

Aurora First United Methodist Church

March, 2026

“Heart to Heart, House to House, Town to Town, One Kingdom to Another”

What Is the Significance of the 40 Days of Lent?

(from “Get Fed: Bite-Sized Faith,” author unknown)

No matter how excited and determined we are as Lent starts, the high of Ash Wednesday can start to slide away as the reality of the next several weeks sets in.

“I have to go without candy until Easter?”

“I need to keep up this new prayer routine for 35 more days?”

One question probably continues to pop up: “Why is Lent so long?” Why is it 40 days? Why not 30? Why not a week? The answer lies deep in Scripture, where the number 40 appears again and again at pivotal moments of trial, testing, and transformation.

In the Bible, 40 is the number of preparation before something new. It marks a period of purification before renewal, of struggle before mission, of surrender before promise. Lent follows this ancient pattern.

One of the earliest and most dramatic examples is the flood in Genesis. Rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights upon the earth. At first glance, this seems only like destruction. But the flood was also a cleansing. Corruption and violence had overtaken humanity, and through those 40 days the world was washed clean. When the waters receded, God established a covenant with Noah; and thus a new beginning emerged from this time of trial! The key here is that the 40 days were not meaningless suffering; they were preparation for renewal.

We see the same pattern in the story of Israel’s 40 years in the desert. After God freed His people from slavery in Egypt, they did not immediately enter the Promised Land. Instead, they wandered. The desert was a place of testing. Hunger exposed their complaints. Thirst revealed their fears. Hardship uncovered their longing to return to slavery rather than trust God. Yet it was

in the wilderness that they learned dependence. God fed them with manna from heaven and water from the rock. He formed them into a people who knew His law and relied on His providence. The desert stripped away false security and shaped them into a nation ready to receive the promise. Forty years transformed former slaves into God's covenant people, fully prepared and on fire to do His will.

Then we come to Our Lord Himself. Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. There, He faced temptation from the devil. He experienced hunger and isolation. Where Israel had failed in the desert, Christ remained faithful. He resisted the temptation to turn stones into bread, to test God, to grasp earthly power. After those 40 days of preparation through self-denial and union with the Father, He emerged ready to proclaim the Kingdom. His ministry was prepared in silence and sacrifice.

Other biblical moments echo the same meaning. Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai before receiving the Law. The prophet Jonah warned Nineveh that it had 40 days to repent before destruction. Again and again, 40 marks a merciful space: time to be purified, time to turn back, time to prepare for what God is about to do next.

This is why Lent lasts 40 days. If Lent were only a few days, we might grit our teeth and power through. 40 days, though, is a long time...long enough to stretch us, to expose our attachments, and to reveal how much we rely on comforts instead of God.

But 40 days require something deeper than willpower. They require surrender. Over time, fasting begins to uncover what controls us. Extra prayer reveals how distracted we are. Acts of charity challenge our self-protection.

The number 40 tells us that trial is not pointless. It is purposeful. In Scripture, 40 never stands alone. After 40 comes renewal. After the flood comes the covenant. After the desert comes the Promised Land. After Christ's 40 days comes the proclamation of the Gospel. And after Lent comes Easter.

When the days feel long, remember: this is what 40 does. It clears away what is unnecessary and readies the heart for resurrection!



Attendance and Giving for February

2/1 – attendance: 27/offering \$3825

2/8 – attendance: 28/offering \$1142

2/15 – attendance: 34/offering \$1151

2/22 – attendance: 27/offering \$1382

We also received a \$100 donation for the Blessing Box. Our average attendance for the Sundays of February was 29.

Average giving for the Sundays of February was \$1875. This month we sent \$117 to St. Vincent de Paul. Weekly our church gives \$10 to the Clearing-House, so for February we sent \$40.

Easter Flower Orders

Thanks to Judy Hizer for ordering our Easter flowers! These are our options:

Azaleas: \$33.00

Hydrangeas: 30.00

Easter Lilies: \$25.00

Daffodils: \$14.00

Tulips: \$14.00

(We're sorry, but this year we don't have color options.) Please get your order to Judy Hizer by March 15.

Dates to Remember

March 15 – Coffee and donuts after worship

March 17 – St. Patrick's Day

March 20 – First day of spring

March 22 – Hymn Choice

March 29 - Palm Sunday

Mission and Outreach

Our Souper Bowl results for this year are 66 cans for the Seattle Seahawks and 49 cans for the New England Patriots. This year we called it! Here's a rundown of what we accomplished in 2025:

-January UMCOR Change the World Jar / California Fire \$940.20

- February "SOUPER BOWL"

Winner of Super Bowl

Philadelphia Eagles 204 cans of soup collected / Loser Kansas City Chefs

94 cans of soup collected

- May UMCOR Change the World Jar \$725.12

- July Christmas in July "Cops and Kids" \$655.81. The program shopped for 283 kids and spent \$36,421.38

- August Relief is Needed for UMCOR \$500.00

- October Church open for Trick or Treat 65 kids 35 adults

- November Holiday Food Bags; 135 bags collected

- December Bishop's Christmas Gift \$236.00

The above does not include our monthly donation to St. Vincent de Paul and the Dearborn County Clearing House or product collected for the Blessing Box; nor does it include our service at High Hopes Cafe, 4th Street Foods, the rummage sale, or our support of

UMC Mountain Mission. Thank you for all you do for the mission work of the church.

Upcoming Birthdays & Anniversaries

Jim Blair, Jr. 3/1
Barry Hussung 3/9
Kara Goode 3/12
Brad Moorhead 3/16
Bonnie Nocks 3/20

Cleaning Teams

March 1: Team 3
March 8 & 15: Team 1
March 22 & 29: Team 2
Cleaning teams save our church money!
If you are interested in being on a cleaning team, please contact Roger Fehling at 513-519-1309, or leave a message at 812-926-0535.

March Liturgists

March 1: Julie Whitaker
March 8: Robin Hochstrasser
March 15: Rob Moorhead
March 22: LouAnn Martin
March 29: Kathi Prarat

March Ushers & Greeters

March 1: Bonnie Nocks and
Shelly Hubbartt
March 8: Jeff & Sue Baer
March 15: Judy & David Hizer
March 22: Judy Mosier and
Kelly Kuckenrider

March 29: LouAnn & Danny Martin
If you are unable to serve on your given Sunday, please change with someone, and notify Pastor Ryan. Contact Judy Hizer at (513) 314-6682 if you would like to help out as a liturgist, an usher, or a greeter.

Lectionary for March

March 1: Gen 12:1-4a; Ps 121;
Rom 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17
March 8: Exod 17:1-7; Ps 95;
Rom 5:1-11; John 4:5-42
March 15: 1 Sam 16:1-13; Ps 23;
Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41
March 22: Ezek 37:1-14; Ps 130;
Rom 8:6-11; John 11:1-45
March 29: Matt 21:1-11;
Ps 118:1-2, 19-29; Isa 50:4-9a;
Ps 31:9-16; Phil 2:5-11;
Matt 26:14-27 or 27:11-54

PRAYER LIST

Let us share our concerns and blessings with the Lord: Bill Caulkins-Parkinson diagnosis (Katherine), Patty Terrill-ankle surgery Wednesday (Becky), Nancy Turner 2nd chemo Monday (Debbie), Gary ER Friday (Judy M.), Barbara Scott waiting for test results (Susan), Kristin-back surgery (Stephanie), Donna Largent-angiogram Tuesday (Kathie), Sue Turner-sciatic nerve issues (Steve T.), Julie-wrist-appointment Monday (All of us),

Bonnie-bad cold (Shelly), Nick's parents-traveling in Holy Land (Nick), Nancy Guthrie and her family-Nancy's safe return (Jim W.), Phee Ellinghausen (Charlotte), Allen Collins-procedure Jan. 19th (Beth), Terry Heath-hospice (Judy M.), Don & Marlene Kincer (Robin), Verna & Kenny Cotton (Pastor Ryan), Ken Carpenter (Jeff), Ron Veverka-ALS (Judy M.) Mattie-migranes (Nick), Shirley Kuckenrider-fell (Kelley), Mark-depression (Charlotte), Mark-brain tumor (Charlotte), Carol-health issues (Judy M.), Janet Ingle-brain aneurysm (Janet H.), Randy Turner-gall bladder (Steve T.), Charlotte Hastings-stroke (Jim W.), Tim-seizures (Jeff), Liz Kenny-tests (Steve T.), Mike Peters- poor health (Jim W.), Barb Ankenbauer - injuries in auto accident (Debbie), Jan Uhlmansiek (Kelley), Millie Tufts-healing from hip replacement (Debbie), Roger Ullrich-health issues (Judy H.), Sandy-hip surgery (Steve T.), Dave Krouse-throat issues (Shelly), RJ-heart issues (Jim B.), Virginia Becker-multiple issues (Debbie), Barbara Taylor-kidney donor needed (Steve H.), Liz Hauntz-dementia (Debbie), Julia Heyob (Debbie)

Our cancer prayer list of friends and families: Nancy Turner (Debbie), Angela Brookbank - appendix cancer (Jim W.), Tammy Veverka-breast cancer (Judy M.), Mark-brain tumor (Charlotte), Ishita (Cari), Jane Van Arsdale-lung cancer (Judy H.), Pastors Ed & Stormy Scherer-

Berry's granddaughter, Xiomari, 2 years old-liver cancer (Judy M.), Kim Schmeltzer-lung cancer (Judy M.), Dakota's mom's friend - cancer (Jenna), Jackie Reynold's -breast cancer (Debbie), Merrill Hutchinson-brain cancer (Jeff), Paul Green-lung cancer (Debbie), Cooper Cain-stage 4 cancer (Jim B.), Bev Houze-masses in both lungs, inoperable (Nancy T.), Russ Smith-lung cancer (Roger), Cammy Hochstrasser (Robin), Lona (Kenn), Leslie Cassidy-cancer in 3 areas (Bonnie), Amy Shackelford (Julie), Doug-pancreatic cancer and coming surgery (Kelley), Ellaine Marshall (Julie), Kim Burkey (Pastor Ryan), Stephanie Riley (Gary)
Sympathy to the Families and Friends of: Sylvia Wilson, Judy Arthur

PRAISES Randy Meyer health improvements (Kelly), Baer family successful UMCOR experience in Wisconsin (Debbie), Monica thankful to be back in worship (Monica), Robin Hochstrasser's birthday (All of us), 11 years of Souper Bowl-1,118 cans donated (Everyone !!), Answered prayers (Judy H.), Tom & Charlotte's anniversary (Charlotte), LouAnn, Stephanie, & Ellie-birthdays, Asa, Ellie, & Hudson feeling better (Pastor Ryan), LouAnn's retirement (LouAnn), LouAnn's witness for

Christ (Pastor Ryan), Judy M's decorations in the church, Janet P's and Elliott's help (Charlotte), Oliver Moision coming to Ft. Meade in June (Susan), Steve Turner birthday (Monica), Debbie birthday (Judy H.), Salvation Army collected over \$13,000 for Dearborn County (Steve T.), \$236.00 for Bishop's Offering (All of us), Jeff & Sue's 42nd anniversary (Jeff), SD winning Rivertown Classic (Debbie), 283 kids served with our donation of \$655.00 (Debbie), Generous donation for Blessing Box (Judy M.), lots of hats from Joy & another friend (Judy M.), \$655.00 for Cops & Kids-294 kids (Kathi), Janet Ingles-successful surgery, Joy knitting hats for the Blessing Box (Judy M.), 135 bags for St. Vincent de Paul (All of us). Gayle Templeman in remission (Mattie), Veterans everywhere (Kathi), Power of God's miracles (Cari), Served 53 meals at 4th Street (Judy M.), Recovery Groups appreciation for sharing our building (All of us), Opportunity to help through UMCOR (Everyone)

Those in Nursing Homes & Assisted

Living: Doris Spencer, JD Largent

Shut Ins: Wilma Beyer, Jerry Stonebraker

Special Care & Concerns: Gun violence around the world; all who are suffering after natural disasters. For an end to war and violence around the world especially in Israel and Ukraine; refugees;

discontent in United States, Red Cross workers and volunteers, relief workers

Local Missions:

AA, NA, CASA, St. Vincent de Paul, Clearinghouse, YES Home, Heart House, Safe Passage

United Methodist Missions:

UMCOR workers and volunteers, Red Bird Mission, Mountain Mission

Prayers for our Nation as COVID continues, racial tensions, Christian Unity, our United Methodist Church, Prayers for our cities, for our counties, our state, our police, our firefighters, EMTs, all military men and women and their families, all healthcare workers, first responders, chaplains, missionaries, clergy, persons in financial distress, businesses needing employees

WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT PRAYER. To help us keep our lists current, if you see a name that can be removed, PLEASE let us know. If you would like to add a name, please let us know. If you know of a change, have a concern, or a praise and would like to add a name, you can call the church with the information, mail a note, email Pastor Ryan (ryangoode1@gmail.com); Judy Mosier (kjmosier@comcast.net); or Jim Waldon (jimgwaldon@gmail.com)

When submitting a prayer request please include the following information—

** Your Name (required), ** Name of the one needing prayer (*be sure you have their permission to make their need known*), **Nature of Request (surgery, health concern, etc.)