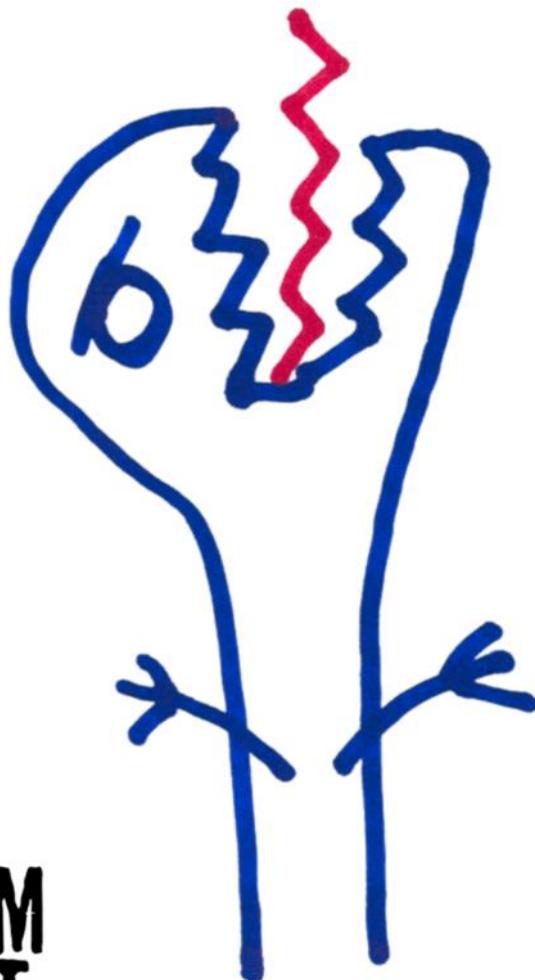


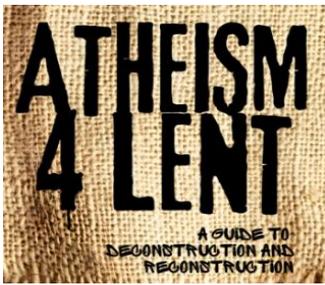
TOXIC



**ATHEISM
4 LENT**

A GUIDE TO
DECONSTRUCTION AND
RECONSTRUCTION

 **MEDINA
UCC**
CONGREGATIONAL



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 "Aria, Op. 51" – Flor Peeters

Cathy Fafrak, Organ

WELCOME

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

God gathers the scattered.

God tends the wounded.

When leaders fail,

God does not abandon the flock.

When religion harms,

God moves toward healing.

Come, you who carry pain.

Come, you who still hope.

Come, you who are unsure.

This is holy ground.

Let us worship.

***OPENING HYMN**

"My Shepherd Is the Living God"

CONSOLATION C.M.D.

Composite from Thomas Sternhold, 1549 & Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Southern Harmony, 1835; Harm. Erik Routley, 1976



1 My shep-herd is the liv - ing God, I there-fore noth-ing need;

2 When I walk through the shades of death, your pres-ence is my stay;

3 The sure pro - vi - sions of my God at - tend me all my days;



In pas - tures fair, near pleas - ant streams you set - tle me to feed.

A word of your sup - port - ing breath drives all my fears a - way.

O may your house be my a - bode, and all my work be praise.



You bring my wan-dering spir - it back when I for-sake your ways,
Your hand, in sight of all my foes, does still my ta - ble spread;
There would I find a set - tled rest, while oth - ers come and go—



And lead me for your mer - cy's sake in paths of truth and grace.
My cup with bless-ings o - ver-flows, your oil a - noints my head.
No more a strang-er or a guest, but like a child at home.

*CONFESSION

Let us pray,

Holy God, we confess the harm done in your name.

**We confess leaders who sought power instead of care,
who protected institutions rather than people,
who silenced pain rather than listening.**

**We confess communities that demanded loyalty over truth,
obedience over conscience,
and silence over healing.**

**We confess the ways we participated,
the times we looked away,
the moments we chose comfort instead of courage.**

Forgive what we have done.

Heal what has been done to us.

Restore what has been broken within your people.

Hear now our silent confessions.

Silence is kept

**Free us from toxic faith that wounds instead of heals,
and lead us toward the love that Jesus shows us still.**

Amen.

ANTHEM "I'm Just a Poor Wayfaring Stranger"
Appalachian Folk Tune/arr. Tammy Waldrop

Alleluia Ringers

SCRIPTURE *Ezekiel 34:1-10 and John 10:11-18*

Dave Butler, Liturgist

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

"Your Words are Spirit and Life"

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

Three staves of musical notation in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. The lyrics are: "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

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

*PRAYER RESPONSE

"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"

Words and music by Ken Medema, 1973, © Hope publishing Company

CHILDREN PRAYING Irr.

Three staves of musical notation in 2/2 time, key of B-flat major. The lyrics are: "Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, Lord, send your spir-it in this place; Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace!"

SERMON "Toxic"

The Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

HYMN

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" vs. 3

Isaac Watts, 1707

HAMBURG LM
Lowell Mason, 1824

3. See, from his head, his hands, his feet, The pain and
 3. love flow min - gled down; Did e'er such love and
 3. sor - row meet, Or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?

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

Offertory Invitation

As we rebuild trust and community,
**we give not to maintain systems,
 but to nurture spirituality and empower life.**

These gifts support a church committed to care rather than control,
**truth rather than silence,
 and love rather than fear.**

Let us rise in body or spirit and sing out our praise to 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.**

*Prayer of Dedication

God who binds up the wounded,
 receive these gifts as signs of our commitment to healing.

Use them to create safe spaces, to restore trust,
 and to reflect the love of the Good Shepherd
 who lays down their life for the flock.

Shape us into a beloved community where pain is honored, hope is nurtured, and love has the
 final word.

Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

Fred Kaan, 1965, © 1968 by Hope Publishing Company

"For the Healing of the Nations"

WESTMINSTER ABBEY 8.7.8.7.8.7.
Henry Purcell, c. 1680; arr. Ernest Hawkins, 1842



1 For the heal - ing of the na - tions, God, we pray with
2 Lead us for - ward in - to free - dom; from de - spair your
3 All that kills a - bun - dant liv - ing, let it from the
4 You, Cre - a - tor God, have writ - ten your great name on



one ac - cord; for a just and e - qual shar - ing
world re - lease, that, re - deemed from war and ha - tred,
earth be banned; pride of sta - tus, race, or school - ing,
hu - man - kind; for our grow - ing in your like - ness



of the things that earth af - fords; to a life of
all may come and go in peace. Show us how through
dog - mas that ob - scure your plan. In our com - mon
bring the life of Christ to mind, that by our re -



love in ac - tion help us rise and pledge our word.
care and good - ness fear will die and hope in - crease.
quest for jus - tice may we hal - low life's brief span.
sponse and ser - vice earth its des - ti - ny may find.

*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 "Toccatina in e minor, P.462" – Johann Pachelbel** **Cathy Fafrak, Organ**

****Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service****
Coffee Hour is hosted this week by the Costa Rica Mission Trip Attendees

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

MARCH 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

March 22 thru March 29, 2026 WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun **Confirmation Retreat**
Blake Donations Due
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:00 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal
9:45 am Bell Choir Warmup
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
11:45 am Hospitality Team

Mon 7:00 pm Beer & Hymns

Tues

Wed 10:30 am Quilters
5:00 pm Bell Choir
6:00 pm Choir Practice
6:00 pm Gathering Band
7:00 pm **Trial of Judas-Lenten Series**

Thurs 6:30 pm Bible Study

Fri

Sat

Sun **Palm Sunday - Palm Parade**
Blake Donations Sign ups
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:45 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal
10:00 am Children’s Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
10:30 am Jesus Vibes

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

Scripture: Ezekiel 34: 1-10 & John 10: 11-18

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

Communion Table Flowers: The Communion Table flowers are given by Carole Fawcett in honor of her parents, George & Lillian Fawcett

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday – March 29th @ 8:15, 9:00 & 10:30 am
Children’s Palm Parade at 10:30 am service

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

Good Friday - documentary in Fellowship Hall
April 3rd @ 7pm
“Bad Faith”

directed by Stephen Ujlaki and Chris Jones.

Easter Worship

7:00 am Sunrise Service @ Spring Grove Chapel
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Praise
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
11:30 am Easter Egg Hunt

EASTER BAGS DUE BACK

To those who picked up an Easter Bag last week, make sure you fill the bags with age-appropriate items, **and return by next Sunday, March 29th (Palm Sunday)** to be blessed. Thanks for helping the Mission Team spread some love to kids whose parents are not able to celebrate Easter with them!

DONATION OF THE MONTH

March donation of the month will be for Cups Collective. Let’s help restock them with paper plates (6 or 9 inch), paper bowls (12oz), to go containers, disposable coffee cups (8oz), napkins and paper towels.

ANNUAL REPORT TIME!

Teams, Committees and Leadership of the church are being asked to write up their Annual Reports to be presented at the May 17th Annual Meeting immediately following **ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP at 10:30 am**. The due date for your report will be Thursday, April 30th. Please email or drop off your reports to me in the church office. Please try to limit your reports to one page. **Also, please inform me as to any changes on your team.** I appreciate all your efforts in getting these to me on time. Please email to: office@uccmedina.org

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

One Great Hour of Sharing is a UCC Church Wider Mission that can help those in need and change the trajectory of their lives! This Lenten offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the UCC. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty the wider church ministries provides resources, educated staff, and volunteers to help shelter, calm, uplift and guide others through these devastating times. Immediate help is given along with long-term guidance. Your contributions make a difference! Please consider a generous donation on March 29th. Checks should be made payable to our church with "OGHS" noted in the memo. Your donation may also be made online through Realm.

EASTER EGG HUNT

Sunday, April 5th

On Easter Sunday, after the 10:30 service, we will have a quick Easter Egg Hunt for the children. The children should bring their Easter Basket or a bag so they can add a few more eggs to their collection. We will have the hunt in the grass area by the pergola. Hope to see you then.

LAST CHANCE FOR EASTER FLOWER ORDERS!

Order your Easter Flower today! An assortment of lilies, tulips, daffodils and hyacinths will be used to decorate the Chapel, Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary for Easter services (type of flower claimed will be on a first come, first served basis). If you would like to order a flower, **please plan to take it home after 10:30 worship on Easter Sunday. We no longer have a "flower committee" to deliver flowers.** Flowers are \$10 each. Orders and payment are due no later than March 23rd. You may order through [Realm here](#) or by filling out a paper form (available from the ushers) and return it to the office or simply scan the QR code.



EASTER CANDY NEEDED

The DELTS will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt at church after the 10:30 service on Easter Sunday. We are asking for **individually wrapped** Easter Candy donations to stuff the Easter Eggs with. There will be container outside the church office to put your donations in. Thank you in advance, the kids appreciate it!

BEER 'N HYMNS

Join us at Medina Brewing Company!



Medina UCC Beer 'n Hymns presents 

★ **CABIN FEVER** ★

MAR 23 7PM Medina Brewing Company
Farmer's Exchange
320 S Court St. Medina

12 05693 3053 4

PINWHEEL GARDEN SIGNUP!



We'll be caring for the Medina Library's pinwheel garden for the Children's Center once again this year! All you need to do is stop by with your family to pick up any fallen pinwheels and replace those that are obviously missing or broken. Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/MedinaPinwheels2026>

HABITAT WALL BUILD UPDATE

All of the spots are filled! Thanks to all who've signed up. You'll get a reminder email two days prior to the build on May 9th.

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

John 11:1-45

Breath of Hope

The first sermon that ever made tears roll down my cheeks was heard in a New York City church in my early 30s. I was a single Manhattan editor facing the proverbial fork in the road of life, not knowing which way to go. Even worse was that I had no desire to take any step in any direction. I was stuck in what felt like a dank cave of gloom.

The preacher began talking about poor, dead Lazarus. Lazarus' sisters had sent word to Jesus about his friend being ill, urging him to come quickly. Jesus took his time, though. When he arrived, Lazarus had been wrapped in burial cloth and placed in a tomb for a couple of days. Jesus cried but then wiped his tears and called to his dead friend to come out.

This is when the preacher got dramatic, standing in the middle of the chancel and looking into an invisible tomb, shouting, "Come out! Live!"

The words reverberated from every corner of the sanctuary. The preacher then turned away from the imagined tomb and looked at us, the worshippers, and with an urgent, quieter plea, he begged for us to, "Come out! And finally live!"

The first tear ran down my cheek. Then the second. Then came the deluge, for I had realized I had been wrapped in my own burial clothes of fear. I had allowed the stone of depression to seal me from the hope that was still around.

That day I didn't hear a dramatic preacher preach. I heard Jesus himself cry to me, "Come out! There is still so much life to be lived. Remove the cloths of fear wrapped around you. Step out of the dark tomb of death and into the light of life — new life filled with God's promises of an amazing future."

Truthfully, I didn't hear the rest of the preacher's sermon. I was too excited to start living again. On this Sunday in Lent when we are so close to the cross, when soon we will be hearing another resurrection story — THE resurrection of all resurrections, that of Jesus — we are reminded that God can and will revive us as well. Jesus is standing this day outside of whatever door you have slammed shut and he is breathing hope back into your lifeless world. It's time to come out of your tomb of grief, hopelessness, despair or indecision, and do something radical: Live!

Loving God, You know all too well how we often give up when things don't go our way or when we seem to have hit a dead end. But You see that this is not the end for us — or of us. There is still more to experience and to learn. May this day we heed Jesus' words to "Come out and finally live." In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.