



The First Word

March 2026

First United Methodist Church, Racine

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Dear Church Family,

If you've driven through Racine lately—whether along Main Street, around the construction zones near Memorial Drive, or past the lakefront when roads narrow for winter repairs—you know that detour signs are part of life. We do not usually welcome them. They interrupt our routines. They add time to a trip we thought would be simple. **They force us to slow down and pay attention.**

In the life of the Church, we have a name for a forty-day detour: Lent. For many years, I thought of Lent mainly as a season of "giving something up." It felt like a spiritual test of discipline. But over time, I have come to see it differently. Lent is not about proving ourselves to God. It is about making room for God.

In Scripture, the wilderness was not a punishment zone. It was a meeting place. Israel encountered God there. Elijah heard the still, small voice there. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness not to be abandoned, but to be prepared. The wilderness strips away distractions so we can hear what truly matters.

When you are on a detour, you have to decide what you really need in the car and what is simply weighing you down. Lent invites us to ask similar questions of our souls. What might we gently lay aside during these weeks?

The Detour Checklist: What to Leave Behind & What to Carry

To help you navigate this "in-between" season, here are two ways to approach the road ahead:

1. What to "Leave at the Curb" (Subtraction) This isn't about being "extra holy"—it's about clearing space.

The Digital Fast: Try turning off your phone an hour before bed. What could you do with that quiet hour?

The Complaint Fast: Catch yourself before you grumble about the March slush or the traffic. Replace it with a quick "thank you" for something small.

The Clutter Fast: Find items in your house you don't need and donate them. Clear the physical space to clear the mental space.

2. What to "Pack for the Trip" (Addition)

Sometimes the best way to grow is to add a new, life-giving habit.

The Encouragement Text: Every morning, text one person in our church family or your neighborhood just to say, "I'm thinking of you."

The Five-Minute Sit: Before you turn on the radio or the TV, just sit in silence for five minutes. Ask God, "What do You want me to notice today?"

The Open Table: Invite someone you haven't talked to in a while to grab a tea or a coffee. The wilderness is where the transformation happens. Jesus didn't go into the desert to be lonely; He went to be prepared. So, if the path feels a little winding this month, don't worry. You aren't lost.

You're just on a detour that leads straight to Easter and new life.

I'll see you on the road

Pastor Temo

SERMON Themes for March

March 1, 2026 - Second Sunday in Lent

Theme: Guided by the Promise

Scriptures: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 & John 3:1-17

March 8, 2026 - Third Sunday in Lent

Theme: Companion for the Journey

Scriptures: Psalm 95 & Romans 5:1-11

March 15, 2026 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Theme: Journeying in Grace

Scriptures: Psalm 23 & Ephesians 5:8-14

March 22, 2026 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Theme: Redemption Road

Scriptures: Ezekiel 37:1-14 & John 11:1-45

March 29, 2026 – Palm Sunday

Scriptures: Psalm 31 & Matthew 26:14-27:66



SACK LUNCH PROGRAM AT THE HOSPITALITY CENTER

First Church was responsible for the sack lunches on Saturday, February 21. We had an excellent crew consisting of Ed and Melanie Guckenberger, Patti Walker, Beth Michael, Jeanne Whiteside, Pat Held and Carol Feest. This program started back in the 1990's when we were made aware of the fact that children received free lunches at school each day; however, no lunches were available on Saturdays. The program began with 12 different churches taking one Saturday per month to provide a sack lunch to whomever needed one. Covid stopped the program in 2020. When we tried to restart providing this service most of the churches were unable to continue. The Hospitality Center took over the program offering lunches two Saturdays per month and have now added an extra Saturday to the process. Our United Methodist Women have provided the funds for the lunches since the program began. At this time there are 72 lunches provided, each consisting of a turkey & cheese sandwich, a peanutbutter and jelly sandwich, three or four cookies, a bag of chips and a drink. The total cost this month was \$200.87. The United Methodist Women also provided feminine products to the center.

IN MEMORY – We send condolences to the family of former member Ed Robotka. Our thoughts and prayers are with Karen and her family. Rest in peace, Ed.

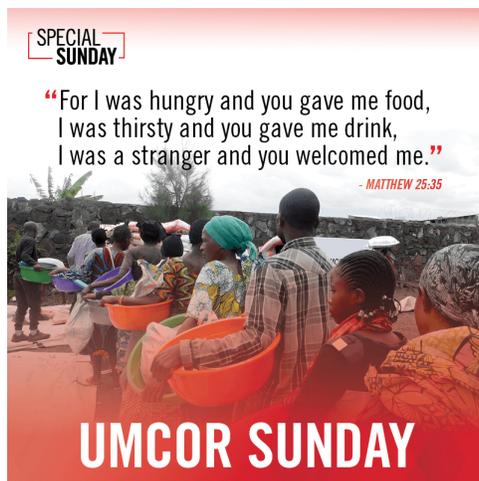
HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN MARCH

- 2 – Sue Mills
- 5 – Brittany McKenney
- 6 - Amie Jean Feest
- 14 – Dawn Nejedly
- 15 – Scott Boehm
- 16 – Patti Walker
- 18 – Debby Ganaway

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN MARCH!

- 29 – Justin & Shannon Hirth

Celebrate UMCOR Sunday on March 15, 2026!



UMCOR Sunday is one of The United Methodist Church's Special Sundays. Special Sundays are designated Sundays each year that deepen the connection between the local church and ministries on a global scale. Individuals and congregations are encouraged to give to support the church's collective work with an offering.

Gifts given on UMCOR Sunday strengthen the church's global humanitarian response by underwriting UMCOR's administrative costs. This allows UMCOR to use 100% of additional funds for specific programs like [U.S. disaster response](#), [international disaster response](#), and [global migration](#).

FOOD BANK ITEM FOR MARCH

Food bank item for March is Chunky soup. Bring your donations to church any time and place them in the crates near the entrances. All food collected is distributed by the North Side Food Pantry.

SIGN UP TO PROVIDE REFRESHMENTS

There is a sign up sheet on the refreshment table where you can volunteer to provide the light refreshments on any given Sunday. Let's all enjoy the fellowship around the table!

5TH SUNDAY POTLUCK

March has 5 Sundays and it has been a tradition to hold a Pot Luck Lunch following worship on those days. So, bring your favorite dish to share and join us on Sunday, March 29.

LOOSE CHANGE FOR MARCH

is designated to assist the local Veteran's Outreach Program housed on Yout Street. They are currently asking for donations of fresh meats and produce. Your loose change offering will be sent to help with this request.

Simply place your contribution in one of the pew envelopes and indicate "Mission Project" and put it in the offering plate.

Thank you for your continued support of our outreach ministry.

The First Word

is published monthly by

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First United Methodist Church

The Vision statement:

Inspire all to live faithfully in Jesus Christ

The Mission statement:

Gather, Equip, and Serve our community and the world in the name Jesus Christ!