

March 2026

Rev. Jeff Bandy

937-372-7601 office@fcum.org www.fcum.org

9:00am-Sunday School

10:00am-Hospitality Time-Narthex

10:30am-Worship-Sanctuary

We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation

Attendance

<u>Date</u>	<u>Worship</u>	<u>S.S.</u>
February 1	78	20
February 8	60	18
February 15	72	17
February 18 Ash Wed.	40	0
February 22	74	23

From the Pastor

Welcome to March! Every year this month lies in the middle of the season of Lent. This year during Lent, as you should already know, we are working through a series, titled, “Removing Barriers to Engagement.” This series is addressing the fears that hinder our engagement with God and our community. For additional encouragement, I suggest following the Lectionary readings for March from the Gospel of John which include: John 3:1-17, John 4:4-42, John 9:1-41, and John 11:1-45. As you read focus on Jesus’ engagement with the people in the stories. Keep in mind, as followers of Christ, we are called to reach out and connect with the people around us, just as Jesus did during His ministry. When we look at how Jesus engaged with others—whether it was Nicodemus, the Pharisee seeking truth under the cover of night; the Samaritan Woman at the well, shunned by her community; the blind man longing for healing; or Lazarus’s family grieving their loss—we see His deep compassion and willingness to meet people in their circumstances.

These examples show us that true engagement starts with an open heart, a listening ear, and a willingness to meet people where they are. I encourage all of us to look for opportunities to build bridges, offer compassion, and share God’s love with those around us—at

work, at home, in our neighborhoods, and beyond. When we follow Jesus's example, we reflect His grace and invite others to experience the transforming power of His presence.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Jeff

Congregational & Community Engagement

In our last newsletter, we introduced Congregational & Community Engagement and my role as a ministry consultant with the church. I shared that one of our primary goals is to establish a team dedicated to this work.

The initial members of the Congregational & Community Engagement Team met for the first time in January and again in February. Our first task was to clarify our role and purpose. This statement will guide our work moving forward:

The purpose of the Congregational & Community Engagement Team (CCE) is to invite, engage, and empower our community through meaningful opportunities for connection and service.

I am grateful for—and excited about—what we have already accomplished in just two short meetings. This team is energized and ready to live into this calling.

In addition to building the team, a Sunday morning class is currently being offered alongside our sermon series on *Barriers to Engagement*. The class explores the fears and obstacles that often keep us from connecting with others in deeper and more meaningful ways. If you have not yet joined us, it is not too late. We will continue meeting on Sunday mornings throughout Lent, leading up to Easter Sunday.

Finally, I would like to share a reflection with you. Recently, while reading a devotion from *Lectio* 365, I spent time with Isaiah 40:3:

“A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight a highway for our God.’”

The reflection pointed out how easily this verse is misunderstood. It is often read as though the voice is located in the wilderness—“a voice calling in the wilderness.” But the message of the voice is actually this: *“In the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord.”*

In other words, the wilderness is where we are invited to go in order to seek God. That subtle shift in meaning caught my attention. It suggests an intentional decision to go into the wilderness to look for God—something we do not often choose to do.

As I reflected on this, it was the day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. In prayer, God gently brought to mind how often I fill my quiet or idle moments by scrolling or playing games on my phone. It is

genuinely difficult for me to put it down. I began to wonder: could “going into the wilderness” be as simple as setting aside the things—like my phone—that so easily absorb my attention? For me, the answer is yes. Lent is going to be a wilderness period for me fasting from my phone.

So I leave you with this question:

What wilderness might God be inviting you to enter in order to seek Him more fully? And what barrier—perhaps something as small and familiar as a phone—may be standing in the way of deeper engagement with your Creator, Savior, and Friend?

- Suzanne Bandy

A Visit with Michaela Skaggs

Michaela is a native of Greene County. She can be seen in the church choir on Sunday mornings, and has been a member of Faith Community for a number of years.

As some of you know her mother, Carla, is a teacher but also loves to spend time in the kitchen baking.

Michaela loved helping her mom and decided to attend Greene Vocational to learn more about culinary arts. She graduated from Cedarville High school. This proved to be so interesting to her that after graduation, she decided to enroll in a culinary school in Chicago to learn European techniques.

She accepted a position as a pastry chef at Dorothy Lane Super Market where she utilized her skills for five or six years.

More recently, she is at her alma mater, not as a student, but as a teacher. With her ready smile and considerable knowledge, she is loved and respected by her students.

She especially likes making wedding cakes which take two or more days to complete.

In addition to singing in the choir, sometimes the church is blessed to hear her lovely voice when she sings a solo.

When I asked about her favorite hymn, she thought a bit and decided “*Amazing Grace*”.

–Joan Baxter

Spring Forward in Faith

In spite of the unusual winter we have experienced this year, I’m grateful to live in a part of the country where we experience four distinct seasons. Soon trees that have spent the entire winter with bare branches will begin to show signs of new life. Trees will bud and

some will even bloom. Tulips and daffodils will bring color to the drabness we've experienced. It's awe inspiring to watch winter melt into spring. As I recently heard someone comment, "*Changing seasons is familiar but new all at once.*" The change from winter into spring lifts our spirits.

Sometimes in order to come into a new season and spring forward in faith, we have to let go of the old season. Isaiah 43:18 NIV says, "*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.*" One of the many lessons we may need to learn in life is to let go. Sometimes there are past hurts, past struggles, and past relationships that we need to release. In order to move forward, we may need to give ourselves time and permission to grieve. We may need to let ourselves feel the loss, be sad for a while, and talk with someone who cares. That person may be a Stephen Minister.

If you are going through a personal "winter" and are looking forward to a change of season, having someone to walk alongside you may be just what will help remind you how beautiful change can be as you begin to have the strength needed to let go of the past and move forward into a new season of healing and hope.

Our Stephen Ministers are here to walk alongside you as a Christian friend for as long as is needed. To learn more, contact Pastor Jeff, 937-372-7601, or Becky Cultice, 937-376-5747.

- Becky Cultice

A Voice for Environmental Stewardship

I grew up in New Jersey not far from the Atlantic Ocean. Numerous times my family would go to the ocean for a retreat from small town inland life. Mainly I lived in Orange, a crowded suburb of Newark, and Verona about 6 miles to the west. I lived in New Jersey for the first 22 years of my life.

I grew to love the Atlantic Ocean, especially Island Beach State Park. As a child I remember getting excited when we came close to the ocean. I could smell the salty breeze coming off the ocean and I could hear the call of the seagulls and the crash of the waves on the beach. When I finally got on the beach, I would see the horseshoe crabs and the tiny sand crabs digging in the sand. I would see the sea kelp that had washed up on the beach with the waves, having been torn from the sea kelp forests offshore. The salty spray would get in our noses and when we would dive into the waves, our bodies would

become covered with sand and salty salty ocean water. What a delight. This experience was a far cry from life as a landlubber.

The ocean has enriched my life so much that when I was a Biology Major at Montclair State College, I was considering becoming a biological oceanographer. Even though I have lived in Ohio since 1970, I still love the ocean. I have been a member of Ocean Conservancy for years and have even taken a course in oceanography with The Great Courses.

Ocean Conservancy was founded in 1972 by scientists and ocean enthusiasts in order to protect the oceans world-wide from the pollution caused by plastics produced and discarded by humans, wastewater released by cruise ships and fishing nets lost by fishing boats and ships. It is heartbreaking to see pictures of sea turtles snagged in lost fishing nets. Many sea creatures are endangered by ocean pollution. Even large marine mammals like manatees (also called sea cows) and whales of many sizes are endangered, injured or killed by boats and ships when they collide in the open ocean.

The Ocean Conservancy is partnering with stakeholders who use the oceans for their businesses to reduce and eliminate endangering sea creatures. It is mindboggling to realize how many species of large animals there are that inhabit our Earth's oceans and the air above them. Protecting that life is an important issue when we consider ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP. Respecting the life that God has put on this planet is a moral issue. Let us stand up for all life on this PRECIOUS PLANET EARTH, God is counting on us, who were made in His Image.

- Rev. Alan D. Barone, B.A. in science education, M.Div, and Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist

Conversations with Pastor Dexter Ceballos, Our UMC Missionary in Mongolia

I have recently been exchanging emails with our UMC Missionary in Mongolia. Here is a condensed summary of our discussions. Pastor Dexter's Ceballos comments are in [blue](#).

Where are the Billie and Luke Snell Educational Programs located?

[We have started the program in two locations, each with a slightly different purpose.](#)

[1\) Kairos Center – Language Program \(Ulaanbaatar\)](#)

[This program is based at Kairos Center, located in a community near Gerelt UMC](#) (Note: this is the church Billie and I attended while in

Mongolia) and Blessed Life UMC. Its primary goal is to provide quality English education to students from low-income families who cannot afford private language schools. We promote the program in the surrounding community and nearby schools, and interested students may enroll. Our long-term vision is that this may become a recognized Educational Center, potentially the first UMC Educational Center in Ulaanbaatar, while still reflecting our Christian values and mission.

2) Church-Based Language Program – Tahilt UMC

The second program is conducted inside church premises and is directly integrated into our evangelistic and discipleship ministry. This is at Tahilt UMC, about 25 kilometers (16 miles) from central Ulaanbaatar. This program is an outreach tool to engage the community and share the gospel. This is most evident at Tahilt UMC, where the language program serves as a bridge for students and families to connect with the church and its ministries.

3. Murun City Program

Our planned program in Murun City is currently on hold due to extreme winter conditions, which are more severe than in Ulaanbaatar. Murun is on the border with Siberia and is one of our most remote churches from Ulaanbaatar. It is 732 Kilometers (450 miles) from Ulaanbaatar. We plan to begin construction/renovation after the winter season.

Who can attend these programs?

Both programs are open to everyone, church members and non-Christians alike. Students enroll voluntarily; enrollment is required because parents must sign consent and agreement forms, as required by law for programs involving minors.

Thank you, Faith Community UMC, for developing a partnership and for your encouragement and prayers. Your support helps us continue strengthening these ministries and serving the people God has entrusted to us here in Mongolia.

- Luke M. Snell

Why go to Church?

I think this is fantastic, I just love the guy's answer, and the interpretation for the word BIBLE. Enjoy and pass it on.

A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. He wrote: "I've gone for 30 years now, and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't

remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time, the preachers and priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all".

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column. Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

When you are DOWN to nothing, God is UP to something!
Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible & receives the impossible! Thank God for our physical and our spiritual nourishment!

IF YOU CANNOT SEE GOD IN ALL, YOU CANNOT SEE GOD AT ALL!

B. I. B. L. E. simply means: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth!

- Christopher Long · Moderator · May 16, 2024

Days In the Districts

Clergy and Laity are invited to join Bishop Jung on Saturday, Mar. 7 at Resurrection Mason UMC, 6315 S. Mason Montgomery Rd., Mason. Clergy Gathering will begin at 9:00am. Worship will be at 9:30am, followed by Bible Study. Laity will begin at 11:00am for a special training on leadership skills. Lunch will be served at noon, from 1:00-3:00pm the bishop will lead a discussion on the Five Strategic Pillars of the Ohio Episcopal Area Missional Direction and closing worship. Register by Sunday, Mar. 1 at

<https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/event/srd-and-gmd-bishops-day-district>.



Mary & Martha

Please join us for Mary & Martha on Monday, Mar. 9, 6:00-8:00pm in FCC. In PREPARATION of Lent, we will bring to you other activities to be PREPARED for in your life! As always, bring a dish to

share—one that you have **PREPARED**. If you need childcare or have any questions call Laurie Krakowiak at 937-694-8114.

Fun at Faith

Please join us for Fun at Faith on Sunday, Mar. 15, 5:00-7:00pm in FCC. Come celebrate March Madness Faith Community style. Sloppy Joes & drinks will be provided. Please bring a side dish to share. We hope to see you there!

Women's Groups

DORCAS CIRCLE will not meet in March. **WOMEN UNITED CIRCLE** will meet on Tuesday, Mar. 16 at 1:00pm in the Parlor.

United Methodist Men of Faith

Men of Faith will meet on the third Monday each month. All Christian men are invited to join us on March 16, at 6:00pm in CC 16A. Dinner will be served. We will have social time during the meal followed by a short Bible devotional from the book "God calls you to more". We need more men to attend this great group. This small group of men build relationships and serve the community through donations of fresh vegetables from their group garden and annual church wide garage sale. Please join the group for spiritual refreshment and comradery. Don't forget that you can donate large items to be sold by the Garage sale group headed by Bob Whipp. Please provide us with your email address for more information.

Children's Church

Twice a month we will have Children's Church immediately following the Children's Moments during regular Worship Service. Jane Henning will teach on the 2nd Sunday and Carla Skaggs will teach on the 3rd Sunday of each month.

Jackson Area Ministries Seed Program

The "JAM" program provides garden plants and seeds for the residents in need so they can provide veggies and fruits for their family. Please mark checks J.A.M. project and place in the offering plate or drop seed packets into the basket in the narthex through Sunday, Mar. 29.

Scholarships

Thanks to the generosity of members past and present, Faith Community is able to offer educational assistance each year to graduating high school seniors who plan to attend a college, university, or trade school. Guidelines and application forms for FCUMC's 2026-2027 Educational Assistance are available in the narthex and church office. These forms must be completed and returned to the church office by Thursday, Apr. 16.

In addition to the general educational assistance funds available for distribution is the Jan Sandifer Scholarship. This scholarship is to be awarded to a female Faith Community U.M. Church member who is graduating from high school. This individual must be actively attending and participating in the life of the church and have been accepted into a college, university, or trade school.

As a church family we appreciate our youth and want to support them with their education. Help us to get the word out to these young people about the assistance available and remind them of the deadline.

Help Needed

If anyone is looking for something to do outside on a nice day, there are numerous leaves and sticks/limbs which will need to be cleaned up. There are always limbs and sticks along the bike path and in the front yard. Leaves are mainly along the exit driveway and in front of the fellowship hall and music room. Your help will be appreciated!

Extended Hours

The Community Center is now open for walkers on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00am-2:00pm. Enjoy a safe, indoor place to walk and keep moving!

Thank You Notes

Dear Faith Community United Methodist,
Thank you for your support throughout 2025. Your donation of \$1007.11 is an investment in the lives of some of our community's most vulnerable citizens will enable Bridges of Hope to keep helping them pursue the hope of a better future. God Bless you, Tom Kornbau, Treasurer, Bridges of Hope

Dear Faith Community U.M.,
 From all of us at the FISH food pantry, your support through the year is appreciated more than we can say. Your donation of \$6,861.20 enables us to secure food for our Greene County neighbors in need. We are truly grateful. In appreciation, B. Vandecreek, Board member.

Dear Faith Family,
 We would like to thank all of the people that have been helping in Karson’s care. The meal train, gas cards, food cards and any money that has been used for food or gas. Also, thanks for all prayers and concerns on the prayer chain. We are so thankful for your support in this tough situation. Jaylynn & Dylan Green and Mike & Sharon Boothe

FCUM
January 2026 Financials

Monthly Income	\$ 15,130		YTD Income	\$ 15,130	
Monthly Expenses	\$ 31,625		YTD Expenses	\$ 31,625	
Difference	\$(16,495)	-109.03%	Difference	\$ (16,495)	-109.03%

Passings

Sincere condolences and prayers are extended to
 Friends and Family on the death of:

FLORENCE HARNER

**Deadline for Submitting Articles
 for April Faith Links: Monday, March 16**

March 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9-10am-Sunday School - 6, 11, FH 15C, Parlor 10-10:30a-Hospitality - Narthex 10:30-11:30a-Worship-Sanctuary	2 5:15-6p-Prayer Partners-Parlor 6:45-8p-G.C. Spec. Olymp. Basketball-FCC 7-8p-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30p-Boy Scouts-15C 7-8:45p-Stephen Ministry - OFFSITE	3 9a-2p-Walking-FCC 10-11:30a-Bible Stdy-Par 1-3:30p-SM Training-Lib 3:30-5:30p-Wint Grd-FCC 5:30-7p-Cong & Com Eng -Parsonage 6-8p-G Scouts-15ABC,16A 6-8p-Volleyball-FCC 6:30-8:30p-Trustees-Parlor	4 6:15-7:15p-Handbells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9p-Choir Practice-Sanctuary	5 9-11a-Walking-FCC 11a-12p-Prayer Shawl-Parlor 2-3:45p Woman's Club of Xenia - Parlor 6-8:00p Girls Volleyball-FCC	6	7 9a-3p-Bishop Jung Days In The Districts - Resurrection Mason UMC, 6315 S. Mason Montgomery Rd. Move your clocks FORWARD 1 hour before bedtime
8 Daylight Savings Time 9-10am-Sunday School - 6, 11, FH 15C, Parlor 10-10:30a-Hospitality - Narthex 10:30-11:30a-Worship-Sanctuary	9 6-8p-Mary & Martha-FCC 7-8p-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30p-Boy Scouts-15C	10 9a-2p-Walking-FCC 10-11:30a-Bible Stdy-Par 1-3:30p-SM Training-Lib 3:30-5:30p-Wint Grd-FCC 6-8p-G Scouts Leaders-15C 6-8p-Volleyball-FCC	11 6:15-7:15p-Handbells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9p-Choir Practice-Sanctuary	12 9-11a-Walking-FCC 11a-12p-Prayer Shawl-Parlor 6-8:00p Girls Volleyball-FCC 6:30-8:30p Scouting America Sycamore District Leaders - 15A-B	13	14
15 9-10am-Sunday School - 6, 11, FH 15C, Parlor 10-10:30a-Hospitality - Narthex 10:30-11:30a-Worship-Sanctuary 5-7p-Fun at Faith-FCC	16 April Faith Links Articles Due 1-3p-Women United-Parlor 6-8:30p-Men of Faith-16A 6:45-8p-G.C. Spec. Olymp. Volleyball - FCC 7-8p-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30p-Boy Scouts-15C	17 St. Patrick's Day 9a-2p-Walking-FCC 10-11:30a-Bible Stdy-Par 3:30-5:30p-Wint Grd-FCC 6-8p-G Scouts-15ABC,16A 6-8p-Volleyball-FCC	18 6:15-7:15p-Handbells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9p-Choir Practice-Sanctuary	19 9-11a-Walking-FCC 11a-12p-Prayer Shawl-Parlor 6-8p-Girls Volleyball-FCC 6:30-8:30p-AdBoard Council-FH 15C	20	21
22 9-10am-Sunday School - 6, 11, FH 15C, Parlor 10-10:30a-Hospitality - Narthex 10:30-11:30a-Worship-Sanctuary	23 6:45-8p-G.C. Spec. Olymp. Volleyball-FCC 7-8p-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30p-Boy Scouts-15C 7-8:30p-SPRC-Library	24 9a-2p-Walking-FCC 10-11:30a-Bible Stdy-Par 3:30-5:30p-Wint Grd-FCC 6-8p-Volleyball-FCC	25 6:15-7:15p-Handbells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9p-Choir Practice-Sanctuary	26 9-11a-Walking-FCC 10-11:30a-Private Event-Lib 11a-12p-Prayer Shawl-Parlor 6-8:00p Girls Volleyball-FCC	27	28 6-8p-Double I -15A/Kit.
29 Palm Sunday 9-10am-Sunday School - 6, 11, FH 15C, Parlor 10-10:30a-Hospitality - Narthex 10:30-11:30a-Worship-Sanctuary	30 6:45-8pm-G.C. Spec. Olymp. Volleyball-FCC 7-8p-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30p-Boy Scouts-15C	31 9a-2p-Walking-FCC 10-11:30a-Bible Stdy-Par 3:30-5:30p-Wint Grd-FCC 6-8p-Volleyball-FCC				

EASTER FLOWERS



It is time to order your Tulips or Lilies for Easter Sunday. The flowers truly beautify the church for all the worshipers. Please place the order form and payment in the offering plate or return to the church office by **Monday, Mar. 30, 2026**. Please indicate how many plants and if you want to order tulip(s) or lilies(s). The cost per plant is \$12.00. Make checks payable to Faith Community UMC, mark your check "Easter Flowers" in the memo and/or on your envelope. We need to have this form & payment in order to correctly place and record your order.

(#)_____ Tulips/ (#)_____ Lilies (Amount paid _____ check or cash, please circle)

Given by: (Your name)_____

Given in honor of:

Given in memory of:

If you purchase flowers, you may pick them up immediately following the Worship service on Easter Sunday. Flowers not picked up on Easter Sunday may be picked up during regular office hours Tuesday, April 7 thru Friday, April 10. (The church will be closed on Monday, April 6.) Thank You



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