The Community Messenger November 2026

Erica Extemporaneous

Although I don't often talk about it, or think about it, I spent a year at Purdue University before transferring to Bucknell University. There is a women's restroom on the third floor of Heavillon Hall at Purdue University. In that women's restroom, the third stall from the left functioned as somewhat of a cultural icon, perhaps even a shrine of sorts. Within the confines of such a "safe space," arguably some of the most rational and thoughtful discussions concerning sexuality and sexual orientation transpired. Every several weeks, the custodial staff would whitewash the walls with a fresh coat of paint, calling the dialogue to a halt. Yet the conversation always resumed.

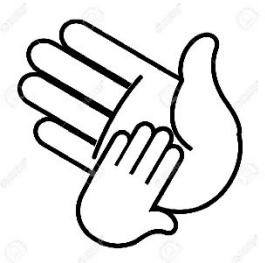
And it was in fact a conversation – a give and take, a push and pull, a tension of different viewpoints and perspectives. In 1993, in West Lafayette, Indiana, such a dynamic did not necessarily come naturally, or comfortably. It struck me as a deeply troubling commentary on our capacity to be in conversation with one another about things that matter, about things about which we don't necessarily agree. I would like to think we can do better than graffiti scrawled on the bathroom wall.

Several weeks ago, Howland Community Church, which has long been "a house of prayer for all people," voted to adopt a Welcome Statement proclaiming in no uncertain terms that all are welcome in this place. Following more than a year of discernment, we have chosen to become an Open and Affirming Congregation, welcoming "all people regardless of economic status; religious background; political belief; race; ethnicity; sexuality; gender identity; or differing physical, mental, and emotional abilities." This is exciting! My heart is full of gratitude and love for this bold and beautiful decision, and for the lives and hearts that will be seen and heard and held in this community of faith. We should celebrate! And we will!

In the coming weeks and months, we will think about and talk about what it will look like to live into this calling of perhaps radical welcome and hospitality. Some of us are ready to go all in. Some of us are a bit more circumspect. Some of us might not know exactly what to think of it all.

I recently had a wonderful conversation with the Rev. Dr. Dave Long-Higgins, our conference minister for the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ. He talked about growing up in Illinois, remembering that a number of houses in each neighborhood had signs in their windows that were visible from the sidewalk. The moment he mentioned that, I recalled the orange and white signs in my neighborhood when I was a child. No words, just a big hand reaching out to a smaller hand. I think the PTO made them available. We were taught that if we ever found ourselves hurt or frightened or not feeling okay in any way, we should look for one of those signs. Those signs were there so we would know that the people who lived in that house were safe and they would help us. Dave suggested that when we, as an Open and Affirming congregation, place a sign on our door, or in our front yard, we let people who may have been hurt by some other church know that we are safe, that the people within this church are here to welcome them exactly as they are. That is important.

When I was the Assistant Chaplain at Northwestern University, I was very involved with the LGBT Student and Staff Support Network. I had a sticker on my office door that quietly let others know that my office was a "safe space," that I was someone with whom they could be themselves without fear of judgment or condemnation. Right before commencement one year, a student I knew through the Support Network mentioned that I had something to do with her decision to attend Northwestern. I was startled because I really didn't know her very well. She mentioned stopping in the Chaplains' Office while visiting campus. While her father was talking with my colleague, she noticed the Safe Space sticker on my door. When she and her dad were heading home, she told him that she felt good about Northwestern because of seeing that sticker. It really does make a difference. May this always be not only a safe space, but a brave space.



Take good care,

Erica

Greetings from Gabby!

It's almost time for Thanksgiving! Do you like to eat turkey and mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie? I know I do!

John Howland likes to remind me that his ancestor fell off the Mayflower on his way to this country. Not sure why he is so proud of that... sounds clumsy to me! Have you seen the book about that in the John Howland Room? How come there isn't a book about me? Maybe someday... Happy Thanksgiving!

Your friends~
Gabby and John Howland

Client Choice Food Pantry

Our October Food Pantry included many new faces and we had a total of 51 families come in for food assistance. We were recently audited by Second Harvest Food Bank, mostly to ensure that our food was being stored properly and safely. Please continue to save plastic bags for us, but we do have an overabundance of egg cartons at the present time.

Our November Food Pantry will be held on Friday, November 20th. We do expect to have a large truck delivery of food on Thursday the 19th, and we will appreciate volunteers to unload and stock the shelves on that day. (Time to be announced later).

In addition, please watch for information regarding our Holiday Food Baskets, as that season is rapidly approaching.

~Thank you so very much, Linda Hitmar

Lectionary for November 2026

November 1, 2026
All Saints' Day
Revelation 7:9-17
Psalm 34:1-10, 22
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

November 8, 2026
Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25
Psalm 78:1-7
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

November 15, 2026
Judges 4:1-7
Psalm 123
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Matthew 25:14-30

November 22, 2026
Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalm 100
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46

November 29, 2026
First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 108:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

The Helping Hands Craft Show

Saturday, November 14, 2026
10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Door Prize and Vendor Raffles
Bake Sale
The Kitchen will be open!

The Craft Show supports
the Client Choice Pantry,
Free Fellowship Meal,
Operation Shoeleather,
and other mission projects.

Admission is free!
Bring your friends and family
for a fun day of holiday shopping!

Operating Fund Update

	September Activity	YTD Balance	Budget YTD
Income	$24,188.00	$200,090.27	$199,530.00
Expenses	$20,464.85	$204,473.75	$201,439.00
Difference	$3,723.15	-$4,383.48	-$1,909.00

Diaconate and Elders' Schedules – November 2026

Date	Elder	Diaconate Sanctuary (All Month)	Diaconate Kitchen (All Month)
November 1	Katy Kell	Natalie Sanders – Captain	Sanctuary Karen Brown
November 8	Brooke Schubert	Amy Gazdik	
November 15	Bim Turner	Matt Sanders	JHR Naomi Foster &
November 22	Tom Hitmar	Andrew Steele	Susanne Shaulis
November 29	Katy Kell		

MARK YOUR CALENDAR - SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd

COMMITMENT SUNDAY – All are invited to present their Stewardship Pledge Cards during worship!

CHURCH FAMILY THANKSGIVING - Please join us after service for our annual turkey dinner. Turkey, stuffing, potatoes and gravy will be provided.

Please bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share.

HANGING OF THE GREENS – Once fed, the fun begins! Please join in the annual decorating of our beautiful church for the Advent season! All help is greatly needed/appreciated!

Sanctuary Advent Giving Tree!

Nov. 29th – Liquid Body Wash & Deodorant

Dec. 6th – Shampoo & Conditioner

Dec. 13th – Hats, Gloves, & Scarves

Thank you in advance for your generous donations!

Th

Christmas Open House!

Wednesday, December 9th

6 pm to 8 pm

There will be Christmas displays, artwork, music, hot chocolate, and cookies!

Plan to join us for the fun!

We are Celebrating!

Howland Community Church
is celebrating becoming an
Open and Affirming Congregation!

Please join us on Sunday, November 8 at 3:00 pm
for Celebratory Worship and Fellowship

Music by Rebecca Shelton, UnMeasured Grace,
and Crash the Great

Light refreshments will be provided

CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS

It's time again to begin preparing for our annual Christmas Food Baskets. Whether you donate food or money or time…all are appreciated! Please watch for a sign-up sheet in the back of the sanctuary. We are asking you to help fill baskets with the following items:

Instant Mashed Potatoes	**Gravy**	**Pineapple**
Jello	**Cake Mix**	**Frosting**
Cereal	**Peanut Butter**	**Jelly**
Crackers	**Bread**	**Rice**
Tomato Soup	**Chicken Noodle Soup**	

All items/baskets should be dropped off on **Sunday, December 13th** at the kitchen door (Door #3) before or after the church service. Volunteers will be available to assist in unloading your car.

We plan to be packing the baskets after the church service on the 13th for distribution to families on Friday, December 20th.

Thank you All! ~ "Little" Linda Raphoon

November 2026 - HCC Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10 am Worship -All Saints' Day	2 6 pm Trustees 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	3 Learning Center – CLOSED	4 1 pm Women's Group (JHR)	5 6 pm Girl Scouts (NH) 7 pm Game Night(JHR)	6	7 1 pm NA (NH) 6 pm AA (NH)
8 10 am Worship -Noisy Coin 3 pm - O&A Celebration	9 6 pm O & A 7 pm Elders 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	10	11 1 pm Women's Group (JHR) 6 pm Budget	12	13	14 10 am – 3 pm 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 pm Girl Scouts (NH) 7 pm Game Night(JHR)	20 3-5 PM Client Choice Food Pantry	21 11 am – 12:30 pm Free Fellowship Meal (SH) 1 pm NA (NH) 6 pm AA (NH)
22 10 am Worship After worship Turkey Dinner & Hanging of the Greens	23 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)	24	25 1 pm Women's Group (JHR)	26 Office Closed 	27 Office Closed Blood Drive 10 am – 4 pm	28 1 pm NA (NH) 6 pm AA (NH)
29 10 am Worship 1st Sunday of Advent	30 7 pm Boy Scouts (NH)					

HOWLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH
198 Niles Cortland Rd. S.E.
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WE'RE ON THE WEB:
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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