

# Glad Tidings

*First Congregational Church of West  
Brookfield  
United Church of Christ  
March 2026*

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West Brookfield, UCC



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## From Our Pastor

Dear Friends,

By the time this edition of Glad Tidings reaches you, we will be almost two weeks into the season of Lent on the Christian calendar—perhaps the most intensely serious season in the Christian year, beginning with Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday sets the tone for Lent, demanding a deep self-examination that can easily intimidate the most faithful of those who strive to journey through life as disciples of Jesus.

Throughout Lent, writes Rev. Peter Marty in *The Christian Century*, we're asked to quit acting as imposters in our own lives, to level with God about all that is not right within us. Vulnerabilities are laid in the lap of God. Sins get stared straight in the face. It's all rather uncomfortable." It is indeed—but Rev. Marty reminds us that, if we are listening, there is another message that we hear in Lent. "The heartwarming news of this [season] is ... this: We get to freely confess our sin without fear of reprisal. Let's remember, we don't confess in order to be forgiven. We confess because we're already forgiven, already assured that the love of God for us in Christ Jesus is no mistake.

In my growing up years the only way I ever heard that a Christian could observe a holy Lent was to "give up something for Lent." The idea was that we would make a sacrifice of some sort in remembrance of the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf by giving his life for all God's children on the cross. "Observing a Lenten discipline," as it's often called, can take a variety of forms in contemporary Christian life. Fasting, praying, studying, tithing, and service have all become traditional practices for the 40 days leading to Easter. Each of these, and all of these, can help prepare us for new and resurrected life. Taking Lent seriously can change us, and I heartily encourage us to give it a try this year.

Not sure which one or more of these practices to adopt? We might turn to the litany we used in the service of ashes we shared in after our regular worship on Sunday, February 22. If you didn't keep the bulletin insert from that morning, here's the litany:

*Pastor: Let us pray together, preparing for the journey to the cross that lies ahead.*

*All: We have chosen to fast: Not with ashes but with actions;  
Not with sackcloth but in sharing; Not in thoughts but in deeds.  
We will give up our abundance--to share our food with the hungry.  
We will give up our comfort--to provide homes for the destitute  
We will give up our fashions--to see the naked clothed  
We will share where others hoard; We will free where others  
oppress; We will heal where others harm.*

*Then God's light will break out on us; God's healing will quickly  
appear; God will guide us always; God's righteousness will go  
before us; We will find our joy in walking in the ways of Jesus.  
We will be like a well-watered garden; We will be called repairers of  
broken walls; Together we will feast at God's banquet table. Amen.*

Wishing each one of us in this community of faith a blessed, and focused, journey of discipleship, in this Lenten season.

Grace and peace,

Doug



## Dismas Farm Dinner

Dinner will be at the church  
**Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 6.00 PM.**

Please email Deanna or Angela with whatever you would like to bring!  
Thank you for your help!

### **Dismas Volunteers:**

Deanna Randall - 413-436-7849 or [drandall444@comcast.net](mailto:drandall444@comcast.net)

Millie Gushue - 413-436-7125;  
or [gushoo@comcast.net](mailto:gushoo@comcast.net)

Angela Carville - 508-347-1148 or [angelacarville67@gmail.com](mailto:angelacarville67@gmail.com)



## *Lent*

*Last week, Christians around the world began the Lenten Season with Ash Wednesday services and observations. The forty days of Lent (46 days inclusive of Sundays) run from February 18, 2026, to Holy Thursday, April 2, 2026. This year, the Lenten season coincides with Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which begins the evening of February 17, 2026, and ends on March 19, 2026. These are High Holy days for both traditions, a time for strengthening faith through self-reflection, fasting, and observance of other spiritual disciplines. This is a time of transformation focused on generosity, kindness and love with the expectation of deeper relationship with God. These focal points are accompanied by the call to action and justice.*

*Rev. Dr. Georgia A. Thompson*

**Please be sure to read our weekly email announcements to keep up on dates and times for our Lenten and Easter services.**

## New Deacons!

As Karen Murphy mentioned in last month's note, the Board of Deacons are happy to welcome Linda Daskowski, Debbie Decoste and Deanna Randall to the board this year. They join Pat Jackman, Chris Showalter and Nancy Arsenault in serving our church. I have also returned to the board after a 5 year hiatus! Together, under Pastor's Doug's guidance, we plan to continue to assist in bringing everyone meaningful Sunday morning services. If you have any comments or questions regarding Sunday worship, please don't hesitate to speak to a deacon.

Terry Hall  
Deacon Chair





We don't know about you, but we've had our fill of snow this season. Here's hoping spring decides to show up soon.

Our annual meeting was a wonderful time of fellowship with our church family. The 2026 budget was unanimously approved, and we're excited about several renovations and repairs planned for this year—including creating a dedicated meeting room for our boards and committees.

*A quick reminder:* on Sundays, we ask that you respect our time of worship by writing any non-urgent concerns in the notebook located in the Parish Board mailbox. Of course, true emergencies are an exception. Parish Board members can also be reached by phone or email, and their contact information is listed in the church directory.

Parish: Juan Bacigalupi, Karen Murphy, Dave Stelzer (handyman)  
Wally Hall, Mike Murphy & Doug Showalter (assistants)



**SUNDAY, MARCH 8TH**

## Open and Affirming Panel Discussion

On Sunday, February 1st, our church came together following our morning service to hear our Open and Affirming Committee (ONA) share their personal thoughts about the importance of our church becoming an ONA church. The floor was open for questions and many in attendance shared their hopes and concerns. It was explained that the next steps after this meeting would include continuing our education on how to live out our welcoming commitment and that we would soon schedule a date for a special meeting where a vote would be taken regarding our ONA status. It was noted that the vote will need to be more than just a “majority” but should be a very high percentage of the members voting. This meeting was followed up at the annual meeting (2/15) by a straw poll (non-binding vote) to see where we stood regarding our possible future ONA status. Prior to the straw poll, the proposed ONA covenant was shared and read aloud. Of the 30 members in attendance, 29 raised their hands in favor of becoming an ONA church. It should be noted that if/when our congregation adopts such a covenant by a strong vote, that covenant will then be submitted to our UCC for our church to be designated as one of its ONA churches.

The committee is grateful for the support they have received from the congregation and will continue to ponder, listen and share as ideas arise. Please watch this newsletter for future updates!

Your ONA Committee

Doug Showalter, Angela Carville, Stephanie Beland, Pat Jackman, Karen Murphy, Pastor Doug, Beverly Prestwood-Taylor and Terry Hall



## 2026 Annual Meeting and 2025 Annual Report

Copies of our 2025 Annual Report were emailed out on February 5th to all. Paper copies are available near the mailboxes in the Fellowship Hall. Please be sure to take a copy for your reference.

Why is the annual report important?

The report gives a summary of all of the work each board, committee and group in the church has done for the prior year! You can read and see all the good you and your church are doing in our church, community and the world. In addition, the annual report lays out the proposed financial budget that the Parish Board and our church treasurer have put together for the upcoming year. Your donations at work! Add to that – the Nominating Board lists all of the members of each board, committee, officer and those who volunteer to keep everything humming in the church. Have a question about something? Pull out the annual report and look up the names of people you should ask. In summary, the annual report is a valuable resource for all of us!

Our annual meeting opened on February 15th after enjoying a delicious lunch offered by Jaclyn and Eric von Bleicken. Our thanks to them and to those of you who provided the delicious desserts. The meeting was attended by 30 members (28 in person and 2 on Zoom) and opened at 11:45 am. Business was conducted, thanks were given to outgoing volunteers and necessary votes were taken. The meeting concluded at 1:15 pm. Thanks to all who attended, to the Parish Board and to all who organize the details to bring this meeting to us each year. It is appreciated!

Terry Hall  
Church Clerk

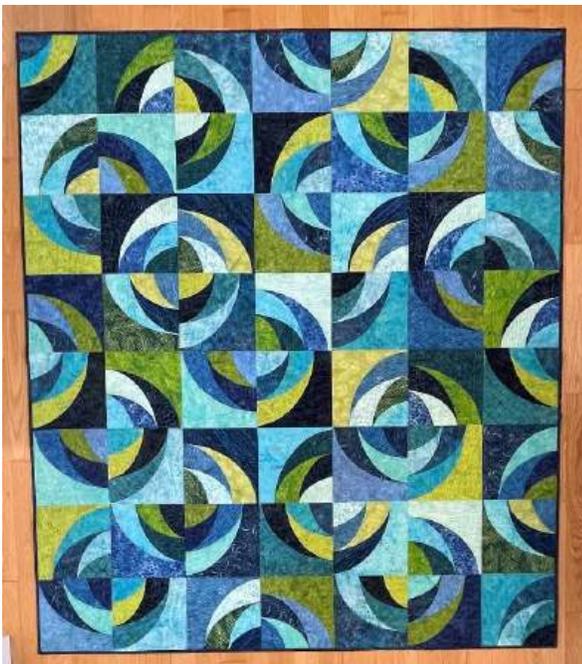




This year's annual quilt raffle will be for a beautiful quilt made by Mary Deotte called "Blue Onion". It is approximately 68" x 78", made entirely from gorgeous batik fabrics. Tickets will be sold for \$5 each or 3/\$10. All proceeds will be added to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. This fund helps folks in our community with specific needs such as help with their car, help with heating oil, help with temporary housing, etc.

Let's all support this important fundraiser -  
we can make a big difference in someone's life when we work together.  
Please see Dee Blanton or Karen Murphy for tickets.

And THANK YOU!





Pat Jackman – 3/13  
Dee Blanton – 3/16  
Wyatt St. Germain – 3/20  
Juan Bacigalupi – 3/28  
Bev Anderson – 3/31

Al & Deanna Randall – 3/4

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHURCH OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Moderator: Dee Blanton – [deebanton86@gmail.com](mailto:deebanton86@gmail.com)  
Deacon Chair: Terry Hall – [terryle56@yahoo.com](mailto:terryle56@yahoo.com)  
Parish Board: Karen Murphy – [kmurphy718@charter.net](mailto:kmurphy718@charter.net)  
Treasurer – Mary Deotte – [hombai@yahoo.com](mailto:hombai@yahoo.com)  
Collector: Deanna Randall – [drandall444@comcast.net](mailto:drandall444@comcast.net)  
Clerk: Terry Hall – [terryle56@yahoo.com](mailto:terryle56@yahoo.com)  
Church Phone: 508-867-7078

#### From Our Church Office

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Doug Williamson – 913-387-9974 – [djwnscaa@gmail.com](mailto:djwnscaa@gmail.com)  
Office Hours- Wednesday by appointment & Friday 9:30am – 12:00, 1:00 – 2:00pm

Church Secretary – Bonni Holmes – [fccwbworship@gmail.com](mailto:fccwbworship@gmail.com)  
Office Hours – Friday 8 am – 10 am

**Please note** – The *Glad Tidings* deadline for March is Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>

#### SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Website: [westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org](http://westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org)  
Facebook: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC  
Instagram: Search @firstcongowestbrookfield



*love of God to all people.*

**Our Mission and Vision Statement:** *We are a church where all are welcome to worship together, to share in fellowship and to grow spiritually in our journey with Christ. We value justice, diversity, and freedom of expression. We strive to serve our community and all God's creation and to spread the*

# MARCH 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>1 Worship 10 am</p> <p>Coffee &amp; Fellowship</p> <p>Parish Board</p>	2	3	<p>4 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am</p>	<p>5 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm</p>	<p>6 Open &amp; Affirming Committee</p>	7
<p>8 Worship 10 am</p> <p>Sunday School</p> <p>Coffee &amp; Fellowship</p> <p>Deacons</p>	9	<p>10 Dismas Farm Potluck dinner at the church 6pm</p>	<p>11 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am</p>	<p>12 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm</p>	13	14
<p>15 Worship 10 am</p> <p>Coffee &amp; Fellowship</p> <p>Church Council</p>	16	<p>17 </p>	<p>18 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am</p>	<p>19 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm</p>	20	21
<p>22 Worship 10 am</p> <p>Sunday School</p> <p>Coffee &amp; Fellowship</p> <p>Julie Olmstead</p>	<p>23 <i>Glad Tidings Deadline</i></p>	24	<p>25 Sharing Cupboard 10 – 11:30 am</p>	<p>26 Sharing Cupboard 7 – 8 pm</p>	27	28
<p>29 Worship 10 am</p> <p>Coffee &amp; Fellowship</p> <p></p>	30	31		<p></p>	<p></p>	



- Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> - Palm Sunday - 10 am
- Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> - Maundy Thursday - 7pm
  - Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> - Good Friday - TBA
- Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> - Easter Sunday - 10am

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