has, through the last 2,000 years, sought to pursue this Christian spiritual life.

In *The Walk*, Adam Hamilton focuses on five essential spiritual practices that are rooted in Jesus' own walk with God and taught throughout the New Testament. Each of these practices is intended as part of our daily walk with Christ while also being an essential part of growing together in the church.

Deepen your walk with Christ as we explore the five essential practices of worship, study, serving, giving, and bearing witness to our faith.

Sign up today. A great resources the study book will be available, but not necessary for this study. There is a \$14 suggested donation to cover the cost. Pastor John will be presenting this class along with Adam Hamilton's video guide.

Lectionary Readings

In preparation for Worship read ahead and ponder! Just note, while Pastor John typically follows the lectionary, there are times the Spirit moves him to cover different passages in his Sunday sermons.

Advent Year B	First reading	Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
<u>Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany</u> February 4, 2024	<u>Isaiah 40:21-31</u>	<u>Psalm 147:1-11, 20c</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 9:16-23</u>	<u>Mark 1:29-39</u>
<u>Transfiguration Sunday</u> February 11, 2024	<u>2 Kings 2:1-12</u>	<u>Psalm 50:1-6</u>	<u>2 Corinthians 4:3-6</u>	<u>Mark 9:2-9</u>
<u>Ash Wednesday</u> February 14, 2024	<u>Joel 2:1-2, 12-17</u> or <u>Isaiah 58:1-12</u>	<u>Psalm 51:1-17</u>	<u>2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10</u>	<u>Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21</u>
<u>First Sunday in Lent</u> February 18, 2024	<u>Genesis 9:8-17</u>	<u>Psalm 25:1-10</u>	<u>1 Peter 3:18-22</u>	<u>Mark 1:9-15</u>
<u>Second Sunday in Lent</u> February 25, 2024	<u>Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16</u>	<u>Psalm 22:23-31</u>	<u>Romans 4:13-25</u>	<u>Mark 8:31-38</u> or <u>Mark 9:2-9</u>

Daily Challenge to Pray Fast Give

Pick one idea from each list each morning and make it a goal to complete that sacrifice or prayer by bedtime.

PRAY

- Pray for the lost sheep.
- Pray for those weary.
- Prayer for those homeless, jobless.
- Pray for the sick and medical teams.
- Pray for the caregivers.
- Pray for the depressed.
- Pray for the hungry.
- Pray for the imprisoned.
- Pray for the persecuted.
- Pray for the Pastors John and Ken.
- Pray for the children in Foster Care.
- Pray for the scared.
- Pray for the world leaders.
- Pray for your best friend.
- Pray for the lonely.
- Pray for the first responders.
- Pray for the school staff.
- Pray for the volunteers at Pilgrim.
- Pray for the depressed.
- Pray for your relationship with Jesus.

FAST

- Fast from social media.
- Fast from snacking between meals.
- Fast from TV.
- East a simple meal today.
- Fast from procrastination.
- Fast from sweets.
- Don't complain.
- Fast from music.
- Drink only water today, avoid sodas.
- Go last in line.
- Say only kind words.
- Fast from anger.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Spend an hour in silence.
- Fast from jealousy.
- Fast from gossip.
- Fast from junk food.
- Fast from screen time.
- Fast from shopping.
- Fast from tablet/phone apps.

GIVE

- Donate one item of clothing.
- Send a card to someone on the prayer list.
- Donate a book.
- Share a joke.
- Love your neighbor.
- Direct others to have a turn first.
- Write a kind note to someone.
- Collect change for a charity.
- Order flowers for a Sunday morning .
- Donate to the Little Food Pantry.
- Offer an hour to assist in your neighborhood or community.
- Send a text with a Bible verse.
- Donate time to Habitat build or other mission project.
- Offer a sincere compliment.
- Pick up some jam for PBJ Ministry.
- Do something to help the Earth.
- Offer compassion to a stranger.
- Tell someone you love them.



Ministry & Outreach

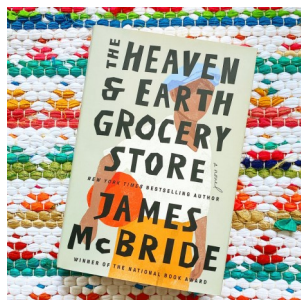
Women's Fellowship

The February Fellowship will meet in the Church Library on Thursday, February 15, at 10:00 a.m.. Please enter and check in at the Joyful Noise Office to comply with DCF regulations.

In the Spirit of the Valentine season, the group will review the Seasons of Our Lives and pinpoint examples of God's love and guidance as we have experienced life. The activity of the meeting will be to prioritize service and fund-raising projects to be accomplished through the Spring.

Consider this announcement as a nudge to extend yourself into the life of the Church's mission in one avenue of service. You will be welcomed by the group and receive blessings from meeting with a small group of like-minded women. We conclude our meeting time at a nearby restaurant where we share lunch together.

Make sure your calendar is marked for 6:00 p.m. on Monday, February 5, for Book Club discussion and dinner at the home of Betsy Field. The book to be reviewed is *"The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store"* by James McBride.



Prayer Partners

Weekly phone conference prayer meetings are held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesdays. To join, call Jacque at 941-258-2597.

PBJ Sandwich Makers

Gather Thursday, February, January 15, at 9:15 a.m. in Room 4 of the Community Center! Remember to check in at Joyful Noise Learning Center to meet their DCF regulations. Goal 200 sandwiches for the homeless.

Funeral/Memorial Service Planning Guide and Worksheet

There is perhaps no time when we most feel the need for God's grace and comfort than when we experience the loss of a loved one. In the first days following a loved one's death, the family makes an average of 200 decisions. During such an emotional, stressful and demanding time, plans that have been made in advance offer peace and help lighten the load after death. If you've not made advance plans, this guide will be helpful to you as you make arrangements for services and burial.

Guides are available in the church office and on the hospitality desk.

Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3

Joyful Noise Learning Center

February is the month we celebrate love. Love of God, love of family, love of friends, and love of all of God's creations. Joyful Noise staff will share books, songs, and activities all about love. We will have parties on Valentine's Day to help show the love we have for each other at school.

We anticipate the Early Learning Coalition to come at any time to visit each VPK classroom and conduct the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) Monitor. This is done each year and assesses how the teachers interact with the students and "grades" each classroom. These grades go towards the School Readiness Rate which is used by the Department of Education to grade our school.

Joyful Noise will end the month by having our Spring/Easter pictures taken by Lucky Lady Photography.

Cynthia Poudrette, Director Joyful Noise

Adult Bible Study

Sundays at 10:15 a.m.

Back in our original meeting space of the Church Library, this group is studying Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church. We meet immediately after Sunday worship and spend an hour in God's Word and especially to its application in our lives. Each lesson stands alone making it easy for you to join the class as you are able. All are welcome.



Missions

Everyone interested in the Missions and Outreach of Pilgrim Church are invited Monday, February 12, at 7:00 p.m. to our meeting in the Conference Room.

February Mission of the Month: Back Pack Kidz

The Yah Yah Girls, Inc., learned there was a serious problem in our own Charlotte County: some children on free and reduced lunch at school left school on Friday and received little to no food until they returned to school on Monday morning. Back Pack Kidz was formed and now volunteers meet weekly to prepare and fill backpacks for distribution to the area elementary schools. Run by our own Jolene Mowry, we support financially every year!

Habitat House Apostles Build 2024

Pilgrim Church has partnered with 10 local churches to provide financial support and labor to build one house each year. We need twelve painters to work on this special home. Sign up to serve on Saturday, March 9!

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' - Matthew 25:35-40

Respectfully Submitted, Pastor Ken

Al Anon

Tuesdays 10:00 a.m.

Pilgrim Church Conference Room

Al-Anon is a worldwide fellowship that offers a program of recovery for the families and friends of alcoholics, whether or not the alcoholic recognizes the existence of a drinking problem or seeks help. Members give and receive comfort and understanding through a mutual exchange of experience, strength, and hope. Sharing of similar problems binds individuals and groups together in a bond that is protected by a tradition of anonymity.

Learn and Grow

Word Find

G	R	E	A	T	I	P	U	T	A	M	T	O
I	N	I	N	T	H	E	V	Y	N	A	O	A
F	S	S	H	I	S	O	G	O	D	J	O	Y
I	D	R	A	W	V	P	R	U	L	O	V	E
R	R	W	V	E	D	L	I	G	H	T	H	A
S	A	S	E	E	N	E	O	U	R	R	I	W
T	W	T	R	U	S	T	D	T	R	U	S	Y
W	A	Y	U	T	H	E	A	N	D	T	H	E
I	N	T	H	N	E	A	R	H	A	H	D	J
L	D	T	H	E	T	O	K	A	G	O	D	O
L	R	D	N	A	N	D	N	V	J	O	Y	H
L	A	L	H	R	H	E	E	E	J	O	H	N
O	W	L	A	I	F	E	S	I	A	N	D	N
V	L	I	V	I	N	G	S	N	M	T	A	E
E	N	F	E	N	L	O	V	E	E	R	N	A
A	E	E	W	I	L	L	H	I	S	U	D	R
R	L	I	G	H	T	M	A	T	T	H	E	W
H	A	P	V	A	L	E	N	T	I	N	E	S

Draw
Near
To
God
And
He
Will
Draw
Near
To
You
James (4:8)
And
The
People

Living
In
Darkness
Have
Seen
A
Great
Light
Matthew (4:15)
I
Am
The
Way
The
Truth

And
The
Life
John (14:6)
And
We
Have
Put
Our
Trust
In
His
Love.
First
John (4:16)

Lent Did You Know?

The Teutonic word Lent, which we employ to denote the forty days' fast preceding Easter, originally meant no more than the spring season.

Ash for Ash Wednesday is made by burning the palms that were used during the previous Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, where people waved palm branches to welcome him. These palm branches are collected and blessed during Palm Sunday, and then they are burned to create the ashes used for Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. The ashes are applied to the forehead in the shape of a cross as a sign of repentance and mortality. In the early days of the church, pastors did not dip their thumbs into the ashes to draw the shape of a cross on your forehead. Instead, they poured or sprinkled ashes over your head.

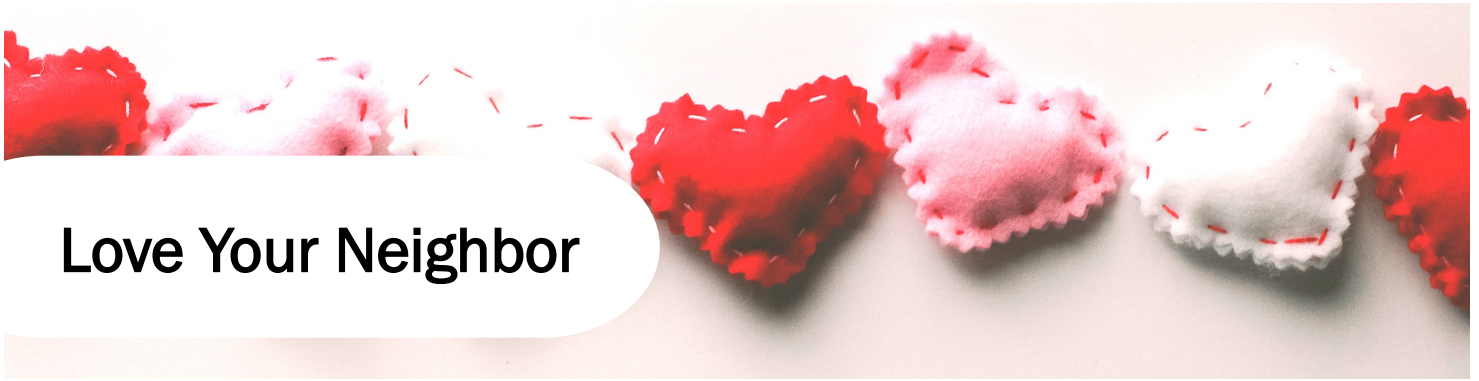
Many people give something up for Lent like chocolate, social media, shopping, or a bad habit. Penance can be expressed in many and various ways but above all in fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

According to legend, a 7th century monk made bread from flour, water, and salt—no eggs or milk because they were avoided during Lent. He then formed it into the shape of a common prayer pose of the day: hands on opposite shoulders. Turn a pretzel upside down to see the pose.

Lent last 40 days to represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, tempted by Satan. Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. (Matthew 4:1-2, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-2)

Catholics started the tradition of Lent around the year 325, during the Council of Nicea, but it has spread through other Christian denominations.

Violet is the official color of Lent, as this represents mourning for Jesus dying on the cross while also celebrating his resurrection with the colors of royalty.



Love Your Neighbor

February Birthdays

3	Dave Wheatcroft
10	Randy Blanchard
10	John Krueger
11	Bob McWhirter
12	Jane Beaudreau
15	John Sweatt
17	Kevin Beaver
18	Carol Veigel

February Anniversaries

18	John & Jo Sweatt
21	John & Savinia Krueger
22	David & Sandy Wheatcroft
23	Joe & Jane Beaudreau

Did we miss your special date? Please call or email the office, so we may update the records.

February Ideas to Love Your Neighbors

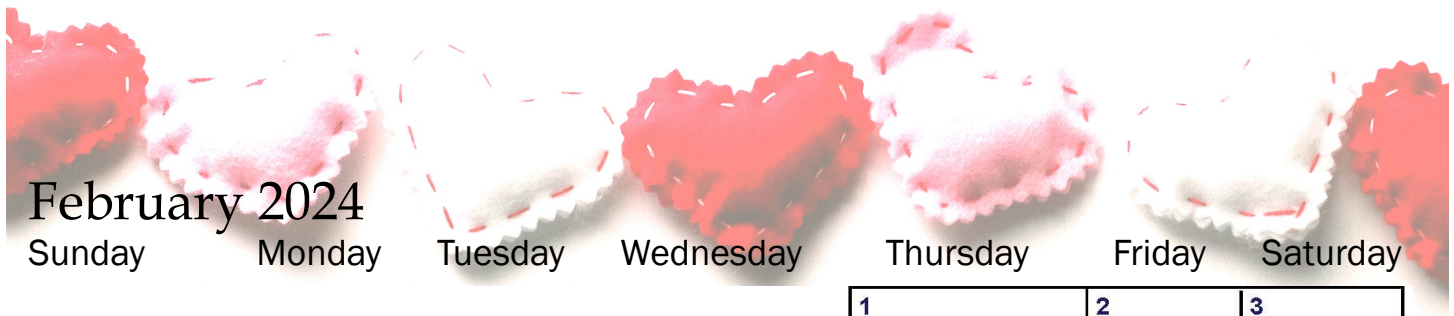
- ♥ Love your neighbor: National Acts of Random Kindness Day, Saturday, February 17
- ♥ Love your neighbor: pray for them
- ♥ Love your neighbor: send a card
- ♥ Love your neighbor: call the Pilgrim you haven't seen in a few Sundays
- ♥ Love your neighbor: remember birthdays
- ♥ Love your neighbor: leave a treat for your postal worker
- ♥ Love your neighbor: offer a bottle of water to someone working outside
- ♥ Love your neighbor: wave and say hello
- ♥ Love your neighbor: invite a friend to the Lenten Bible Study with Pastor John.

Pilgrim Prayer List

Hurricane Recovery Ian/Idalia
Savina Krueger - cancer
John Krueger - Parkinson's
Lorraine O'Keefe - cancer
Russ Whittaker - health
Sidoney Johnston - homebound
Bill Wolf - Sandhill
Gayle Bratton - PC Rehab
Joe Beaudreau - health
Bert Scott - homebound

Carter & family - peace
Michael Mitchell - health
Cheri Perry - Alzheimer's
Judy Michaels - health
Valerie Forge
Betty Dickey - health
Laurie Farrell - health
Gene Rice - stroke
Pat Wheatcroft - cancer
Rick Perry - caregiver

Judi Wilson - pneumonia
Fred Ripley - health
Sharon Rendon - grief
Martin Heckler - cancer
Mark Schantz - health
Zach Foster - health
Gene Burnell - health
Rita Hancock - grief
Lytisha Jackson - health



February 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	2	3
4 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 10:00am Adult Bible Study 10:15am Youth Bible Study	5	6 10:00am AI Anon 2:00pm Prayer Shawl Ministry	7 10:00am Prayer Partners	8 6:30pm Property and Grounds Ministry 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	9	10
11 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 10:00am Adult Bible Study 10:15am Youth Bible Study	12 7:00pm Missions Meeting	13 10:00am AI Anon	14 Ash Wednesday Newsletter Article Deadline Valentine's Day 10:00am Prayer Partners 6:30pm Ash Wednesday Service	15 9:15am PBJ Sandwich Makers 10:00am Pilgrim Women's Fellowship 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	16	17
18 1st Sunday in Lent 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 10:00am Adult Bible Study 10:15am Youth Bible Study	19 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting	20 Prayer Shawl Ministry 10:00am AI Anon	21 10:00am Prayer Partners 12:00pm Lent Bible Study 6:30pm Lent Bible Study	22 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	23	24
25 2nd Sunday in Lent 8:00am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Worship 10:00am Adult Bible Study 10:15am Youth Bible Study	26	27 10:00am AI Anon 7:00pm Council Meeting	28 JN Picture Day 10:00am Prayer Partners 12:00pm Lent Bible Study 6:30pm Lent Bible Study	29 JN Picture Day 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous		



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