

# 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.



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

Psalms 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17

#### **March 8, 2026**

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalms 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42

#### **March 15, 2026**

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalms 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

#### **March 22, 2026**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalms 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

#### **March 29, 2026-Palm Sunday**

Psalms 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

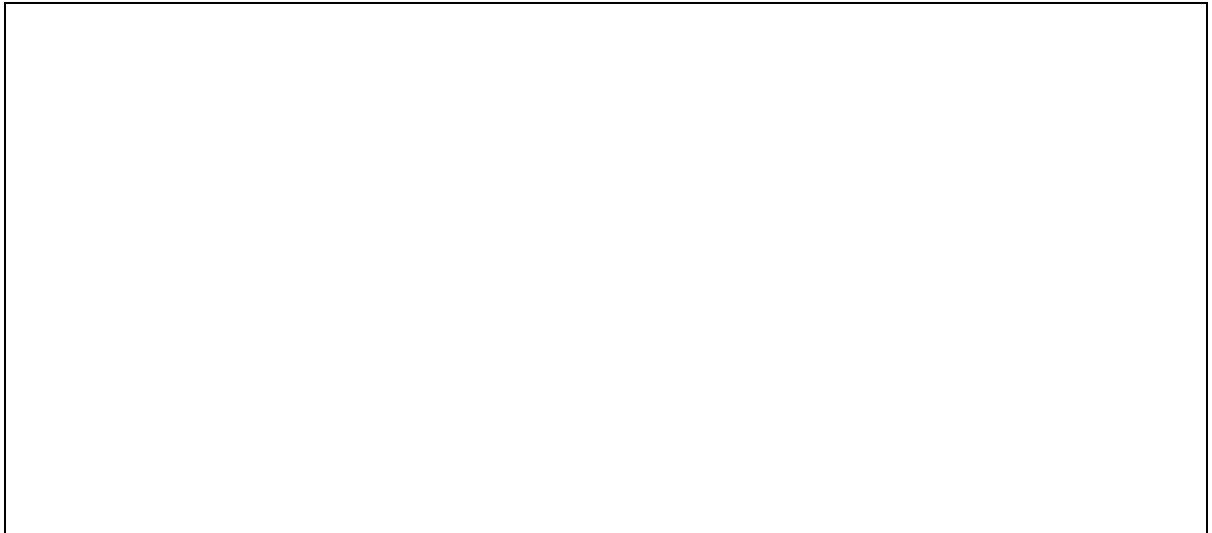
	January Activity	YTD Balance	Budget YTD
<b>Income</b>	\$27,807.59	\$27,807.59	\$22,154.00
<b>Expenses</b>	\$21,258.64	\$21,258.64	\$21,604.33
<b>Difference</b>	\$6,548.95	\$6,549.95	\$549.67

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



**HOWLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
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**WE'RE ON THE WEB:**  
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Fax: 330-856-4496



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**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*