



February Whispers 2026
Hope United Church of Christ



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Dear Friends,

It's February, and with that comes basketball tournaments, a groundhog checking for his shadow, and Valentine's Day. The day is named after a Roman martyr, Valentine, who was tortured, beaten with clubs, and finally beheaded on February 14 in 260 AD. Although there are several different stories connected to St. Valentine, we don't know for sure why he was executed or even if he was a Christian before his arrest; yet Pope Gelasius I (492–496) included him in a feast day in the church calendar.

A feast remembering a cruel death hardly seems a valid reason to exchange expressions of love. One explanation commonly offered has to do with the timing of Valentine's death. Allegedly in the third-century, Romans observed a pagan festival in mid-February to the goddess Februata Juno, at which boys drew girls' names for acts of sexual promiscuity. The practice hung on after Christianity took hold. To divert the custom into a more innocent expression, church leaders may have embellished Valentine's story to give it a romantic twist and at the same time leaven the day with a tinge of holiness.

In keeping with that, one persistent legend makes Valentine a priest who secretly married couples in defiance of a temporary imperial ban on marriages. Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers – but husbands were exempt from induction. By continuing to marry couples, Valentine kept Claudius from having a source of soldiers; so, the emperor punished Valentine's disobedience.

Another story is that Valentine was condemned to death for assisting persecuted Christians. Knowing he was going to die, he wrote letters to his friends saying "Remember your Valentine."

A third legend makes Valentine a priest who refused to sacrifice to pagan gods. Imprisoned, he witnessed for Christ in prison. Through his prayers the jailer's daughter was healed. On the day of his execution, he left her a note signed "Your Valentine."

We will probably never know with certainty why Valentine perished or why we exchange cards and candies in his name. Nonetheless it will probably remain a day of romance and friendship into the foreseeable future. It's also an opportunity to remind ourselves that many of the things which bring us joy exist because others bore witness and made sacrifices never getting to experience the joys we celebrate today.

If the love of Christ is more than just an emotion, if it has real significance in your life, who do you need to take the bold step with and bear witness to that love in order that he/she might experience that same love and joy you know in their lives as well?

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Gene



Hope Happenings

Debbie Mader, Worship Committee

Worship for 2026 started with a Covenant Service on January 4th. Those who truly desire to make a pledge of faith to discipleship and service were invited to make this covenant with the following prayer. Pastor Gene suggested adding your signature and date, cutting it out and hanging on your refrigerator or bathroom mirror to be repeated every day.

COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

*Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exactly for thee or brought low for thee.*

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and Blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Thank you to all those who stayed after the service to help take down the Christmas tree and put away decorations.

The Baptism of our Lord was celebrated January 11th.

The annual meeting was held after the service on January 18th.

To help keep everyone healthy and prevent the spread of germs it was decided at the last Worship Committee meeting that the Greeting/Passing of the Peace during services will be temporarily paused during the winter months.

Ash Wednesday, February 18 – There will be two services for imposition of ashes: 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Come to the early service and display the ashes on your forehead the entire day!

Lenten Soup Suppers:

- **Wednesday, February 25** – Becky will present on programs and ministries in Uganda. Soup served at 6:00 p.m. with presentation at 6:30 p.m.
- **Wednesday, March 4, 11, 18, 25** – Council will sponsor a soup supper at 6:00 p.m., followed by the service at 6:30 p.m.

Sunday Worship Services:

- **February 1st** - *Communion, family worship, noisy offering*
Liturgist: Flower Ramsey
Ushers: Ron Kramer, Jan Lamers
- **February 8th** - **The Baptism of Jesus**
Liturgist: Andrea Neault
Usher: Ben Bodoh
- **February 15th** -
Liturgist: Samantha Bailey
Usher: Lori Hahn
- **February 22nd** -
Liturgist: Bryan Hahn
Usher: Jan Lamers

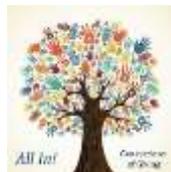


February is “**Souper**” Bowl month! Please help us with donating cans of soup to Weymont Food Pantry. Circle of Hope will match all soup donated in February.

February 1st is our **Potluck** luncheon. Please bring a dish to pass, there is a signup sheet on the bulletin board.

February 8th is our “**Souper Bowl**” luncheon, lunch will be provided, with a free-will donation jar available.

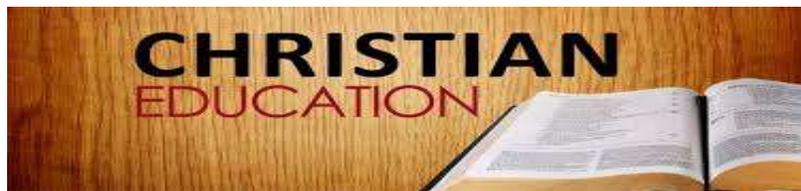
Do not forget to sign up for Snack and Chat, signup sheet on the bulletin board.



Stewardship

It's Picture Time! We have begun taking pictures for the new church directory. For those of you who were unable to get your picture taken prior to February 1st. We are going to take directory pictures on Wednesday night, February 18th from 4:30pm to 6:00pm and Tuesday morning, February 24th from 10:00am to noon. Please do your best to make one of these times for your new photo. Thank you!





On Sunday, January 18th, Hope youth and friends enjoyed ice skating at the Waupaca Expo. For two high school skaters, this was the first time they tried skating. They both did great and want to go again. The high school youth were invited to join St. John's, Lutheran Church, of East Bloomfield, for a brief Bible study at the end of the night, who happen to be there, enjoying a night of fellowship and ice-skating, as well.

On Sunday, February 1st, Hope youth will be ringing bells and collecting a noisy offering to benefit Tomorrow's Children, in Waupaca.

Tomorrow's Children is a private, non-profit residential care center in Waupaca, Wisconsin, for boys and girls ages 5-18 with severe emotional and behavioral issues, providing a home-like, trauma-informed environment with on-site education, therapy, and family support to help them return to the community. It offers intensive, individualized treatment for mental health and co-occurring substance abuse issues, focusing on building coping skills and resilience through a high staff-to-child ratio.

We are still looking for adult helpers to be the second person in the Sunday school room and to help lead a game or activity for our youth group. Please see the bulletin board for dates highlighted in yellow and sign up. Please talk with Allison Gleisner or Martha Bailey, with any questions or dates you can help. Thank you!

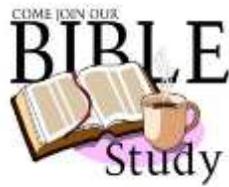
Upcoming dates:

February 1st: Family worship – Bells & Noisy offering: Tomorrow's Children -Waupaca
Youth group 11:30-1:00pm

February 8th: Sunday school

February 15th: Youth Group 11:30-1:00pm

February 22nd: Sunday school



Bible study
Tues 4:00 pm
&
Weds 6:30 pm

Birthdays

Amanda Kohl 2/05
 Kris Steiger 2/08
 Shawn Kalbus 2/11
 Malachi Selsing 2/12
 Barbara Hahn 2/14
 Marjorie Tellock 2/16
 Evan Marquardt 2/16
 Allision DeZurik-Otto 2/18
 Rebecca Hoewisch 2/25



Anniversaries



Michael & Renee Foist 2/15
 Jay & Diane Zempel 2/17

**BY
 THE
 NUMBERS**

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
<u>Monthly Average</u>			
January	\$ 8543.97	\$ 5839.22	50
February	\$ 7426.45	\$11186.30	59
March	\$13958.67	\$ 9865.19	50
April	\$16935.87	\$21885.70	59
May	\$15183.15	\$12141.06	60
June	\$10601.60	\$10654.98	49
July	\$ 8369.20	\$17583.07	52
August	\$19933.30	\$12463.21	52
September	\$10027.55	\$13362.69	76
October	\$13,306.87	\$12,590.69	65
November	\$11,758.65	\$19,412.47	75
December	\$19,707.15	\$13,576.08	86
	\$155,752.43	\$160,560.66	



February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Family Worship 10:15 Bells – Noisy offering Installation of Church Officers w/potluck luncheon	2	3 Bible study Romans 4pm	4 Bible Study Matthew 6:30pm	5	6	7
8 Family worship 10:15 Sunday School “Souper” Bowl luncheon	9 Council Mtg 6:30	10 Bible study Romans 4pm	11 Bible Study Matthew 6:30pm	12	13	14 
15 Circle of Hope 9:30am Worship 10:15 Sunday School Youth Group	16	17 Bible study Romans 4pm Worship 5:30	18 Ash Wednesday Imposition of Ashes 6:30 am service 6:30 pm service Church directory pics 4:30-6pm	19	20	21
22 Worship 10:15 Sunday School	23	24 Bible study Romans 4pm Whispers deadline Church directory pics 10:am-noon	25 Soup 6:00pm Becky’s Ugandan Ministries presentation 6:30-7:00 pm Bible Study	26	27	28

Lenten
Soup
Suppers



Hope United
Church of Christ
8950 Alpine Rd, Fremont

Wednesdays
February 25 through
March 25

Soup at 6:00 pm
Service at 6:30 pm