

The Community Messenger March 2026

Erica Extemporaneous

I have said many times that I am fond of the quiet contemplation of Lent. It suits me better than the frenzied anticipation we often associate with Advent. Both liturgical seasons find us preparing, waiting, perhaps biding our time, until... Jesus is born, or betrayed and put to death. Then of course we wait again for the wonder of Easter morning.

Waiting during Advent can be hard because we have so much to do. The holidays are filled with school concerts and caroling, sugar cookies and shopping, family obligations and opportunities for gathering with those we love and those we tolerate in the interest of keeping the peace.

Waiting during Lent lacks the urgency and the excitement of Advent. Invited into the wilderness for forty days, we can take our time. We can open our minds to the many ways our world stands in need of resurrection. We can open our hearts to the pain we carry deeply hidden, or hung loosely as though upon our sleeves. We can open our ears to hear the cries all around us, calling for justice, for mercy, for peace.

We can also open our eyes and look for the beauty, the wonder, the joy that is all around us. We can see the magnificence of a spider web sparkling with dew; the playful banter of birds as they wake for another day; the smile on the face of someone you love, someone who loves you.

If you have given something up for Lent... if you have taken something on... if you are not so simply doing your level best to get through the day more or less intact... Remember. The sacrifice of Lent, the penitence and prayer, is not meant to deprive you of joy. It is meant to illuminate it all the more when you happen upon it. When it happens upon you.



you will
find
your JOY
in the
LORD.
Isaiah
58:14

Take good care,

Erica

Greetings from Gabby!

John Howland and I were sitting on Pastor Erica's desk when she was writing her article for the newsletter. We kept trying to get her attention, but she was so serious she wasn't paying any attention to us at all! We read what she was writing. I think it was about finding joy. That made me think about a song I know. Can you guess which one? "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart - where?" That made me happy. Singing is one way you can not only find joy, but also share joy. What are some of your favorite songs... especially those that make you smile?



Your friends~ Gabby
and John Howland

CLIENT CHOICE FOOD PANTRY

Our Client Choice Food Pantry has been off to a busy start this year. We served 52 families in February, and many of them were larger families coming to us for the first time. We were able to purchase bulk eggs at a reduced rate and used many of the available egg cartons you have been contributing. Students from Howland High School have continued to volunteer their time in carrying out food for our clients, and now the Rotary Organization of Howland has partnered with our pantry, and plans to have their members take turns in donating time also. Our presence in the community is certainly enriched by so many people willing to give of their time. We were blessed to receive large donations of \$500 this month from both the First Baptist Church of Warren and the Howland Rotary.

Our MARCH food pantry has been cancelled, but we will be prepared and ready to resume on Friday, April 17 between the hours of 3-5 pm. ~Linda Hitmar



Easter Flowers

\$15 each

Send to shut in

Will pick up
after worship

Easter Lily

Tulip

Hyacinth

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Dedication to read: (Please print)

Please include \$15.00 per flower with your order.

Make checks payable to **Howland Community Church** and include **Easter Flowers** in the comment area.

Deadline for orders is **Sunday, March 22, 2026.**

Please note: Only prepaid orders will be accepted.

Diaconate and Elders' Schedules – March 2026

Date	Elder	Diaconate Sanctuary (All Month)	Diaconate Kitchen (All Month)
March 1	Gretchen Hrusovsky	Natalie Sanders – Captain	Sanctuary Karen Brown
March 8	Dawn Adgate	Amy Gazdik	
March 15	Bim Turner	Matt Sanders	JHR Naomi Foster & Susanne Shaulis
March 22	Brooke Schubert	Andrew Steele	
March 29	Alan Purdum		

Lectionary for March 2026

March 1, 2026

Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17

March 8, 2026

Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 95
Romans 5:1-11
John 4:5-42

March 15, 2026

1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

March 22, 2026

Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

March 29, 2026-Palm Sunday

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Matthew 21:1-11

Official Board Announcement

In an attempt to be proactive, the official board has adopted a checklist for canceling services if the need should ever arise again. Things that could cancel service would be a state of emergency declared, dangerous driving conditions, no power, heat or water in the building, parking lot not cleared of snow or ice. The decision will be made with a consensus of the pastor and key leaders of the church. Once the decision has been made the congregation will be notified the night before, if possible, or at least 2 hours prior to our 10am service. For that to happen, we need to have all of your information. We ask that you fill the form shown below and drop it in the offertory plate on Sunday or email back to me at dawnadgate@aol.com I will then compile the list to be prepared in the event that we ever have to cancel again. Thank you! ~Dawn Adgate

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Preferred method of communication:

____ Text Message ____ Phone Call ____ Email

From the Open and Affirming Committee

During Lent, members and friends of the O&A Committee will be sharing some of the stories and discussions we have been enjoying at our monthly meetings. Below is the text of Gretchen Hrusovsky's presentation on February 15:

I joined a Disciples congregation--Second Christian in Warren--back in 1980, and I felt the statement "No Creed but Christ" was just about perfect. When I came to HCC in the 90s "A House of Prayer for All People" over the door was the frosting on the cake. And if HCC can become an Open and Affirming congregation, that--for me--will really put the cherry on top!

Becoming an Open and Affirming congregation is important to me--because of:

- My niece and her husband, who pray every day for gays, because they don't want them to burn in hell;
- My 17-year-old Catholic grandson, who tells me seriously that, "Yes, homosexuals are welcome in the Catholic Church," but leaves off the 'gotcha' part;
- Because of all the straight men who just can't resist making a comment; and mostly
- Because of my friend, Jen. We knit together and feed each other's cat when one of us is away--it's that kind of friendship. Jen is what I think of as a Christian with a capital C.

Last summer she and her sister were on the West coast. They went to a park for a picnic and were surprised to find the place packed. Turns out there was a big Christian rally. Hoping to participate, they tried to move closer--but there was a large and ominous police presence. There were protesters, waving signs and wearing brightly-colored clothes. But the worst thing, Jen told me in tones of horror, was that the protesters were Singing. "...singing OUR hymns and *Pretending* to be Christians!"

Every Christian--not just Capital C Christians--deserves a safe and welcoming church in which to worship. I believe that Howland Community Church is that place--we just need to let people know.

Operating Fund

	January Activity	YTD Balance	Budget YTD
Income	\$27,807.59	\$27,807.59	\$22,154.00
Expenses	\$21,258.64	\$21,258.64	\$21,604.33
Difference	\$6,548.95	\$6,549.95	\$549.67

Update from the Marketing Committee

The Marketing Committee is in the process of expanding HCC's presence on social media, such as Instagram and Facebook. We are exploring the possibility of using paid promotions to increase our visibility. As with any church committee we are always looking for new ideas: don't hesitate to contact Alan Purdum, Sarah Sanders, or Rev. Brown with your comments and ideas.

March 2026 - HCC Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10 AM Worship	2 6 PM Trustees 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	3	4 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	5 6-8 PM Girl Scouts (NH)	6 Fish Fry 4:30-6:30 pm	7 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
8 10 AM Worship- Noisy Coin Offering	9 6 PM Open & Affirming Comm. 7 PM Elders 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	10	11 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	12 7 PM Game Night (JHR)	13 Fish Fry 4:30-6:30 pm	14 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
15 10 AM Worship	16 6:30 PM Finance 7 PM Official Board 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	17 	18 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	19 6-8 PM Girl Scouts (NH)	20 3-5 PM Client Choice Food Pantry Fish Fry 4:30-6:30 pm	21 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
22 10 AM Worship	23 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	24	25 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	26 7 PM Game Night (JHR)	27 Fish Fry 4:30-6:30 pm	28 11 AM - 12:30 PM Free Fellowship Meal (SH) 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
29 10 AM Worship - Palm Sunday	30 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	31				

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

Barb Layfield	2	Suzanne Baker	15	Tom Caldron	20
Jennifer & David Lewis	2	Rev Erica Brown	15	Anna Marie Ottney	20
Mari-Lee Yeropoli	5	Bill McConahy	16	John DiGiacobbe	22
Mary Stiver	10	Alan Purdum	16	Steve Lewis	22
Harry Stull	11	Brian Guy	18	Bob Tucker	23
Barb & John Layfield	11	Eli Becker	19	Brayden O'Dell	26
Marlene Pond	12	Trey Jones	19	Lorada & Joe Bezilla	28
Dawn & Chuck Adgate Jr.	14				

Please note: If you fail to see your birthday/anniversary listed, please contact the church office at 330-856-3628 so that we may update our information. Bless you!



HOWLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH
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 Warren, Ohio 44484

WE'RE ON THE WEB:
 HOWLANDCOMMUNITYCHURCH.ORG

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Fax: 330-856-4496



Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 PERMIT No. 163
 Youngstown, OH

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Reverend Erica L. Brown, Senior Minister
 Andrew Purdum, Director of Music
 Rebecca Shelton, Organist
 Minta Pitts, Custodian
 Diane Andrews, Office Coordinator
 Alan Purdum, Chair of the Congregation
 Sarah Sanders, Vice-Chair of the Congregation

The Community Messenger is the monthly newsletter of the **Howland Community Church** (affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Church of Christ, and the International Council of Community Churches). Our church is “**A House of Prayer for All People.**” We offer Sunday School for children and a fellowship gathering after Worship. Communion is served every Sunday.

Office Hours:
Monday – Thursday
9:00 am – 1:00 pm



International Council of Community Churches