



# ***March Whispers 2026***

## **Hope United Church of Christ**



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Dear Friends,

Most of us want a clear path forward. We want to know where life is headed, how to make the right decisions, and what will actually lead us to something good. And when things feel uncertain or start falling apart, that desire only gets stronger. We look for answers, clarity, and direction, hoping something will steady us.

That same tension sits underneath one of Jesus' most well-known statements. It is often quoted, debated, and reduced to a soundbite, but it was not spoken in a calm or theoretical moment. It was spoken to anxious disciples on the night, everything they trusted was about to unravel. What Jesus says in that room is not abstract theology. It is deeply personal, and it reframes what it means to find God, truth, and life itself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). I want to suggest these words matter when clarity is hard to find and faith feels fragile.

John 14:6 is not spoken in a debate hall or to a hostile crowd. It is spoken in a room thick with anxiety. Jesus has just told His disciples that He is leaving, that betrayal is coming, that death is near. Everything they thought following Him would lead to feels like it is unraveling.

When Jesus says, "I am the way," He is not claiming to teach a better method for getting to God. He is saying that access to God is no longer found in a system, a place, or a practice. In Israel's story, the "way" to God had always been marked by temple, sacrifice and obedience to the law.

Jesus now says that the way is not something you walk toward. It is someone you follow. The path is no longer external. It is personal.

Don't miss this, the disciples are not being asked to understand where Jesus is going. They are being asked to trust who He is. Jesus does not explain the future, rather he offers Himself. In other words, the security they are looking for will not come from clarity, but from relationship.

When Jesus says, "I am the truth," He is not simply claiming honesty or accuracy. In John's Gospel, truth is always tied to revelation. Truth is what is revealed about God's character and purposes. Jesus is saying that God is no longer hidden behind symbols or shadows. The truth about God has taken on flesh. To know Jesus is to know what God is like. To listen to Jesus is to hear God speak. Truth is not merely something to agree with. It is someone to submit to. The disciples want answers, but Jesus gives presence. The truth they need will not come from having everything explained, but from remaining connected to Him as the story unfolds.

And when Jesus says, "I am the life," He is not pointing to survival after death alone. In John's Gospel, life is always about participation in God's life right now. It is fullness. Restoration. A way of being human that is aligned with God's purposes. Jesus is saying that life does not come from avoiding loss or preserving control. It comes through union with Him, even when the road leads through suffering.

John 14:6 is not a verse to win arguments with. It is a verse meant to steady people when life feels uncertain, disorienting, or heavy. Jesus speaks these words to disciples who are afraid, confused, and about to watch everything fall apart. Most of us come to this verse not in moments of strength, but in moments where we are trying to figure out what to do next.

So, what does it look like to actually live as if Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life?

Most of us want clarity before we move forward. We want to know where something is heading, how it will turn out, and whether the risk will be worth it. That is exactly what the disciples are asking for in John 14, and it is exactly what Jesus does not give them. Instead of explaining the future, He anchors them to Himself.

Following Jesus often feels less like walking on a well-lit road and more like walking closely beside someone you trust in the dark. The invitation is not to figure everything out, but to stay near Him as you move forward.

If Jesus is the truth, then following Him means allowing His words to carry more weight than everything else competing for your attention. That requires intentionality. Slowing down enough to notice what is forming you. Paying attention to what you are consuming. Being honest about where your assumptions about life are coming from.

Most of us are not chasing bad things. We are chasing good things and asking them to give us more than they can. We look to relationships, achievements, comfort, or control to give us life, and we are surprised when they leave us tired or disappointed.

Jesus says He is the life, which means real life is not something you achieve or accumulate. It is something you receive as you remain connected to Him. This changes how you measure whether your life is going well. Instead of asking, "Am I getting what I want?" the question becomes, "Am I staying close to Jesus in this season?"

This verse is an invitation to stop striving and start abiding. Not because the road is easy, but because the One who walks it with you is trustworthy. Jesus does not promise a simple path. He promises Himself. And for people who are tired, uncertain, or worn down, that is often exactly what they need most.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Gene



## *Hope Happenings*

*Debbie Mader, Worship Committee*

Spring is just around the corner! At least it feels like it today as I am writing this after a record high temperature for February. Winter certainly isn't over yet, but I don't think Nature knows that because our magnolia and weeping pussy willow have budded already!

Mark your calendars and plan to attend these special services in preparation for celebrating Easter:

### Lenten Soup Suppers

**Wednesday, March 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th:** The Council will sponsor a soup supper at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Lenten service at 6:30 p.m. Both the supper and services will be held in the Fellowship Hall.

**Regular Sunday Worship Services:**

- **March 1st - Communion served**  
Liturgist: Nikki Steiger  
Ushers: Katrina Dering, Ben Bodoh
- **March 8th -**  
Liturgist: Renee Foist  
Usher: Gordie Vong
- **March 15th -**  
Liturgist: Katrina Dering  
Usher: Ben Bodoh
- **March 22nd -**  
Liturgist: Autumn Bailey  
Usher: Dennis Vogt

**Palm Sunday – March 29th**

Liturgist: Kerry Jones  
Usher: Gordie Vong

**Maundy Thursday – April 2nd at 6:30 p.m. (Sanctuary)**

- Holy Communion. Interpretation of elements of the Last Supper

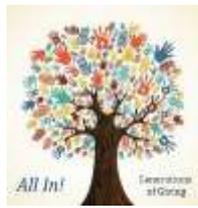
**Good Friday – April 3rd, 6:30 p.m. (Sanctuary)**

- Stripping of the altar
- Reflections on the Seven Last Words of Christ from the Cross
- Ending the service by leaving the church in silence

**Easter – April 5th:**

- 6:30 a.m. Sunrise Service (in Sanctuary) includes redressing of the altar
- Easter Breakfast prepared by Circle of Hope served immediately following the Sunrise service
- 10:15 a.m. Easter Worship Service (in Sanctuary)





# Stewardship

**DEADLINE IS MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>**-The directory is coming along nicely, and we would like to thank everyone who has had their picture taken so far. Our goal is to have all pictures done by March 9, so we can proceed to our next step of finishing the designing and printing. We would like to have the directory completed by Easter for you to pick up. Please email your pictures to [hopeuccfremont@outlook.com](mailto:hopeuccfremont@outlook.com) as soon as possible. Pictures must be from the waist up if possible. Please contact Cindy Kohl 920-450-6623, Lori Schmidt 920-497-1492 or Jan Lamers at 920-428-6415 with questions or if you still would like your picture taken at church. Thank you!! The Stewardship Committee.



## Confirmation classes (9:30am)

A Confirmation-specific Sunday school class will be offered for unconfirmed youth, grades 6 and up, at 9:30 am, starting Sunday, March 1. Our Confirmation Sunday celebration will be in May, with the specific date to be determined, depending on how the class goes.

## Youth Group (11:30-1)

(for all church youth)

**March 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**March 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**March 29<sup>th</sup>**

## Sunday School Dates

**March 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**March 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**March 22<sup>nd</sup>**



**Easter Sunrise Service is coming up! We need volunteers, egg bakes and sweet rolls. Please use sign up sheet on the bulletin board or contact Kerry Jones to volunteer or bring in needed items.**



**We are still collecting aluminum cans for the church. If you have some that you would like to donate/recycle. You can drop off at Gary Zuehlke's home.**



**Bible study**  
**Tues 4:00 pm**



***Birthdays***

Ryan Bailey	3-02
Bruce Lind	3-07
Carter Greening	3-07
David Schmidt	3-08
Debra Mader	3-10
Bill Fischer	3-11
Eric Smith	3-13
Cindy Vong	3-15
Greg Freer	3-25
Leslie Hildebrandt	3-27
Timothy Otto	3-29
Joan Otto	3-29



***Anniversaries***

Jack & Sandy Rasmussen	3-04
Ryan & Martha Bailey	3-31
Bruce & Linda Lind	3-24

**BY  
THE  
NUMBERS**

	Income	Expenses	Attendance Monthly Avr.
<u>Beginning Balance</u>	\$155,752.43	\$160,560.66	
January	<u>\$ 7,302.81</u> <b>\$148,719.62</b>	<u>\$13,272.12</u> <b>\$147,288.54</b>	49



March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Confirmation Class 9:30 Family Worship 10:15 Noisy Offering Youth Group	2	3 Bible study Romans 4pm	4 Lenten Soup Supper 6:00pm Service 6:30pm	5	6	7
8 Confirmation Class 9:30 Family worship 10:15 Sunday School	9 Education Committee 5:30pm  Stewardship Mtg 5:30pm  Council Mtg 6:30pm	10 Bible study Romans 4pm	11 Lenten Soup Supper 6:00pm Service 6:30pm	12	13	14
15 Confirmation Class 9:30 Family Worship 10:15 Sunday School Youth Group	16	17 Bible study Romans 4pm  	18 Lenten Soup Supper 6:00pm Service 6:30pm	19	20 Whispers Deadline	21
22 Confirmation Class 9:30 Family Worship 10:15 Sunday School	23	24 Bible study Romans 4pm	25 Lenten Soup Supper 6:00pm Service 6:30pm	26	27	28
29 Confirmation Class 9:30 Family Worship 10:15 Processional with Palms Youth Group	30	31				