

SEEKING: Big Questions. Honest Faith. A New Beginning.

What if faith didn't require having all the answers? What if church was a place where your questions were not only allowed—but welcomed?



This Lent, beginning **Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026**, Monroe United Methodist Church invites you into a new sermon series called **Seeking**, a season built around the honest, sometimes messy, questions many of us are already asking.

Life in Monroe is busy. Between work, school schedules, aging parents, finances, health concerns, and a world that often feels overwhelming, it's easy to feel stretched thin or spiritually restless. Many people describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious," unsure what they believe anymore or whether church has a place in their lives. If that sounds familiar, this series is for you.

Throughout Lent, we'll follow stories from the Bible where real people meet Jesus while they are searching:

- *Who will you listen to?*
- *How do we begin again?*
- *Will you give me a drink?*
- *Can these bones live?*
- *Where are you headed?*

These are not trick questions, and they're not meant to be quickly answered. Instead, they open space for reflection, honesty, and growth. In Scripture, moments of seeking often lead to clarity, heal unexpected hope. We believe the same can be true today.

This series is designed especially for people who may feel uncertain about faith, cautious about church, or curious but unsure where to start. You don't need prior Bible knowledge. You don't need to agree with everything. You just need a willingness to show up and explore.

Lent is traditionally a season of reflection and renewal: a time to slow down, re-center, and reconnect with what matters most. *Seeking* offers a gentle on-ramp into that journey, creating a safe, welcoming space to wrestle with big questions and discover a faith that is thoughtful, relevant, and deeply human.

Whether you've been part of Monroe UMC for years or haven't been in church for a long time, you are invited. Come as you are. Bring your doubts, your hopes, and your curiosity. Let's seek together, and trust that God is already at work in the questions themselves.

Join us Sundays throughout Lent at 9:30 or 11:00 am and on Ash Wednesday at 7:00 pm as we begin this journey. You might be surprised by what you discover along the way.

UMW Going to LaComedia

This is an invitation from the United Methodist Women to all the women in our church and their friends. We hope you will join us at LaComedia on **April 16th** to see "Jesus Christ Superstar".



We will meet at the church at 10:00am to carpool. Please make your reservation and pay \$53.00 to Arlene Horton or Jane Majors by **March 1st**. Our seats are on the lower level.

Mark Your Calendar: The UMW is having a Mother's Luncheon **Saturday, May 2nd**. Invite your female family members.

Agape Fund Helps Local Families

Our **Agape Fund**, which is administered by the Pastor, shares God's *agape love* (unconditional love)



with our neighbors in need. It is entirely funded by gifts from the congregation.

In 2025, the Agape Fund assisted families with:

- Utility bills to keep lights, heat, and water on;
- Rent to have safe housing;
- Gasoline to drive to appointments and work;
- Prescription medications to manage health;
- Food to feed hungry families when the Food Pantry was not open.

In one case, we assisted a mother and daughter who needed to relocate to a safer community and situation with furniture, household items, gift cards for food and supplies, Bibles and Christian literature.

Some of the needs we help meet are identified through the Monroe School Liaisons, who work with school families to address their physical and financial needs. Others are parishioners or community neighbors who contact the Church Office or Pastor Jeff. Sometimes needs are identified to Gina Craft, our Children's Ministry Director. All needs are verified as best possible, and with rare exceptions, funds are distributed directly to providers rather than to the people requesting.

There are constant needs for the Agape Fund throughout the year, so as you are moved, please give generously, marking your special offering for "Agape Fund" (online - Fund 8404-Agape Pastor Fund; text, \$*amount* Agape). Thank you for blessing others through your generosity.

2025 Giving Statements Coming to You

Thank you for your generous support for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ through Monroe UMC in 2025. You will be



receiving a copy of your 2025 Giving Statement, showing all giving (both tax deductible and not). If we have a valid email address and you are not unsubscribed from our emails, you should receive it by email on or about January 28, 2026. All others will be hand-delivered in worship or mailed to you.

If you do not receive your email statement, please check your Spam/Junk email folder. We can send a printed copy to anyone who requests one, whether you received an email or not. Contact Anne Lapham, Financial Secretary, or Edna Miller, Office Manager, to receive a copy. If you believe your statement is incorrect, please contact Anne Lapham directly.

Roger's Ramblings

Aristides de Sousa Mendes



During World War II thousands of desperate refugees flooded into France fleeing the onward coming Nazis. One foreign diplomat had a choice – stop them from escaping German-occupied France or disobey orders, help them and risk everything.

That man was Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Portugal's consul general in Bordeaux, France. Part of his job was to issue visas so people could leave France and cross through Spain and enter neutral Portugal and hopefully find a way to leave Europe.

As the thousands and thousands of refugees, mostly Jewish, fled from the Nazi military establishment, Sousa Mendes received orders instructing him to not issue any more visas without the approval of the head of the Portuguese government.

Sousa Mendes found that the country was being overrun by people with nothing more than what they could carry, dead tired from all the walking and very hungry. People camped wherever they could. Some had tents but others stayed in large boxes. He opened his home and office to them giving some a place to sleep and a meal. During this time, he came into contact with some important people who were trying to leave, but he was not to issue any visas without approval. He had received a cable from Portugal telling him, "You are strictly forbidden to grant anyone a visa for entry to Portugal."

A Polish rabbi came leading several of his synagogue family requesting help. Sousa Mendes took him into his home and requested permission to issue visas to him and his followers but was told "visas denied." Disobeying orders, Sousa Mendes told the rabbi that he would issue him a visa. He felt he could not issue them for the rest. The rabbi refused to accept one without the others receiving one.

Sousa Mendes's selfless effort to help the rabbi and his synagogue family became "a choice between saving himself and saving thousands, between obeying his government and his conscience". It was a destabilizing dilemma causing Sousa Mendes to stumble into his bedroom "as though he had been struck down by a violent disease".

Three days later he emerged and announced he was going to issue visas to anyone who asked for one. He stated, "Even if I am discharged, I can only act as a Christian as my conscience tells me".

Sousa Mendes went on to issue 10,000 visas; some even say he issued 30,000. Knowing that if he was recalled he would lose everything he continued signing visas.

The Portuguese government did recall him and did remove him from his job telling him that he had no job. He was told that he would receive his retirement benefits, but he never did. The rest of his life was a life lived in poverty, but he always felt that he had done the right thing.

Sousa Mendes once stated, "I could not have acted otherwise, and therefore accept all that befallen me".

Trustees Set New Building Use Policy



At their January 2026 organizational meeting, the Trustees of Monroe UMC reviewed, amended, and adopted a new Building Use Policy and Form. This policy sets forth standards for individuals, families, or groups that wish to use Atchley Hall or any other part of the building for special non-church-related events. There are some important changes in the policy.

- Fee schedules were set for Church Members/Regular Participants and for Non-Member usage.
- Everyone requesting to use the building will be required to pay a refundable security deposit. After the event, if the building is left in an orderly way, the deposit will be refunded in full.
- There is a nominal building use fee that is nonrefundable.
- Those using the building may utilize the Kitchen once they have been trained on proper use of equipment by a qualified team member.
- Building users will be expected to remain only in their designated area and not to roam the building.
- The building may continue to be reserved through the Church Office.



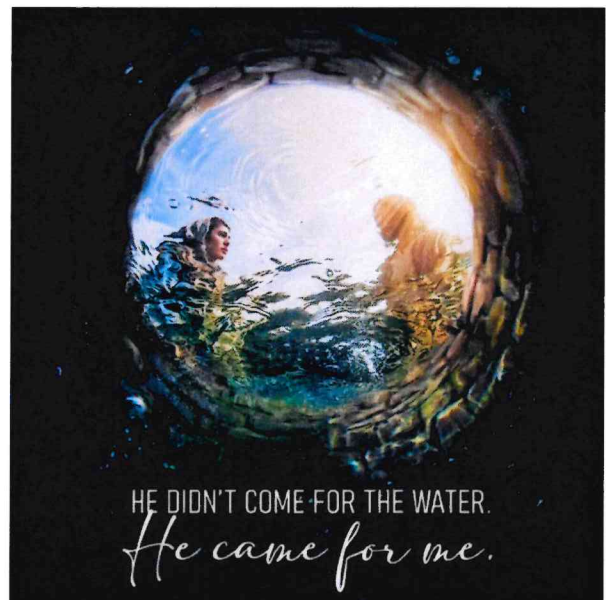
Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.

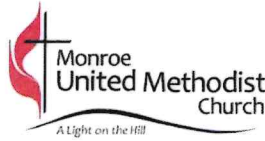
Jean will be leading a weight-management series Wednesday nights. She's used the program herself and has been growing like crazy!

Next Sunday a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the carpet should come forward and do so.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.

The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.





2025 Impact Report

Because of your generosity, we've seen lives changed, families served, and the light and love of Christ reach further than ever.

SPIRITUAL IMPACT

97 In-person Attendance

42 Online Attendance

32 Children at VBS 2025

GIVING SNAPSHOT

\$307K

\$6K

\$17K

All Giving for Operations

Designated Purpose Gifts

Capital Improvements

OPERATIONS FUND SUMMARY

\$183K

\$98K

\$32K

Plate, Online, Text Giving

Qualified Charitable Distributions

Income Excess over Expenses

LOCAL IMPACT

\$10K Local Missions

10 Youth Mission Servants

6 Outreach Events

LOOKING AHEAD

- Increase community engagement events
- Expand care ministry
- Create ministries offering hope and healing
- Receive Estimates of Giving of \$225,660 (+\$17,820)

GLOBAL IMPACT



\$3K UMCOR

\$1.5K Special Sundays

\$20K Paid for Connectional Giving **(51%)**

Thank you for being part of the story that God is writing. As we move into 2026, your continued generosity fuels the mission to "shine the light from the hill."

-Pastor Jeff

February

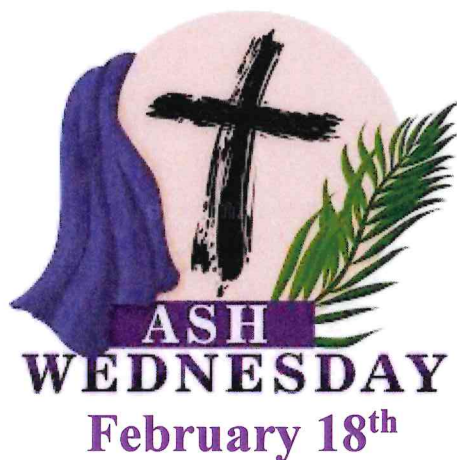
February Birthdays

11 – Barbara Conley
17 – Phyllis Richmond
18 – Phil Lacefield
21 – Alan Dyke
Mike Kuth
22 – Nancy Alexander
Phyllis Michael
23 – Elizabeth Horton
28 – Becky Motter

February Anniversaries

1 – Dave & Karen Shaffer **(62 years)**
3 – Phil & Jennifer Lacefield **(58 years)**

Deadline For
March Newsletter
Wednesday, February 18th



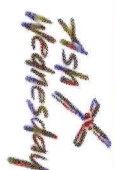


February 14th



February 2nd

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Holy Communion</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 6:30pm -7:45pm Small Group/Library 7:00pm Scouts/AH</p>	<p>3</p> <p>10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor</p>	<p>4</p> <p>11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Nathtex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH</p>	<p>5</p> <p>1:15pm -2:30pm Small Group/Library</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 6:30pm -7:45pm Small Group/Library 7:00pm Scouts/AH</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor</p>	<p>11</p> <p>11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Nathtex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH</p>	<p>12</p> <p>1:15pm -2:30pm Small Group/Library</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH</p>	<p>14</p> 
<p>15</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 6:30pm -7:45pm Small Group/Library 7:00pm Scouts/AH</p>	<p>17</p> <p>10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor 1:00pm Finance Committee/AH</p>	<p>18</p>  <p>7:00pm Worship Service/Sanctuary</p>	<p>19</p> <p>1:15pm -2:30pm Small Group/Library 7:00pm Trustees/Library</p>	<p>20</p> <p>10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH</p>	<p>24</p> <p>10:00am -12:00pm Sewing Group/Youth Room 10:00am Share Group/Parlor</p>	<p>25</p> <p>11:00am -12:00pm Yoga/Nathtex 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH</p>	<p>26</p> <p>6:00pm -8:30pm Emmaus Gathering/AH</p>	<p>27</p> <p>10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH</p>	<p>28</p>

First Sunday in Lent

MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
206 East Avenue, PO Box 310
Monroe, OH 45050

REQUESTED RETURN SERVICE

Mission Statement:

*Shining the light on the hill by connecting with Jesus Christ,
connecting with each other and connecting with the world.*



MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Monroe UMC Staff

Rev. Jeff Motter, Senior Pastor: revjammotter@gmail.com

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Gina Craft, Children's Ministries: gmatcraft@gmail.com

Larry Daniel, Choir Director

Melanie Flower, Organist

Linda Larkin, Nursery Attendant

Arlene Horton, Treasurer

Jerry & Anne Lapham,
Financial Sec'y

MINISTERS: CONGREGATION

OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY 9:00AM-4:30PM



FACEBOOK: *Monroe United Methodist Church*



C/*MonroeUnitedMethodist*



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