



# THE FLAME

Monthly Newsletter  
for

Central and Algonquin United Methodist Churches

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Editors: Barbara Larson and Sharon Jones

## FEBRUARY 2026

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE PASTOR

#### Holding Our Ground in a Noisy World



February is not a flashy month.

There are no major church festivals, no packed sanctuaries, no dramatic turning points. Winter still has a firm grip, and most of us are simply getting through the days. And yet, this is where much of life actually happens—not in the big moments, but in the in-between ones.

It's hard to ignore the weight of the world right now. The news cycle feels relentless. Stories of violence, political division, unrest between nations, and fear about what may come next seem to arrive daily. Many of us are carrying a mix of emotions—anger, grief, anxiety, weariness—sometimes all at once.

I want to say this plainly: **If you're feeling worn down, you're not alone—and you're not weak.**

The church does not gather because we have everything figured out. We gather because we need a place to bring our whole selves before God. Faith is not about escaping the world's pain; it's about learning how to live faithfully *\*within\** it.

This quieter season reminds us that God often works beneath the surface. Scripture tells us that faithfulness is not always loud or dramatic. As the prophet Micah asks,

***“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)***

That kind of faith does not thrive on outrage or fear. It grows through steady love, humble trust, and daily acts of grace.

In the United Methodist tradition, we speak of **grace that goes before us**—prevenient grace. Before we understand, before we respond, before we get it right, God is already at work. That matters in a season like this. It means we are not starting from zero, even when the world feels fractured or our hearts feel unsettled.

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## Reflections from the Pastor Continued:

On **Ash Wednesday, February 18**, we will begin the season of Lent together at **Central** as part of our **Family Night**. We'll start with a simple meal at **5:30 PM**, then gather in the **Sanctuary at 6:30 PM** for a brief Ash Wednesday service. Ashes tell the truth about our limits and our need for God—but they also remind us that God meets us exactly where we are. Lent is not a season of guilt or spiritual pressure; it is an invitation to honesty, simplicity, and attentiveness, and this shared evening is a gentle way to begin that journey together.

In a loud and divided world, choosing that path is quietly prophetic.

It is countercultural to pause when everything tells us to react.

It is faithful to pray when everything tells us to panic.

It is courageous to love our neighbors when fear urges us to draw lines.

The church's calling is not to shout louder than the world, but to bear witness to a deeper truth: that God's reconciling love is stronger than division and more enduring than fear.

So if February feels heavy, take heart.

If your faith feels quieter than usual, do not assume God is absent.

Beneath the frozen ground, new life is already stirring.

May this season steady us, soften us, and prepare us for the work God is already doing—in us, among us, and through us.

The Lord bless you and keep you, **Pastor Marty**

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## PRAYER WHEEL FOR OUR MILITARY

*Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.*



We keep our country's military in our prayers, be they young people who are in "for just a hitch" of maybe a few years, or those who choose a military career.

Thank you to our veterans and all those who have served their country.

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**ALGONQUIN AND CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES**  
**MISSION: CONNECTING ALL PEOPLE TO GOD BY BUILDING**  
**BRIDGES OF CARING, OUTREACH AND ACCEPTANCE**

## NOTES AND NOTEWORTHY

Wednesday, February 18 is **Ash Wednesday** and the first day of Lent, and it is always 46 days before Easter Sunday. Lent is a 40 day season, not counting Sundays, leading up to Easter. Please note in Pastor Marty's Pastoral Letter the information pertaining to our Ash Wednesday service.

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Central's monthly **SOUP LUNCHEON** will be held after the morning service on **February 1, 2026**. Join us for a great time of good food and fellowship. If you are able to bring soup or a dessert, please feel free! Help is always appreciated in the kitchen too.

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### MISSIONS AT CENTRAL

A huge **THANK YOU** for the support for the elementary school food donations! Between the food donated and the things purchased, over \$1,000 worth of food has been donated to the school. Tooth brushes and tooth paste have been given. Thank you, Kris! The school so appreciates all we have done for the students in need.

We are still collecting shelf stable food. Oatmeal, pop tarts, individual cereal bowls, Chef Boy-R-Dee, soup bowls, Ramen noodles, granola bars and snack cracker packets are always good. We are continuing to collect Love Offering the first Sunday of the month to help pay for the purchases. There is also a Change Jar on the table near the upstairs elevator. That loose change can be dropped off anytime.

Submitted by Barb Carlisle

We send a big **'THANK YOU'** to Barb Carlisle for so ably chairing the Missions Committee! Diane Bell will be the new Missions chair.

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**A REMINDER:** The deadline for material to be submitted for our next *Flame*, the March 2026 issue, is due on **February 15, 2026 at noon**.

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*Remember to keep up with your pledge and your giving to our two churches.  
Your continued faithfulness will help us keep current with  
our bills and obligations!!*

## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS GIVEN AT CENTRAL UMC

### **IN MEMORY OF:**

Don & Elizabeth Brown by Tom & Susan Brown

Dale Hoornstra by Great Grandson River Kyle

Dale Hoornstra by Rhonda and Family

Kimberly Ann Rogers by Larry & Janet Rogers

Our Parents by John and Cathy Wilkinson

Aunt Vera Spence by Terri Bush

John Bath by children, grandchildren & great grandchildren

Keith & Betty Rutledge by Norla Rutledge

Dr. James H. Fyvie & Raymond Arfstrom by Mary & Bob Arfstrom

Bonnie Arfstrom & Jamie Arfstrom by Mary & Bob Arfstrom

Our Parents, Margaret & Robert Proulx, Donna & Emil Bourque by Bev & John Proulx

Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Settember by Marla, Tyson & Ethan Nayback

Mr. & Mrs. Vern Ball and Mr. & Mrs. Wilford Nayback by Marla, Tyson & Ethan Nayback

Jim Nayback by Marla, Tyson & Ethan Nayback

Mrs. Patricia Bennin by Norb Bennin

Pat Bennin by Hazel & Hollis Taylor

Aunt Zena Fitzgerald by Terri Bush

Peggy Kaunisto and Ray Kaunisto by the Kaunisto Kids

Gladys & Howard Morgan by Ronald & Diana Morgan

### **IN HONOR OF:**

Our Grandchildren by Colleen & Bernie Arbic

Our Grandchildren & 1<sup>st</sup> Great Grandchild by Ben & Sharon Jones

Bob Noble by Hazel & Hollis Taylor

Our Grandchildren Elsie, Jacob, Sydney & Nora by Bev & John Proulx

### **FOR THE GLORY OF CHRISTMAS:**

Lori Horner

Kristin Donarski

James & Katherine Bankson

Ron & Sherry Hutchins

Jackie Willey



## RECIPE ROUNDUP CORNER

*(We know we have many wonderful cooks in Algonquin and Central churches. We invite the sharing of your favorite recipe. Just write them out, include your name, and turn them into the box marked for "the Flame" outside of our secretary's office, or email them to Barb Larson at [blarson1517@charter.net](mailto:blarson1517@charter.net). It can be desserts, entrees, beverages, appetizers, etc.)*

### SALTED CARAMEL, CHOCOLATE & PEANUT CRACKER STACK BARS



Line a 13x9x2 inch baking pan with nonstick foil, extending foil over the edges of the pan. Using a 8 oz. pkg. of rich, rectangular crackers, such as Club crackers, use ½ of the pkg. and arrange it in a single layer over the bottom of the pan.

In a medium sauce pan combine ¾ cup butter, ¾ cup honey, 1 cup packed brown sugar and 1/3 cup whipping cream. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Add 2 cups finely crushed graham cracker crumbs, reduce heat to simmer and continue to cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in 1 teaspoon vanilla and 1/4 teaspoon sea salt.

Pour ½ of the caramel mixture over the crackers in the prepared pan, spreading to cover. Sprinkle with 2 cups chocolate covered peanut butter cups and 2 cups dry roasted peanuts. Pour remaining caramel over. Arrange remaining crackers in a single layer over the caramel, pushing slightly to secure.

For topping: in a microwave-safe bowl, combine 1 ½ cups milk chocolate pieces (9 oz.) and 1/3 cup butter-scotch flavored pieces, Microwave for 2-3 minutes or until melted, stirring every 30 seconds. Stir in 1/3 cup peanut butter until smooth. Spread chocolate mixture over cracker layer; Immediately sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon sea salt.

Chill bars for 2 hours or until completely firm. Using the edges of the foil, lift the uncut bars out of the pan. Cut into 32-40 squares.

Submitted by Jackie Willey

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## TRAVELOGUE

Since retiring in June, **Cathy Wilkinson** traveled to San Francisco to spend time with her college roommate; she hiked for a week on Isle Royale; became a Master Angler when she saw her son Mark, a DNR employee, on the Island; visited sites and art galleries in Washington D.C. and New York with husband **John**, and cheered the Tigers to a 11-2 victory over the Yankees at Yankee Stadium.

Most recently Cathy and John returned from a river cruise on the Danube through southern Germany, Austria and Hungary, visiting many beautiful Christmas Markets in each city. Highlights included extended stays in Vienna, a favorite destination, and a new but delightful sojourn to Budapest for 4 days.

(If you have taken a trip we encourage you to write about it and turn it into Barb Larson to share your experience with our church family.)

# BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY BLESSINGS AND WISHES

## Central Birthdays

February 1 - Jerry Bell

February 12 - Robin Myers

February 13 - Carissa Bell Vicente

February 14 - Kathy Larson

February 14 - Barbara Larson

February 17 - Tom Harris

February 24 - Kim Harris

## Central Anniversaries

February 10 - Diana and Ron Morgan (67th)



## Algonquin Birthdays

February 28 - Sam White

## Algonquin Anniversaries

February 14 - Woody and Laura Anderson

## 90th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Pete Bush celebrated his 90th birthday with friends and family on January 10, 2026 and then with his church family on Sunday, January 11, 2026 with a special birthday cake. Pete is shown below with his cake and a picture of his family: (L-R) Diana Kennedy, Terri Bush, Peter Bush, Pam Pride, Susy Talentino, Evelyn and Pete.



# ALGONQUIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1604 W Fourth Avenue  
Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783

Our Worship Servants for this month are:

February 1: Liturgist Bev Atkins,,Communion Bev Sibbald, Greeter Rachel Pratt and Usher Bob Sibbald

February 8: Greeter Mary Beth Vollick and Usher Todd Vollick

February 15: Greeters Bob and Bernita Sibbald and Usher Bob S Sibbald

February 22:Liturgist Bev Atkins and Greeter and Usher Laura Anderson

**News To Share:** Change Jar: October and November donations went to Walmart gift cards for people in need. We collected \$305.00 in October and \$231.00 in November. \$139.00 was donated in December for the Soo Locks Children's Museum, and the January donation will go to the Soo Theater Project.

**Algonquin Women in Faith** raised \$275.40 from a bake sale they had on Sunday, December 14 after the church service. Pictured here are Bernita on the left of the table, and on the right are Sandy, Sue, Tina and Sharon. We also adopted a Hearthside resident for Christmas.



The congregation collected non-perishable Foods to donate to Malcolm School food bank.

Submitted by Bernita Sibbald

## **Algonquin Christmas poinsettias were donated IN MEMORY OF:**

Randy Bennett by Sharon Bennett

Howard and Maizie Atkins by Sam and Marcia White

Howard Vollick and Tom and Alice O'Neil by Todd and Mary Beth Vollick

Lorne and Bev Sibbald and Arthur and Donna Greinier  
by Bob and Bernita Sibbald

Ken and Alma Fowler, Jim Wilson and Richard Scott by Lillie Dost and  
Janice Wilson

Beverly Harwood by Sam and Marcia White

Guy and Lorayne La Cross by Sharon Bennett

Beverly Harwood by the Algonquin United Women in Faith



# CENTRAL AND ALGONQUIN UNITED METHODIST

Family Night & Ash Wednesday – February 18th, 2026

Family Sledding – February 24th, 2026



We had a very successful Advent Family night last month and Christmas program (pictured on the left)! **Our next family night is going to be February 18, 2026 at 5:30p-7p.** We will have dinner and a lesson. This Family night is also Ash Wednesday. A service will be following the lesson. **We would love for all members of Algonquin to attend our family night,** which consists of dinner prepared for guests, and also a lesson. Please bring your grandkids and children, **ALL** are welcome here!

This photo was from our Advent family night last month. We had an escape room created for the kids. It was a hit! For families and children, we welcome those from **Central United and Algonquin on February 22nd from 2-4 p.m.** We will be hosting a sledding day at Soo Seal Recreation! We take these events we hold as a chance to get out in the community as a congregation and have some fun! This week's family night lesson will be **"We Bless God,"** from Psalm 104. We hope you join us!



## 2026 FINAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT



Our Stewardship Sunday was on October 26, 2025, with the theme of “Stewards of God’s Good Grace.” The figures below compare the results of the Stewardship drive for last year and the total numbers for 2026. Although the report shows a decrease pledged to the General Fund, we appreciate the 9 members who were able to increase their pledges.

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>
Number of pledges	50	43
Pledged to the General Fund	\$110,218	\$104,156
Pledged to the Building Fund	4,252	5,072
Pledged to Apportionments	13,390	8,592

This comparison indicates a disturbing pattern of decreasing members and friends that pledge. This results in another deficit for 2026. As the amount of income decreases, with an anticipated increase in expenses, Central will have difficulty keeping our expenses current.

The Finance Committee is waiting for the report with the final financial figures for 2025 to provide the information necessary in development of Central’s budget for the year 2026. When completed it will be presented to the Administrative Board for their consideration.

When the budget is completed and approved by the Administrative Board, those figures will be reported on in a later issue of the Flame. The Finance Committee appreciates the support of our members and friends throughout the years and we look forward to serving our community in 2026.

Submitted by the Finance Committee

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### DID YOU KNOW???

1. Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns!. That’s right—xix thousand! Some of the best-known include “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” and “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.” If you sang it, Charles probably wrote it.
2. Methodists helped spark the temperance movement. Wesley called drunkenness a “sin of the deepest dye,” and many 19th-century Methodists helped lead the charge for prohibition and social reform—not just for morality’s sake, but to protect families and workers.
3. Methodism spread via camp meetings. During the 1800s, revival meetings—often in tents or forest clearings—were key to spreading Methodism across the American frontier. Some lasted for days and drew thousands of people.
4. John Wesley’s famous dying words were “The best of all is, God is with us.” He whispered it twice before passing—and it remains a beloved phrase among Methodists to this day.

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
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SAULT SAINTE MARIE, MI 49783-2189

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**February 2026**

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LOVE IS PATIENT  
LOVE IS KIND  
IT DOES NOT ENVY  
IT DOES NOT BOAST  
IT IS NOT PROUD

1 CORINTHIANS 13: 4-6

