

The Central Visitor



Vol. XCVIII

Decatur, Illinois, February 25, 2026

No. 4

All-Church Table Trivia Fellowship Event on March 7

The weekend of March 7-8 will be a big one for us at Central. Our newly-elected regional minister, Rev. Dr. William Crowder, will be visiting us! Dr. Crowder will bring the message on Sunday morning March 8 and there will be a reception in the Friendship Center for him after the 10:30 service. To help welcome him to Central, and to give us a chance to meet him, we are planning a Table Trivia Fellowship Event on Saturday March 7. This will take place in the Great Hall at 4:00 p.m. We'll organize into teams once we all arrive, so there is nothing to do ahead of time except plan to show up. Since our regional minister's territory will now cover the states of Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan, the table trivia topics will all revolve around these three states (categories may include history, geography, sports, etc...). We hope you can come, enjoy some fellowship and fun with one another, and help welcome Dr. Crowder to Decatur.

Welcome New Members

With joy and thanksgiving, we welcome Ron and Terry Grant to the Central family. The Grants have been attending for nearly a year and they said, upon joining, that it feels like "coming home." They transferred their membership at the 10:30 a.m. service this past Sunday. Welcome Ron and Terry!



St. Patrick's Day Get-Together

All Central women are invited to attend our Dorcas Disciples meeting on Tuesday, March 17th. We'll gather in the Disciples Room at 6:00 p.m. for a special Heritage Behavioral Health Center presentation about the many services provided by this valuable community agency. Following CEO Mary Garrison's presentation we'll enjoy yummy St. Patrick's Day-themed refreshments. Join in for an evening of fellowship, information and service. RSVP by Friday, March 13th to Nancy Ellen Taylor at 217-872-9174 or xstr@sbcglobal.net to make sure we have enough goodies. Contact Sandy Garver at 217-454-2111 or revrag@comcast.net for more information about Dorcas Disciples. Hope to see you March 17th!

Easter Egg Prayers

During the season of Lent, one way we can draw nearer to God is through prayer. We want to invite you to join us by doing Easter Egg Prayers. There will be a basket of empty Easter Eggs at church along with a card with some prayer prompts, if you would like to use them. You may take an Easter egg home and write a prayer. Pray it during the week, then put it inside the egg and close it up. Bring the Easter Egg prayer back to church and place it in the basket. You may take another egg each week. The eggs will be opened, and the prayers will be shared with the congregation. Eggs will be available each week from February 22 through March 22.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP
IN-PERSON (SANCTUARY)
AT 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM
AND LIVESTREAMED ON
WWW.CCCDISCIPLES.ORG
AND FACEBOOK LIVE
AT 10:30 AM

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP
IN-PERSON (GREAT HALL)
AND LIVESTREAMED ON
WWW.CCCDISCIPLES.ORG
AND FACEBOOK LIVE
AT 9:15 AM

Sermon for 3/1/26

John 2:6-10

John 5:7-9

John 6:5-9, 11

Michael E. Karunas

Elderberries Save the Date!

Entertainment: Mardi Gras Games!

Menu: gumbo with rice, potato salad, roll and dessert. RSVP by Thurs., March 5.



Happy Birthday!! (3/1-3/14)

Jim Bednar, Becky Flanders, Sarah Jennings, Sandy Garver, Becky Johnston, Mary Jane Linton, Cheryl Zollinger, Tom Spry, Kevin Wilmot, Jim Hinze, Myra Hinze, Lucy Smith, Keith Backes, Kevin Miller, Mark Kincaid, Leona Bray, Carole Baumann, Yvonne Purcell, Dee Dee Gain, Janelle Beedle, Trent Moran, Veda Redden, Arya Clark, Julian Barnes, Beth Calvert, Tylar Cooper

Food for Northeast C.F.

Thank you for your generous support of the Grocery Cart. Our next collection date will be March 1, 2026. On February 3, 2026, I delivered 170 pounds of nonperishable food to Northeast Food Pantry. Let's continue to help our neighbors and community members who may have limited or uncertain access to safe and adequate food. Suggested items are: soup, fruit cups, individual packages of raisins, nuts, canned and pouches of chicken and tuna, noodles, chicken broth, boxed rice items, pancake mix that only requires water, pancake syrup, peanut butter, canned pasta sauce, pasta, Mac And Cheese, and cereal. Of course, these are just suggestions. Be sure to check the expiration date. It is also a good idea not to donate items in glass packaging. Look for the shopping cart in the Connection Cafe'. Together we are making a difference. Thank You!

All-Church Family Service Project

Join us for a service and outreach opportunity! On 3/22/26, we are hosting a card making and family visit outing. We will meet at Central at 2:00 to make cards that we will then take to church members. This is a great opportunity to help brighten someone's day and meet and connect with members at Central that you may not have had the chance to get to know yet. On the 22nd, you have the option of coming just to make cards, or going out and making the visit after all the cards have been made. Card making will be from 2:00-3:00 and the visits will be from 3:00 to roughly 4:00. Please RSVP by Sunday, March 8th if your family is interested in making a visit. That gives us time to make sure we have enough visitors lined up for everyone. Please reach out to David Martin or Vicky Woolridge if you have any questions.

Counting On You

Sunday, February 22, 2026

Total worshipping online = 131
Total worshipping in-person = 263

Sunday, February 15, 2026

Total worshipping online = 136
Total worshipping in-person = 252

Minister's Article

The Being with God Candle: Another Invitation to Experience

Rev. Melinda McDonald

For me personally, Lent has traditionally been a time to dig deeper into what it means to live a life following Jesus a little closer – to nurture the relationship between God and myself. Of course, I want to do this all year long, but with a forty-days' time frame, I am better able to keep my intensity and focus more consistent.

This year and this Lent, I have begun simply... with the spiritual discipline goal of "being with God." To mark this time, I light an inexpensive, unscented candle so that I will focus on being aware of God's presence in my life. If thoughts, planning, praying for others enter my mind, I dismiss them by saying the word, *presence*. Now, admittedly, some days, this is easy; other times, it is hard for me to let go of my squirrel brain. If I need to re-program myself more, I use this phrase: *God, You are present with me and I am present to You*. And this is helpful. Some days, I am able to get to that God space, and some days, not. It has taken me years to learn how to direct myself back into the wordless space that is God-space. But my heart's desire to do this keeps me trying.

What I have learned about the "being with God" candle time is this: it settles me and helps me for the whole day. This set-apart time actually makes my daily tasks flow better. I am less tense about achieving what I want to get done.

Many other people have discovered the paradox of spending more time with God actually enables them to function better. John Wesley (of the Methodist Christian ethos) spent two hours daily in prayer. And folklore says that he would tell people if you are especially busy, pray three hours! Someone who knew him well wrote: "He thought prayer to be his business more than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." I may not glow, but deep inside me, I do achieve a peaceful sense that is a gift from God.

Nowadays, I prefer the early morning time for this spiritual discipline, but when I was a working mother, I would have my special prayer time in the evening. Nowadays, I look forward to the "being with God" time using the real candle. Nowadays, I enjoy watching the flame flicker and move. The literal light of the candle flame has enhanced the spoken words of worship and scripture of God. Just adding the live candle has ramped up my motivation for what has been my devotion time!

For some of us, the artificially lit candle is the better, safer way to go. Pastor Vicky has introduced us all to the wonderful product she has found, a brand does have the flickering motion. Life-like motion mimics a live flame and is quite aesthetically pleasing.

What this spiritual discipline will require of you: resting and gazing at the candle flame (symbol for God/Christ); waiting with open attentiveness; taming scattered thoughts by attending to God or Christ through the image of the light; releasing distractions into the hands of God and returning constantly to God's presence within you. The goal is to focus on the presence of the Holy Spirit that is within your heart. [Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg – *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook – Practices That Transform Us*, Revised and Expanded, 2015].

If this spiritual practice appeals to you, it may be helpful to begin your silent prayer time with God by saying, "For God alone my soul in silence waits..." from Psalm 62:1 (Book of Common Prayer translation, 1979). Other practical tips include taking a few deep breaths, sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor in an area that is quiet and free from distractions.

Scripture tells us that Jesus himself took time apart... quiet times... away from his disciples to be with God. Jesus showed us that praying and spending silent time with God is necessary for our relationship with the Holy One to grow and stay strong in faith. I wish you a good beginning to the 2026 season of Lent as we journey together as disciples. I wish you light, hope, peace, and joy. I wish you to find your heart's desire as you seek to be with God in a deeper way and then to find ways to follow Jesus a little farther along The Way.

Here is an excerpt from a 2018 prayer from Kimberly Knowle-Zeller's A Prayer for the Beginning of Lent: *The season of Lent./ In these days be*

(continued on page 3...)

with us./ Walk with us./ Inspire us./ Call us./ Motivate us. / In these days be with us./ To serve our neighbors./ To sing in community./ To wrestle with your Word./ To sit in the silence.

New Plan Regarding any Cancellation of Worship

If the three Saturday snowstorms of the winter 2025-26 season have taught us anything, it is that we need to have a more organized process for deciding whether to cancel worship and how to communicate it. Whether for winter-weather-related reasons or some other, should we decide to cancel worship, here is what we plan to do:

- If Sunday worship is going to be cancelled for any reason, we will make that decision by 12 noon on the Saturday before. Note: we may decide to cancel worship before that time, but by 12 noon the day before will be the latest time we will decide.
- We will make that announcement on the church's website and Facebook page.
- We will also send a direct email to everyone on our main church email list. If you are not currently receiving the Sunday sermon on Monday morning and the mid-week e-newsletter, you are not on that list.
- **The best thing to do if you have questions about the status of Sunday worship is to check your email through the Saturday prior.**
- In the event of a cancellation, we will re-broadcast at both 9:15 and 10:30 a service from sometime during the past year.
- All staff, ministerial and custodial included, will stay home and the building will be locked. So there would be no reason for anyone to attempt to make it to church.
- Again, the best thing to do at this point is to get on the church's email list if you are not already, and check that email regularly on any Saturday when inclement weather is projected for the following Sunday.

A Note from Pastor Vicky

As a church family, we journey together – sharing our joys and our struggles. Our family has been experiencing some challenges lately and I would like to share them with you. I want to do this for several reasons – one is to ask for your prayers; another is to let you know that it's okay to ask for help and trust people to love you. We all experience hard things in our lives and when we allow others to journey with us through them, we receive God's love in tangible ways.

In mid-January my dad moved into our home. This has been our plan for a long time, and we were happy to begin the transition, but shortly after he came, he had a medical emergency which took him to the ER and a two-night hospital stay. I'm so grateful that he was living with us when this happened. He is back home with us, gaining strength and doing well.

And two days after dad came home from the hospital, we received a late-night call from our daughter in Atlanta that she was alive, but her house was burning down. It was a devastating fire – most of her possessions are gone and her beloved cat Stella died in the fire. Both her dad and sister were able to go to Atlanta to be with her. I have been at home while my dad recovers, but Scott and I will be going this week.

I wanted you to know what's happening in my life because I want to also know what's happening in your life. That's what being a family of faith means – we know one another and we love one another.

I believe in God's loving presence in every moment of our lives, and I cherish the love and prayers that we receive from those who care for us. Thank you for joining our family in praying for peace, wisdom and patience in these days. — Blessings, Vicky

Thank you to Central CC from Rev. Melinda

How many of us have felt like the simple words, "thank you," are not enough? I am in that mindset as I express my heartfelt gratitude for your support – via prayers, cards, texts, and kind gifts recently upon the death of my father and then minor surgery. You have been my security "net" – and this is what an authentic faith community is. I am "all kinds of grateful" for you in my life. My family also appreciates you greatly!

Sunday (March 1)

8:00-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary
9:15-Sunday School
9:15-Contemporary Worship, GH & online
10:30-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary & online

Monday (2)

9:15-Prayer Group, 401
1:00-DOVE Inc. Children's Clothing Room, 407

Tuesday (3)

7:00-Journeymen, Conn. Café
9:30-Card Ministry, 411/412
9:30-Christcare Stitchers, 3R
6:00-P.E.O. I.F., Disciples Room

Wednesday (4)

1:00-DOVE Inc. Children's Clothing Room, 407
1:00-Prayer Shawl Ministry, Fireside Room
6:00-Millikin Heights, 401

Thursday (5)

8:00-Emmaus Reunion Group, 401
10:00-Alanon, 401
12:00-Support Staff meeting
2:00-Decatur Needle Arts, Disciples Room
5:00-Christian Ed, Connection Café
6:00-Fathers & Sons small group
7:00-Chancel Choir

Friday (6)

12:00-Symphony Guild, Disciples Room

Saturday (7)

9:00-Faith Quest

Sunday (8)

8:00-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary
9:15-Sunday School
9:15-Contemporary Worship, GH & online
10:30-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary & online
4:00-"With a Voice of Singing" Millikin choral concert, Sanctuary

Monday (9)

9:00-Good Sam volunteer opportunity
9:15-Prayer Group, 401
1:00-DOVE Inc. Children's Clothing Room, 407
1:00-Golden K, Disciples Room

Tuesday (10)

7:00-Journeymen, Connection Café
9:30-ChristCare Stitchers, 3R
3:00-Women's Book Club, Connection Café

Wednesday (11)

1:00-DOVE Inc. Children's Clothing Room, 407
5:00-Elders, Disciples Room

Thursday (12)

10:00-Alanon, 401
6:00-Fathers & Sons small group
7:00-Chancel Choir

Friday (13)

12:00-Symphony Guild, Disciples Room

Saturday (14)

Sunday (15)

8:00-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary
9:15-Sunday School
9:15-Contemporary Worship, GH & online
10:30-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary & online

Serving Schedule — Sunday, March 1, 2026

Elders:

8:00 & 10:30 - Jeannie Backes, Linda Foltz
9:15 - Jeannie Backes

March Prep Deacons: Mary Jane Linton, Lea West, Linda Zinn*

Offering Deacons:

8:00 - Dianne Devore, Betsy Tietz
9:15 - Angie & Ron Ingram
10:30 - Christine Lyman-Harm, Linda Thomas

Ushers:

8:00 - Team 5 - Mike Munos, Capt., Gerri Munos, Brad Munos,
Brittney Moran, Blair Moran, Bobby Munos, Julia Munos
10:30 - Team 10 - David Martin, Capt., Stephani Martin, Gretchen Kirby

Greeters:

8:00 - Al & Chris Fagin
9:15 - Ellen & Ryan Damery
10:30 - Larry & Michele Bafford

P.A. Operator:

8:00 - Krista Rohrscheib
10:30 - Keith Backes

Liturgist:

8:00 & 10:30 - Ellen Hearn
9:15 - Greg Barnes

Contemporary Snack Table: Ellen & Ryan Damery

Contemporary Perishable Snacks: Steve Turner

Nursery and Children's Sunday School Schedule

Sunday, March 1


Nursery: Stephani Martin, Kate Neumann, Kaylee Sommer

Children's Sunday School: TBA

Sunday, March 8

Nursery: Abigail Clark, Stephani Martin, Jolie Witts

Children's Sunday School: TBA



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Serving Schedule — Sunday, March 8, 2026

Elders:

8:00 & 10:30 - Julie Martin, Lea West
9:15 - Lea West

March Prep Deacons: Mary Jane Linton, Lea West, Linda Zinn*

Offering Deacons:

8:00 - Peggy Carpunky, Ellen Hearn
9:15 - Susie Turner
10:30 - Dale Ford, Tom Jones

Ushers:

8:00 - Team 1 - Carolyn Sunderlik, Capt., Dianne Devore
10:30 - Team 6 - Ron & Terry Grant, Mark Kincaid

Greeters:

8:00 - Dianne Devore, Carolyn Sunderlik
9:15 - Andy & Theresa Fulk
10:30 - Mary Jane & Ron Oliver

P.A. Operator:

8:00 - Bobby Munos
10:30 - Luke Kirby

Liturgist:

8:00 & 10:30 - Keith Backes
9:15 - Theresa Fulk

Contemporary Snack Table: Laura Kappler

Contemporary Perishable Snacks: Do Good Donuts

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To “like” hit the thumbs-up icon.

To “follow” click on the ellipse icon (...).

You will see a list of options pop up.

Find the option marked “follow” and click on that.



Prayer Request Text-In!

Have a prayer request? Text PRAY to 217-212-2173, or use the QR code to the left.

“PRAY” is the only word you should type.

Your phone then sends you a link to the prayer request form to fill out. We would love to pray with you and follow up, if you wish.

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