

March 2026Office Hours
Monday — Thursday
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.**First
Christian
Church****www.cantonfcc.org**215 West Elm Street
Canton, IL 61520

office (309) 647-1363

**THE
WILDERNESS WAY****Lent: A Wilderness Season**

Our Lenten journey began on Ash Wednesday, February 18th with a unique and meaningful worship service. About 45 people got to experience 7 different worship stations at their own pace. There were opportunities to do visio divina meditations, to light candles, receive communion, love their neighbors, dissolve their worries, offer their prayers and, of course, receive ashes. The ashes came from last year's Palm Sunday branches and were placed on peoples' foreheads in a doubly symbolic meaning. The ashes remind us of our mortality, that, yes, we will all die someday and this life is short and fragile. But they also are placed in the shape of a cross, because through Jesus, we remember that, as the Song of Songs says, "love is stronger than death."

The evening also marked the beginning of the Lent Supper & Study as we're reading "Entering the Passion of Jesus" by AJ Levine. The study is helping about 35 of us grow deeper in our understanding of what Jesus' Holy Week teaches us about God's love and what lessons we are called to glean from it.

Our Lenten theme is called "The Wilderness Way", which focuses on Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. The Wilderness Way was created by our regional church (the Christian Church in Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan). We thank them for this wonderful set of resources.

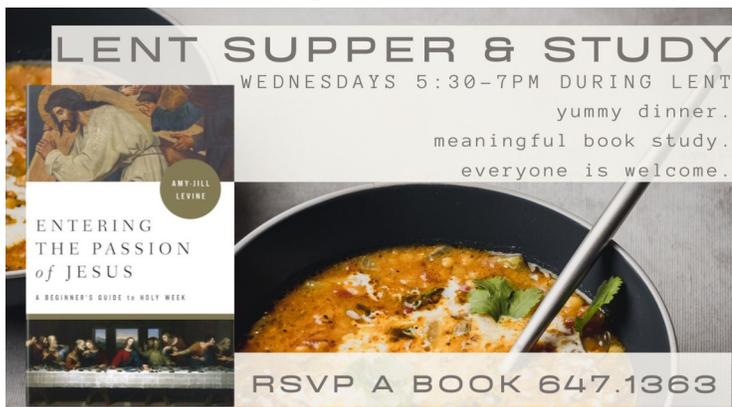
Lenten opportunities for spiritual growth continue with our devotional (let the office know if you need a copy). We also near Holy Week, which begins with Palm Sunday on March 29th and will continue through Easter Sunday on April 5th. We pray that this year, your Lenten journey is not only a time of joining Jesus in the wilderness, but discovering God's love all around you.

Lent 2026 Schedule**Wednesdays in March**Lent Supper & Study 5:30-7pm
(during Lent)**Sun, March 29th**

Palm Sunday & Community Meal

Thurs, April 2Maundy Thursday Agape Feast @
5:30pm**Fri, April 3**Good Friday Tenebrae Service @
7:00pm**Sun, April 5**

Easter Sunday & Egg Hunt

**Steve Mason:** Pastor
Jessa Wenger: Office Coordinator
Email: contact@cantonfcc.org**Rick Coulter:** Building Supervisor
John Davis: Director of Music
Gretchen Fuller: Organist

You have some dirt on your forehead...

The last few Ash Wednesdays, our Congregational Care Coordinator, Kevin Dearing, and I have gone out to retirement communities and assisted living to offer ashes. This year was no different. February 18, we started with the people we knew that had requested it, but inevitably other people around them would request it as well. One woman especially got excited. She had just sat down at the table where the people to her left and right and recently received the sign of the cross on their forehead and she said, "Oh, I know what day it is!" I asked her if she would like to receive the ashes. I asked her name and then repeated back her name and said "you are a beloved child of God. From dust you came into dust will return. And God's love goes with you every step of that journey." I could hardly get the last words out before her face lit up into a bright smile and she said "oh I know that!" Then she turned to her friends and asked, "did I get a cross?" And when they nodded, she squealed with delight, "I knew it! I knew that I could get a cross!"



Another person we visited was in their room and invited us in out of curiosity. She was describing all the ailments and exhaustion and griefs she was carrying in her body. I prayed with her because she was worried that we weren't compatible types of Christians to be able to get the cross in ashes. But after sharing those things that were on her heart and joining together in prayer, as I was walking to the door, she said, "maybe you should come back and let me have that cross."

I know that Lent, and especially Ash Wednesday, have an uphill battle in public perception. (For that matter too, so does the church and Christianity, come to think of it!) I can't tell you how many times we had to tell people, "No, we're not Catholic, this is open to all Christians." It seems that people know a bit about them, but if you asked around, most people would tell you things like Lent and Ash Wednesday have to do with calling people sinners or getting too morbid or depressing by talking about death.

But that's not what these days are about. There is a joy in being known, even being known in our frailty and mortality. The cross unites us across generations, denominations, experiences, and any other division that we might be afraid separates us from one another.

Because in the end, Ash Wednesday is a reminder that we are all in this together. We are all God's beloved children. And all of our bodies at some point wear down, all of us who love will also be visited by grief, and God's love endures through it all.

Peace,

Pastor Steve



Ready for Steve's Sabbatical and Welcoming Pastor Hank

If you've been active in the congregation over the last few years, you are probably already aware, but from April 27-Aug 2, Pastor Steve will be on sabbatical. What is sabbatical? Well, it is a time of rest, renewal and re-orientation for pastors and congregations, where the pastor is granted time and space to disengage from their duties of ministry so they can more fully return at the end of their sabbatical ready to serve God with a fresh sense of God's calling and empowerment.

As a part of their jobs, pastors need spiritual vitality, which requires space for sabbath, rest and silence. Also, pastors often prioritize the needs of the congregation and congregants above the more mundane, but no less important, needs of family. Sabbatical is a chance for pastors and their families to reconnect and recharge their spiritual and emotional health. Sabbatical is also a need of a healthy church—for a congregation to remember their gifts and abilities that are not reliant on any one pastor, but from God's Holy Spirit.

When FCC hired Pastor Steve in May of 2021, it was with the express written expectation that he would take a 3-month sabbatical the summer between his 5th and 6th year of ministry. You might remember that the personnel committee has been working hard these last two years applying for a sabbatical grant, which we ultimately did not receive, but will be the basis of our general sabbatical plans. The board, elders and leadership have also been informed of sabbatical plans and have helped shape this season.

We are pleased to announce that during the sabbatical time, Pastor Hank Anderson, who was our former Interim Minister, will be serving as a "sabbatical interim" minister, leading worship, providing pastoral support, leading Bible study and helping with this newsletter. Pastor Hank offered much life and leadership in his previous interim with FCC and we look forward to welcoming him back! This is such a gift, because during the sabbatical, Pastor Steve will be completely disengaged from life and ministry with FCC. But Pastor Steve wants to express his gratitude, writing, "I want to thank the congregation for this opportunity and pray that we will all be refreshed and renewed by the end of sabbatical. I also need to be clear that, despite some fears I've heard voiced, I'm NOT taking sabbatical for job searching. I will be returning and ready to continuing the good work God has begun among us." We wish Steve well and thank Pastor Hank for his leadership.



All these details will be shared again and with even more detail on upcoming Sundays in March and April, and we'll explicitly hear more from Pastor Steve in a sermon series leading up to the sabbatical.

WORSHIP ONLY SCRATCHES THE SURFACE...

**DIGGING DEEPER
BIBLE STUDY**

Sundays at 10:30am
Room 104



YOUR WEEKLY
MINUTE AT FIRST

Find your **Minute at First** every Monday morning.
Information and spiritual formation on Facebook or in your email.
Watch, like and share!

The Kids are Alright! A Youth Group Roundup

Our youth group had two outings this month! We had a fun gathering at the beginning of the month for bowling and some fellowship at Linn Lanes. But one time wasn't enough, we also met on Sunday, Feb. 22 for a taco bar and games.

Each time the youth group meets, there is a meal, fellowship, an activity, we pray for each other by naming our pits and cherries (our low and high moment since we last met) and we do a Bible study. With some great leadership from Mindy and Greg Glomb, the group has been able to grow and Pastor Steve has been able to help guide the group in their gatherings.

At the recent taco night, we switched up the format from a Bible study led by Pastor Steve to a group exploration based on faith and Bible questions that the youth wrote out. Out of the 10 youth present, they wrote down about 25 questions...such inquisitive minds and hearts! It was such a hit that the youth have requested our next group (on March 22nd), we skip any activities to focus solely on their questions and discussions of faith...that and a request for spaghetti and meatballs! So, as always, if you know any Middle School youth, they are invited to join in! Contact Pastor Steve with any questions.



First
Christian
Church

LIFE SKILLS ACADEMY



Prepare for the next steps of life with experts and one-on-one support in a welcoming space. This is the FIFTH (and final) session, focused on helping you live independently. We'll talk about budgeting, housing, insurance, meal planning and answer your adulting questions.

\$500
scholarships
for 5 who
complete all
sessions

Who: Juniors, Seniors and 2025 Grads

When: Wednesday March 18, 7-9pm

Where: First Christian Church

Cost: FREE! And snacks provided!



Independent Living Skills

309.647.1363 215 W. Elm St, Canton, IL

LOVE INC. DONATIONS

FCC is collecting paper products & cleaning supplies for Love Inc. during the month of March

Needed items:

Toilet paper, paper towels, tissues, laundry detergent, dish soap, sponges, bath towels & wash clothes.

Please drop off donations to the church during worship times on Sundays, or Monday-Thursday from 9-1pm.

Thank you for your generosity and support!

FAMILY MINISTRY NIGHT

ALL ARE INVITED TO PLANT
INDOOR PLANTS ON MARCH
15TH @ 5PM!



GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY,
LEARN HOW PLANTS GROW,
FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER &
GROW STRONG ROOTS —
JUST LIKE OUR FAITH!

YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR FREE

PALM SUNDAY DINNER

MARCH 29TH 2026

CANTON FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
215 W ELM ST

10:30AM CARRY OUT & DELIVERY
BEGINS

DINE IN WITH US FROM 11-12 PM



First
Christian
Church

CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE @
309-647-1363

TO RESERVE YOUR MEALS
BY THURSDAY MARCH 26TH

WHO KNEW DOING GOOD COULD BE THIS MUCH FUN?



TUE MARCH 17TH @ OLD DOG
DOORS & FOOD @ 5:30
TRIVIA @ 6:00PM

RAISING FUNDS FOR CHS CARE CLOSET/FOOD PANTRY

\$5 PER PERSON/TEAMS OF ANY SIZE

FAMILY-FRIENDLY TRIVIA
 SPONSORED BY FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH



RSVP PLEASE
 SHERRYPHARDY@YAHOO.COM

Lunch & Learn

Getting Smart, Getting Connected

Date: Thursday, March 12th
 Time: 12:00pm -1:00pm
 Location: **Baker Rec. Center**
940 N Main St.

Topic: Senior Self Defense & Awareness

Free with lunch provided!
 call 309-647-7665 to RSVP

with Canton PD
 Officer Candi Buhl

HOSTED BY:
 CANTON PARK DISTRICT
 &
 FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

FCC is joyfully serving in the community!



The cold winter months aren't slowing down FCC's commitment to loving God by loving our neighbors. We are continuing our Trivia for Good ministry to raise funds for different organizations, including the Westview Elementary, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity and Fulton Mason Crisis Services. Thus far, we have raised over \$1000 in these combined



events, and we're hoping for a good showing on March 17th (St. Patty's Day!) at Old Dog as we raise funds for the Canton High School Care Closet. Everyone is welcome, \$5 to play trivia!



FCC is also collecting cleaning supplies for Love Inc clients. Through Easter, we're doing a Spring Cleaning Drive to provide goods so that all have the ability to have a clean and sparkling home!

Finally, our volunteers have been in full force at Lincoln Elementary, with the Kindness Club, the Master Builders Club and we a set of IMPACT mentors who have been matched with kids in need of a positive adult. Special thanks to Kevin Coleman, Dave and Janet White, Pastor Steve and Sherry Coffey who are all current mentors in this project.

THANK YOU NOTES

Dear First Christian Church,

I just wanted to say thank you so much for the scholarship and for supporting me during my time in college. It truly means a lot to know that I have the encouragement and backing of my church community.

I'm very grateful for this opportunity and for the support you've shown me. Thank you again for investing in my education and my future. I really appreciate it.

Best Regards ,

Katie Smith



THANK YOU NOTES

Dear First Christian Church,

Thank you so much for awarding me the church scholarship. I am truly grateful for your generosity and support. This scholarship means a great deal to me and will help ease the financial burden of my education as I continue working toward my goals.

I deeply appreciate the encouragement and belief you have shown in me. Your support motivates me to continue working hard in my studies and to give back to others whenever I am able.

Thank you again for your kindness, prayers, and investment in my future.

With sincere gratitude,
 Jaiden Walters



March Birthdays

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Jan Dearing | March 1 |
| John Osborne | March 1 |
| Dennis Doubet | March 11 |
| Eric Jarvis | March 12 |
| Mark Reneau | March 12 |
| Mark Taylor | March 12 |
| Liz Clark | March 13 |
| Ron Rupe | March 14 |
| Derek Spiva | March 15 |
| Cydni Bell | March 19 |
| Griffin Beam | March 19 |
| Bonnie Harn | March 21 |
| Don Heller | March 24 |
| Jake Smith | March 24 |
| John Davis | March 26 |
| Scott Snowman | March 26 |
| Amanda Schrodt | March 28 |
| Michelle Spiva | March 29 |
| | |
| | |

March Anniversaries

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Stephen & Mareigh Snowman | March 3 |
| | |

January 2026 Giving & Ministry Needs

| | | <u>YTD</u> |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| Ind. Giving: | 17,001 | 17,001 |
| Other Income: | 23,936 | 23,936 |
| Total: | 41,137 | 41,137 |
| Needs: | 35,399 | 35,399 |
| Difference: | 5,738 | 5,738 |

Please Pray For:

Kathy Clifford (House Fire); Donna (Keith's Sister); Rickey Noe's Family; Sheila Bell; Henry Holladay; Carolyn Sue (Murphy) Tandy; Lorraine Neill; Diana Black Williamson; Christine Malott; Lori Coleman; Wendy Mayall; Blaine Hardy; Sharon Hall; Don & Shirley Edwards (Bruce's parents); Cathy Schoonover-Orwig (MS); Brenda Dilts (Lyn Snowman's mom); David Lueck (Janet White's nephew); Brad O'Brien; Steve Moore; Those battling with cancer: Beverly McComb, Mary Beth Powell, Beverly, Stephanie Parson, Tim Roberts, Katie Hill, Steve Lefferts, Barb Bishop, Gary (& Susan) Barnhart, Kim Schrodt, Lana Formal, Jodi Smith, Crystal Graybel, Pam Beadles, John Brown, Sharon Blair, Jason Lasseigne

Care Facilities:

The Carriages Bloomington-David Meeker
Heritage Woods-Bruce Christy, Barb Uno, Nancy Cluts
Renaissance C.C.-Angie Slater, Bill Brockett & Sue Weaver
Sunset - Lori Bieber; Ed Ford; Keith Munstedt

BECOMING
DEDICATED

Disciples

Passionate **SPIRITUALITY**

Joyful **SERVICE**

Inspiring **GENEROSITY**

Scriptures, Sermons, & Serving Schedules

| March 1 | | March 8 | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| Scripture | Matt. 4: 3-4 | Scripture | Matt. 4: 3-7 |
| Greeters | Paula Grigsby | Greeters | Keith Munstedt |
| Ushers | Becky Wilcoxon | Ushers | Allen Smith |
| Call to Worship | Michelle Spiva | Call to Worship | Video |
| Scripture Reader | Jean Edwards | Scripture Reader | Jack Fitzjarrald |
| Children's Moment | Jean Edwards | Children's Moment | Janet Krulac |
| Children's Church | Jen & Corey Miller | Children's Church | Lyn Snowman & Denise Jarvis |
| Invitation/Prayer | Tammy Weaver/Mike Krulac | Invitation/Prayer | Rhonda Morgan/Kevin Dearing |
| Deacons (prepare) | Judy & Susan /Zack & Janet | Deacons (prepare) | Jake & Carisa /Emily & Mark T |
| Counters | Tammy Weaver/Alan Coleman | Counters | Daryle Coleman/Jen Miller |
| Coffee Fellowship | Judy Kemper | Coffee Fellowship | The Morgans |
| March 15 | | March 22 | |
| Scripture | Matt. 4: 8-10 | Scripture | Matt. 4: 11-17 |
| Greeters | Barb Pollitt | Greeters | Mark Taylor |
| Ushers | Doris Taylor | Ushers | Don & Connie Heller |
| Call to Worship | Jean Edwards | Call to Worship | Video |
| Scripture Reader | Dave Bell | Scripture Reader | Carissa Moser |
| Children's Moment | Michelle Spiva | Children's Moment | Steve Mason |
| Children's Church | Rhonda Morgan & Amanda S | Children's Church | Jean & Bruce Edwards |
| Invitation/Prayer | Michelle Spiva/Steve Mason | Invitation/Prayer | Shawna Axline/Kevin Coleman |
| Deacons (prepare) | Tom A. & Don P. /Jean & Aja | Deacons (prepare) | Dave & Sheila /Carissa M & Amanda |
| Counters | Don Heller/Bruce Edwards | Counters | Kevin Coleman/Don Heller |
| Coffee Fellowship | Michelle Spiva | Coffee Fellowship | Judy Leitze |
| Palm Sunday-March 29 | | | |
| Scripture | Matt. 21: 1-11 | Children's Moment | Jennifer Miller |
| Greeters | Corey & Jen Miller | Children's Church | No Children's Church |
| Ushers | Jan & Chuck Taylor | Invitation/Prayer | Grant Stephenson/Maida Williams |
| Call to Worship | Grant Stephenson | Deacons (prepare) | Shane & Chris /Shawn & Lyn |
| Scripture Reader | Colleen Conrad | Counters | Grant Coleman/TBD |
| Coffee Fellowship | Palm Sunday | | |

March 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|--|---|--|--------------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Worship 9:00AM Bible Study 10:30AM | | GEMS 10:00AM | Lent Soup Supper Choir Practice 7PM | | | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Worship 9:00AM Bible Study 10:30AM | Worship Meeting 11:00AM Elder's Meeting 6:30 PM | GEMS 10:00AM Finance Meeting 5:30PM | Lent Soup Supper Choir Practice 7PM | Lunch & Learn 12-1PM @ Baker Rec. Center | | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| Worship 9:00AM Bible Study 10:30AM | Christian Ed 6PM Cabinet Meeting 7PM | GEMS 10:00AM Trivia for Good @Old Dog 5:30PM | Lent Soup Supper Choir Practice 7PM Life Skills 7-9pm | | | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| Worship 9:00AM Bible Study 10:30AM | Property Meeting 4PM | GEMS 10:00AM | Lent Soup Supper Choir Practice 7PM | | | |
| 29 Palm Sunday | 30 | 31 | | Maundy Thursday | Good Friday | |
| Worship 9:00AM Bible Study 10:30AM Palm Sunday Meal | | | | | | |