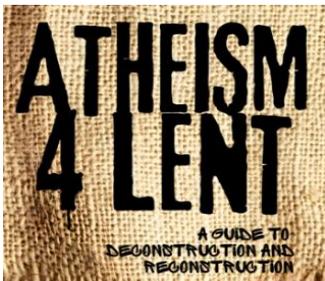




**ATHEISM
4 LENT**

A GUIDE TO
DECONSTRUCTION AND
RECONSTRUCTION





Lent is traditionally a time of fasting, reflection, and spiritual honesty. In this series, we create space for deep questioning and unflinching honesty — even doubt. Inspired by the provocative practice of Atheism for Lent (popularized by theologian Peter Rollins), we enter the wilderness of deconstruction — not to lose faith, but to encounter God beyond our idols and illusions. The goal isn't nihilism, but spiritual rebirth. What if we give up idolatry? What if we turn to ash false images of God and embrace the Living Word?

**Those who are able please stand*

PRELUDE Variations on “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” – Janet Linker

Jerry Mason, Guest Organist

WELCOME

*CALL TO WORSHIP

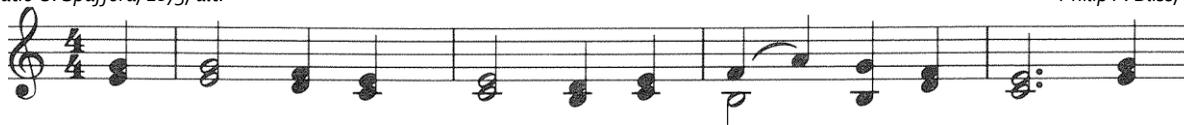
Happy are we
when our treasures cannot be quantified.
Happy are we
when our knowledge is tempered by mystery.
Happy are we
when our pain is held in the balm of love.
Happy are we
when our delight comes from beyond ourselves.

*OPENING HYMN

“When Peace Like a River”

VILLE DU HAVRE 11.8.11.9. with refrain
Philip P. Bliss, 1876

Horatio G. Spafford, 1873; alt.



1 When peace, like a riv - er, up - holds me each day, when
2 Though e - vil should tempt me, though tri - als should come, let
3 My sin— oh, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought— my
4 O God, speed the day that is filled with your light, when



sor - rows like sea bil - lows roll, What - ev - er my lot, you have
this blessed as - sur - ance con - trol, That Christ has re - gard - ed my
sin— not in part, but the whole— Is nailed to the cross and I
clouds are rolled back as a scroll; The trum - pet shall sound and the

Refrain



taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."
 help - less es - tate, and has paid life and blood for my soul: It is
 bear it no more. Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!
 Lord shall ap - pear, "e - ven so"— it is well with my soul.



well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

***CONFESSION**

Holy One, we have placed our trust in material things. You in Jesus told us not to put our trust in things. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, Where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Yet we have preachers telling us to do this very thing. That your favor comes to us in earthly treasures. Help us turn this theology to ash, and see the real you. In the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in your many names, we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE *Job 1:1-12 and Matthew 4:1-11*

Pete Metzloff, Liturgist

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

"Your Words are Spirit and Life"

Text and music © 1993, Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP. All rights reserved.



Your words are spir - it and life, O Lord: rich - er than



gold, strong - er than death. Your words are spir - it and



life, O Lord; life ev - er - last - ing.

MESSAGE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY OF GOD

Stacie Yates

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Reception of New Members Vivian Cline, Carol Laub, Linda Smith

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

*PRAYER RESPONSE

"Hear Our Prayer"

Psalm 134:1, Music by George Whelpton, 1897



Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God; in -
cline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

SERMON "Prosperity"

The Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

ANTHEM "Remembering Home" – Orin Johnson

Chancel Choir with Becca Barko, cello

Super flumina Babylonis, Psalm 137 "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept"

Psalm 137 was written during or shortly after the Babylonian Exile around the 6th century B.C. it describes the trauma of being forced to sing sacred songs for captors who destroyed their home.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

There is an offering plate if you feel led to deposit your envelope or an offering there. You can also give through our Realm app or get the link to give by texting UCCMEDINA to 73256. You can also give through VENMO. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!

UCC Medina
@uccmedina



venmo

Offering Invitation

There is a risk in this giving.

It might go to our enemy.

It might go to someone we once thought undeserving.

Yet we are all undeserving of the grace afforded to us by God. In the imitation of Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit, we sing out our praise to our triune God!

*Doxology (words, Ruth Duck, ©2005, GIA Publications)

**Praise God, the Source of life and birth; Praise God, the Word, who came to earth;
Praise God, the Spirit, holy flame; All glory, honor to God's Name! Amen.**

*Give Thanks

Gracious God, receive these gifts as signs of our turning.

Use them not to build idols, but to heal wounds, feed the hungry, and make room for grace. As we release what we cling to, teach us to receive what you freely give. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

George Hunt Smyttan, 1856; alt.

"Forty Days and Forty Nights"

HEINLEIN 7.7.7.7.

Attributed to Martin Herbst, 1876



1 For - ty days and for - ty nights you were fast - ing in the wild;
 2 Shall we not your sor - row share and from world - ly joys ab - stain,
 3 Then if Sa - tan on us press, flesh or spir - it to as - sail,
 4 So shall we have peace di - vine: ho - lier glad - ness ours shall be;
 5 Keep, O keep us, Sav - ior dear, ev - er con - stant by your side;



For - ty days and for - ty nights tempt - ed, and yet un - de - filed.
 Fast - ing with un - ceas - ing prayer, strong with you to suf - fer pain?
 Vic - tor in the wil - der - ness, grant that we not faint or fail!
 'Round us, too, shall an - gels shine, such as served you faith - ful - ly.
 That with you we may ap - pear at the e - ter - nal Eas - ter - tide.

***ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***BENEDICTION**

Go now into the wilderness of Lent.
Do not be afraid of the questions.
 Do not rush the answers.
May the God who meets us in dust and ashes
 strip away what is false,
and breathe new life where hope feels thin.
 Remember:
we are dust, and deeply loved.
 Go in peace.
 Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "God Be With You"**

**God be with you 'til we meet again; By His counsels guide uphold you;
 With His sheep securely fold you; God be with you 'til we meet again.**

***POSTLUDE "If You But Trust in God to Guide You" – JS Bach Jerry Mason, Guest Organist**

 Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service

Coffee Hour is hosted this week by Jake & Sarah Koehler

 Music in this bulletin reprinted/podcast/streamed with permission under:
 ONE LICENSE, License #A-605137. All rights reserved and CCLI, License #1637380 & #213338

PASTORAL STAFF

Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon, Senior Minister - luke@uccmedina.org
Rev. Meghan Malone, Associate Pastor of Youth & Mission - meghan@uccmedina.org
Karen Brocco-Kish, Visitation Pastor – karenb7777@aol.com

OFFICE STAFF

Cindy Korecky, Office Manager - office@uccmedina.org;
Pete Metzloff, Finance Director - pete@uccmedina.org

PROGRAM STAFF

Stacie Yates, Director of Christian Education – stacie@uccmedina.org
Tracy Gabrielsen, Director of Music – tracy@uccmedina.org
Cathy Fafrak, Organist & Office Assistant – cathy@uccmedina.org
Jennifer Vilimonovic, Director of Hobby Horse Preschool and Children’s Choir – jen@uccmedina.org
Jack Sharpe, Maintenance & Custodian

THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

**“WELCOMING, LOVING, SERVING, WHERE GOD HAS NO LIMITS.
MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY!”**

Live streaming of the 10:30 a.m. Sanctuary service is available at www.uccmedina.org/live

February 22 thru March 1, 2026

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun Blake Donation Due
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:00 am 3rd Grade Bible Class
9:45 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal
10:00 am Children’s Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
10:30 am Jesus Vibes
10:30 am Teen Church
11:30 am Teen Council
11:30 am Hospitality Team Meeting
**4:30 pm ALL CHURCH FAMILY
BOARD GAME NIGHT**

Mon

Tues

Wed 10:30 am Quilters
5:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal
6:00 pm Choir Rehearsal
7:00 pm Trial of Judas-Lenten Series

Thurs 6:30 pm Bible Study

Fri

Sat COSTA RICA MISSION TRIP

Sun Blake Donations List Posted
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:00 am 3rd Grade Bible Class
9:45 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal
10:00 am Children’s Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
10:30 am Jesus Vibes
3:00 pm Vibes Video Crew
4:30 pm Youth Group

Worship Highlights: 8:15, 9:00 & 10:30 am

Scripture: Job 1:1-12 & Matthew 4:1-11

Sermon: “Prosperity” - Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

Communion Table: The flowers on the communion table are given by Autumn Keller in honor of Phillip, Charlotte & Travis Scaggs.

ATHEISM FOR LENT

Lent is traditionally a time of fasting, reflection, and spiritual honesty. In this series, we create space for deep questioning and unflinching honesty- even doubt. Inspired by the provocative practice of Atheism for Lent (popularized by theologian Peter Rollins), we enter the wilderness of deconstruction – not to lose faith, but to encounter God beyond our idols and illusions. The goal isn’t nihilism, but spiritual rebirth. What if we give up our idolatry? What if we turn to ash false images of God and embrace the Living Word? Sundays in Lent...

WEDNESDAYS DURING LENT “Trial of Judas”

February 25th - March 25th

Join us every Wednesday evening at 7 pm during Lent for an Interactive Readers Theatre. We will meet in Fellowship Hall along with members of St. Matthew and St. Paul for our Lenten Study, “The Trial of Judas”.

MEN’S BREAKFAST

Mark your calendars for the next Men’s Breakfast on Monday, March 2nd at Buehler’s River Styx at 8:00 am. Breakfast is always the first Monday of the month, and **all men of the church are invited.** No reservations required. We hope to see you there!

THE PRAYGROUND IS OPEN!

In our efforts to be welcoming to visitors and members of all ages and stages, the DELT committee has created a Prayground area for parents and caregivers of infants and young children. Located in a corner of the East Room with visual access to the pulpits and choir loft, it provides a space for a parents & caregivers to be able to nurse or entertain their little ones and still be able to be a part of the service without disruption to others in the pews. It offers a rocker and other comfortable seating, plus blankets, books and toys geared toward little ones two and under.

DONATION OF THE MONTH

The Mission Team's item for February is feminine hygiene products. During the month, we will collect tampons, sanitary pads, menstrual cups, and period underwear to be donated to the Medina Personal Care Pantry.

VBS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



We are looking for more volunteers for VBS! Curious about what this entails? The VBS volunteer registration form, found by scanning the QR code, has details describing each volunteer role and will help us make sure that we have all positions filled. The dates for VBS this year are June 8th-11th with a family celebration day on June 12th. There are volunteer opportunities before those dates to help prepare, as well as during VBS week. Thank you for your help!

COME TO FAMILY GAME NIGHT

Our annual family game night will be on **February 22nd** from 4:30-6:00pm in Fellowship Hall. **All ages are welcome!** Bring your favorite board or card games to play with old and new friends from church. You're also welcome to bring finger foods and snacks to share!

Be The Neighbor Registration Due March 1st



Register on Realm for this summer's teen mission trip by March 1st! This year we're heading to Tucson, AZ from July 12th-17th to learn about immigrant welcome. Registration is open to students entering 9th grade and up, and the cost is \$400 per person. Adults who are willing to chaperone are strongly encouraged to join us for this unique serving and learning experience! Find out more at: www.betheneighbor.org/tucson.

GREAT HYMNAL GIVE AWAY

Per Luke's sermon about *decluttering*...! There is a cart in the welcome area filled with old hymnals. You are welcome to take one for playing/singing at home, using for crafts (old music is a thing now in crafting for a variety of projects- you might want them for that) or simply to have one for posterity. We will leave the cart there for a week or two and then we will dispose of any leftovers.

COSTA RICA MISSION TRIP

The 2026 Costa Rica Mission Team will be leaving on 2/28/26. We will be building for a wonderful family of 4: Blanca, her husband David, and their 4 and 6-year-old boys Caleb and Ian. We have a team of 17, so in addition to building the home for our host family, we will also be laying cement floors in 3 other homes. On behalf of the entire team, I would sincerely like to thank both the Mission and the Endowment Teams for their generous donations. Without their support, along with the support of the Congregation, this build would not be possible. Keep the U.S. team, the local team, and our host family in your prayers during our trip.

SPIRIT MOVES YOGA CLASS

Gather every Monday from 6-7pm for Spirit Moves Yoga. This free weekly class is offered to individuals of all ages and ability levels including chair yoga. The class will be held in the Fellowship Hall and is offered to members, non-members and open to the community.

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday – March 29th at 8:00, 9:00 & 10:30 a.m.
Children's Palm Parade at 10:30 a.m. service

Maundy Thursday service in Fellowship Hall on April 2nd @ 7pm

Good Friday we will show a documentary in Fellowship Hall on April 3rd @ 7pm
“**Bad Faith**” - *directed by Stephen Ujlaki and Chris Jones.*

Easter Worship

7:00 am Easter Sunrise Service

@ Spring Grove Chapel

8:15 am Chapel Worship

9:00 am Gathering Praise

10:30 am Sanctuary Worship

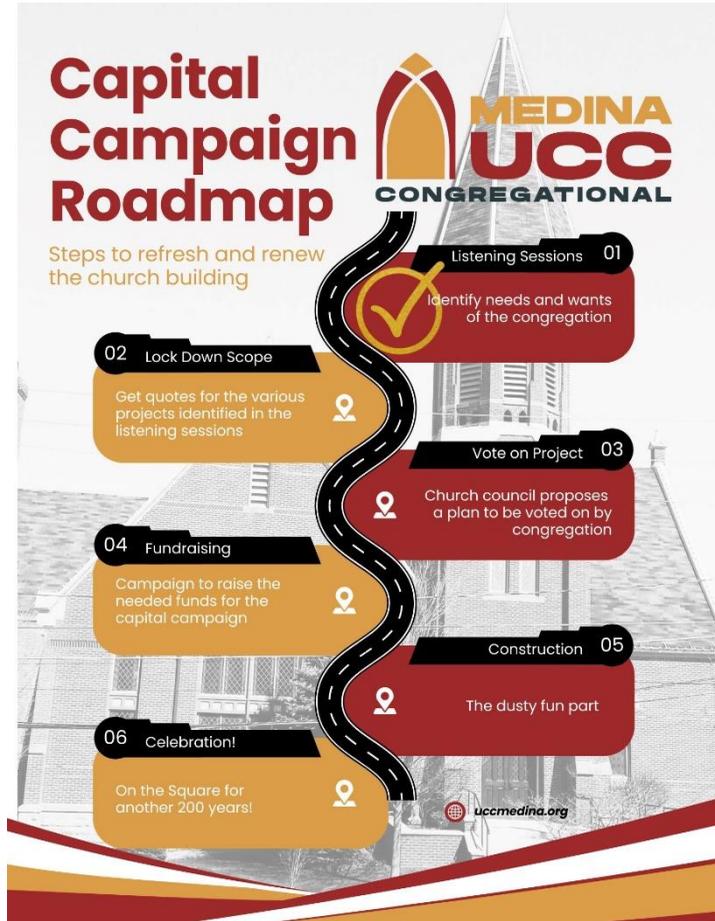
The deadline for submission of articles for NEXT Sunday's Messenger is this Sunday at 11:30 am

Please submit articles to the church office at office@uccmedina.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: 9 am – 3 pm MONDAY THRU THURSDAY; FRIDAY 9 am – 12 pm

Capital Campaign Roadmap

Steps to refresh and renew the church building



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Moderators and I would like to share an update on the status of our Capital Campaign planning.

This fall, we completed Step One: Listening Sessions. Based on what we heard, we are now engaged in Step Two: gathering information and estimates for the projects identified during those sessions.

At this stage:

- We are obtaining three quotes for the organ.
- Property & Grounds is bringing in an architect to assist with assessing and planning for the sanctuary's needs.

In addition, the Moderators were awarded funds from the Endowment to hire a capital campaign consultant. We are grateful to be working with Kelly Brill, former senior pastor at Avon Lake United Church of Christ. During her tenure there, Kelly successfully planned and led six capital campaigns.

We met with Kelly a few weeks ago for an initial scoping conversation. She was

impressed by the vitality and mission of our church, and we were equally impressed by her experience and guidance.

One of her first recommendations was to form a dedicated Capital Campaign Planning Team, which is now being assembled with the support of Church Council.

In short, we are doing our due diligence—securing multiple quotes, engaging professional expertise where needed, and laying a strong foundation for the work ahead.

We will continue to share updates in the *Pilgrim Messenger* as this process unfolds.

Yours in Christ,
-Pastor Luke

Matthew 4:1-11

Abundant Grace

The season of Lent begins with a 40-day trip into the harsh and desolate wilderness. While it might not be as enticing as a trip to Tahiti, it is an important one nevertheless. It is our time to learn from Jesus how to deal with our own wild beasts, our own hungers and thirsts, and our own run-ins with the Tempter, by leaning on God's Word.

This year, though, I don't need to say "yes" to this invitation to follow Jesus into the desert. That's because I have never emerged. I have been in a state of wilderness lostness for quite some time. Wild beasts remain nipping at my ankles. False promises of stones turning into bread have not satiated the hollow pit in my soul. And tempters seem to be trying to get my attention everywhere I turn.

It is easy to "do" Lent when everything is right in the world. When we feel safe and hopeful, Lent becomes a season of eagerly listening to God, slowing down, praying more, and helping others. But when worries of rising grocery bills and whether it is safe to go out in a public place overtake your thoughts, you wonder: Is this harsh world the norm?

I know I am not alone asking this, as studies show how hurtful and hateful society has become. There was a recent poll that revealed a whopping 47% of Americans agreed that people have become ruder to one another since Covid. The other day, a colleague shared an insight that I found profound. She observed how there was a growing sense of entitlement, yet no one had any shame over the things they said and did.

Perhaps this Lenten season is not so much about entering the wilderness as it is about helping one another exit it — to find our way back to hope by holding even tighter to God's Word, by kicking the wild beasts away, and by claiming the name of Christ when tempters tout false promises.

For here is the good news for all my perpetual wilderness wanderers. There are always — always — angels among us eagerly waiting to administer the help that we need. Perhaps there is one sitting in the pew next to you.

Redeeming God, there are many of us who seem to be trapped in a never-ending wilderness. The weight of the world's worries and fears are robbing us of joy and hope. Strengthen us. Grant us courage. Increase our faith. May this Lent we reach out to one another so that we emerge from our desert desolation together, united in a love that no evil can destroy. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.